

## The 'sweetheart' factor: tracing translation in Martin Crimp's writing for theatre

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### ABSTRACT

Martin Crimp's activity as a playwright includes the translation and adaptation of the theatrical works of other writers. This article considers how Crimp's theoretical and practical engagement with translation is manifested in his writing for the stage. Crimp's voice on and in translation is analysed: firstly from the perspective of translation theory, in particular as it relates to Crimp's discussions on translation and adaptation; and secondly, in a study of Crimp's use of the word 'sweetheart' in his various writings, including his translations and adaptations of works by other playwrights. I conclude that Crimp's authorial presence exists throughout his work, whether self-authored, translated or adapted, while simultaneously operating to recognise the plurality of voices within a translated text.

### KEYWORDS

adaptation, theatre translation, translation, translation theory, translator's voice, version

### Introduction: translation and authorial markers

For Martin Crimp, his first translation for the stage was 'a way of getting up in the morning and having something really concrete to do' in contrast to the 'crises' of writing his authored plays (2016: 1). This differentiation between the measured occupation of translation and the creative urgency of original writing represents a widely-held view of the nature of these complementing activities. In theatre, where an extended translation process is frequently hidden behind a label of 'adaptation' or 'version', translators may be seen as technicians responsible for the production of accurate but possibly untheatrical reproductions of an original text. In the wider world, translators are perceived as facilitators who mediate between languages, expected to take a neutral stance. Translators deviating from these professional norms are forced to challenge such expectations; an early documentation of such justification appears in Cicero's defence of his translation approach as orator rather than literal translator (Robinson 2002: 9), and translators have been attempting to validate their strategies and decisions ever since. Modern translation theory locates translation within cultural performativity, asking whether translation itself is a creative function, and blurring the divisions between origination and representation. This article seeks to interrogate these boundaries by means of an investigation of Martin Crimp's writing for theatre. Vicky Angelaki's compilation of 36 'plays, adaptations, translations and versions' composed by Crimp demonstrates the range of his theatrical writing, and this number has increased since publication (2012: 187-199). In spite of Angelaki's best efforts, these texts resist classification, as I demonstrate by means of an investigation of Crimp's authorial voice across his work for theatre. This study employs Crimp's use of the word 'sweetheart' as a tool to examine the traces of the translator's voice, measuring the frequency and usage of this specific marker in a play, a translation and a version written by Crimp, along with iterations of these works in other languages. My discussion of Crimp's writerly voice in action is supplemented by, and contrasted with, Crimp's own deliberations on writing and translation, constructing an analysis of the significance of authorial presence for translation theory.

Martin Middeke sees Crimp's work as 'metaperformative [...] the blanks of time and place and the emphasis on rhythm and atmosphere [...] open possibilities and avenues for the negotiation of the relationships between text, performance, characters/actors, audience perception and reader response' (2011: 98). Such negotiations are characteristic of translation for the theatre, where the

translating agents are forced to impose an interpretation of the source text on the users and receivers of their translation. Crimp's 'blank' stage directions, whereby the time and place in which a play is to be set is indicated as 'blank' beneath the list of characters, for example in *The City* (Crimp 2008c: 3), may be an invitation to complete the missing information. On the other hand, such blanks may be directive to the creators of a production. Eléonore Obis's discussion of the 2008 production of Crimp's *Fewer Emergencies* trilogy in Paris suggests the latter, describing the stage design of white balloons interpreting 'the spatial and chronological references of the text' for the production. Furthermore, Obis takes the view that 'the idea of a "blank" can also be linked to the form of the play and to its characters' (2014: 391). I suggest that these 'blanks' are also represented in Crimp's choice of vocabulary, a vocabulary that explores the tensions between speaker and receiver, between action and reflection, and, as I demonstrate in this article, between writing and translation. Crimp's blanks constitute both a creation and a licence to create; a contextual engagement with language, or with language's absence; a search, not for complete understanding, but for a vocabulary which, as Theo Hermans advocates for translation studies, can be used to map concepts of translation across cultures while reflecting on its own function as a tool to perform those mappings (2003: 385).

Metaperformative blanks extend beyond theatrical production to the published format of Crimp's plays. The cover of the Faber and Faber edition of *The City* (Crimp 2008c) is largely taken up by an expanse of image-free glossy white blankness, presenting only the publisher's logo and author's name (in black) and the title of the play (in red). The French translation published by L'Arche, *La Ville*, adopts a similar presentation (Crimp 2008b). The void within the play, the refusal to assist in interpretation and the lack of identification of any translation process, is thus perpetrated across languages. At one level, these translational blanks might be inserted to be filled in by theatre practitioners, but I see them in terms of Hermans's delineation of '[t]he aporia that opens up once we realise that the study of translation translates translation, and does so in compromised and compromising ways, oblig[ing] us to reconsider not just what we know, but how we know' (2002: 22). Crimp's writing thus addresses translation both via the iterability of its verbal content and the aporia of its existence as translatable text.

### **Crimpian translation theory**

The self-reflexivity of translation theory, however, may be considered an unpermitted luxury in the practical exercise of translation. Margaret Jull Costa points out that as a full-time literary translator she 'can't afford to believe in the untranslatable' (2007: 111). Translation theory is seen as a discipline for the academic few; and yet the bustle of social media - from Twitter's #TranslationThursday to the ProZ.com virtual community of translators - documents streams of translatorial reflection on the processes of linguistic and cultural transformation. Theorising translation is a collateral activity when every choice has to be justified, even if only to oneself. Martin Crimp demurs from publicly examining his writing procedures or products in a direct manner, but is prepared to submit to the introspection required to participate in interviews and discussions. Aleks Sierz lists 24 interviews with Crimp in his revised study of Crimp's theatre (2013: 277-78). This special issue of the *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance* includes a discussion with Crimp (2016), and other documents continue to appear, for example in the online arts website *Le Petit Bulletin/The Little Newsletter* (Pobel 2014). In published introductions to his work, Crimp favours an oblique meditative approach, in which he appears as a third party, such as the Writer in 'Four Imaginary Characters', prefacing the first volume of his collected plays (Crimp 2000). Questions

about writing, implies Crimp, have the same effect on him as ‘the sound of a dentist’s drill and the spatter of pulped tooth on the protective goggles’ (2000: xi). Nevertheless, the formal documentation of such thoughts suggests a willingness to engage with the self-reflexivity of his authorship. Crimp is, fortunately, more prepared to accept direct questioning around his translation procedure; this may be a consequence of his classification of translation commissions as ‘like jobs’, implying a more routine engagement than the creative process of original writing (Laera 2011: 217). Discussing his work on translation is perhaps less of an unwelcome intrusion for Crimp, allowing him to make a detached judgement without the obligation to give his readers ‘a little tour’ inside his head (Crimp 2000: xi).

In conversation with Aleks Sierz during the session ‘Attempts on his Life – Martin Crimp – playwright, translator, translated’, Crimp was prepared not only to discuss his work in translation and adaptation during his career, but also to develop his categorization of ‘three kinds of writing “from existing texts”’, which he had previously discussed in a Round Table on collaborative theatre at Queen Mary, University of London (Laera 2011: 215). Echoes of Roman Jakobson’s ‘three kinds of translation’ (2012: 127) emerge not only in the quantity of categories but also in the nature of the typology. Like Jakobson, Crimp is confident in naming the movement between two languages as ‘translation’. He uses his translation of Ionesco’s *The Chairs* as an example of a work which aims to have no barrier between the audience and the translated text: the effect of the translation should be ‘like polishing a pane of glass and you just look through to the other language’. Crimp describes the next type of translation, ‘something that I thought I would never do’, as working from ‘an intermediate, so called “literal” translation’ in a language that he does not know (2016: 4). This type could be aligned to Jakobson’s ‘intralingual’ translation inasmuch as it resembles ‘an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language’ (Jakobson 2012: 127). The third type is ‘using a text as a point of departure to write another play [...] a rewriting of an existing text’ (Crimp 2016: 5). The intersemioticity of rewriting an ancient text for the modern theatre qualifies this mode as belonging to Jakobson’s third type of translation. Crimp’s practice, however, provides ample illustration of the impossibility of formalist categories.

In Crimp’s categorization discussed above, three types of translation are listed in the increasing extent of their distance from what might be termed ‘conventional translation’. Jakobson, however, situates ‘translation proper’ between intralingual and intersemiotic modes (2012: 127). Crimp’s 2015 ranking of translation modes, although not the specific typology, is different from the order of progression at the 2010 round table on theatre collaboration and translation, where he located ‘straight translation’ between writing ‘a new play based on a pre-existing text’ and composing a ‘transparent straight translation based on an intermediate text’ (Laera 2011: 216-17). On that occasion, Crimp was ostensibly ordering these types according to his own predilections: rewriting preferred as more like ‘normal writing’, translation providing ‘the thrill of interacting with the original language’, and the least favoured option characterized as the ‘danger’ of using an intermediate text, with the risk of ‘cutting yourself’ badly (Laera 2011: 217). Hierarchical ranking of translation types, whether by Jakobson or Crimp, is thus context-dependent. Can any mode be described as ‘straight’, ‘proper’ or, as David Johnston asks, ‘upright and true’ (1996: 8)? And a reading of Crimp’s work might suggest that the ‘danger’ of writing has its attractions for him and his audiences. Furthermore, although Crimp links these translation practices to language competencies, he reveals elsewhere in the discussion that he has some knowledge of Ancient Greek, having studied the subject at school; is prepared to engage with German vocabulary; and committed himself to improving his French in order to converse with a francophone audience in addition to translating

from French on paper (Crimp 2016: 2). In other words, the connection between linguistic expertise and the different methodologies of translation is not necessarily unassailable. Indeed, Crimp himself has categorized his translation of the *Misanthrope* as a new play recreated from an existing text (Laera 2011: 216). The degree of intimacy with a source language may not necessarily dictate the approach adopted towards a translation project. Crimp's theorising of his practice, however, demonstrates his credentials as a translation specialist. This is also evidenced by his alignment with foundational translation theory. 'I would much rather leave the difficulties that we experience when we come across a Greek text [...] than try to find an equivalent [...] because I don't believe it exists, really' (Crimp 2016: 11). Schleiermacher advocates translation as an introduction of the unknown into the target text, language and culture, requiring the translator to adopt 'language that not only departs from the quotidian but lets one perceive that it was not left to develop freely but rather was bent to a foreign likeness' (2012: 53). Theoretical debates around equivalence underpin the discipline of translation studies, but, as Crimp recognises, approaches transform over time, both in theoretical trends and also in the strategies of an individual translator; 'of course [my thinking] will change', Crimp notes, but he 'stands by' earlier decisions as 'good solutions to a particular problem' (2016:11). Crimp thus acknowledges the significance of context - locational, temporal, subjectival - for the exploration of translation theory.

### **Crimp's voice: the idiolect of the translator**

Notwithstanding Crimp's embrace of shifting translation theories, he is firm in privileging his authorial choices and the defence of his writerly voice. 'My plan is to go into a rehearsal room with a non-negotiable document', Crimp insists. This is even more the case when his text is a translation: 'You have to be really clear about your deontology, about how you've established your rules, because you'll be challenged' (2016: 13). Crimp is referring to the phenomenon, well-known to theatre translators and directors, of practitioners bringing a range of different translations to the first rehearsal. These texts may have been employed in pre-rehearsal research, but also enable participants to engage in a comparative analysis of the production script. Such discussions highlight issues of authorial ownership in contrast to collaborative development. For Crimp, producing texts which are not negotiable is what it means to write (2016: 13); Crimp's voice must emerge from all his texts, whatever their typology. As Linda Hutcheon observes, 'the creative transposition of an adapted work's story and its heterocosm is subject not only to genre and medium demands, [...] but also to the temperament and talent of the adapter' (2013: 84). Crimp's writing for theatre proclaims his ownership of the resulting text at many levels: extratextually in the prominent attachment of his name to the product, macrogenerically in the selection of subject matter or source text (even though this usually stems from a commission, approaches and acceptances are reputationally relevant), and microtextually in the form, style, content and, where applicable, code shifts of the composition.

If, as I demonstrate in the following section, Crimp has an identifiable style that can be tracked across his writing typologies, blurring the distinctions of authorship and translation, how do translators of his work into other languages negotiate his mannerisms? And is it possible that translations of Crimp's own works may shed light on his writing and translation process? Crimp's plays are regularly translated into a variety of European languages, including Catalan, French, Italian, and Spanish. These are also the languages into which *Cruel and Tender*, Crimp's rendering of Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, has been translated and presented as part of Crimp's oeuvre<sup>1</sup>. The Catalan *Cruel i Tendre*, for example, was given a rehearsed reading as part of the 2005 *Cicle Martin*

*Crimp/Martin Crimp Season* at the Sala Beckett, Barcelona, amongst Crimp's own authored plays (Aragay et al. 2014: 380). But if *Cruel and Tender* falls into the category of 'rewriting' and is therefore potentially a new play, more overtly-labelled 'writings from existing texts' are also privileged by Crimp's authorship. The Danish-language production of Crimp's version of *The Seagull* was billed as '*Mågen. Af Anton Tjekhov bearbejdet af Martin Crimp*' ('*The Seagull*. By Anton Chekhov adapted by Martin Crimp') when it was performed at Det Kongelige Teater, Copenhagen, under Katie Mitchell's direction (Christoffersen 2011). Crimp's text was translated by Niels Brunse, a literary translator from English, French, German, Norwegian and Russian, who had previously translated the play directly from Chekhov's Russian. The prestige awarded to Crimp's text and its transmission into Danish is confirmed by the experience and calibre of the award-winning translator commissioned for the task. Brunse's website lists some 200 translations, from William Shakespeare to Roland Schimmelpfennig, Howard Barker to Bertolt Brecht (Brunse 2013). Interviewed for the *Berlingske* theatre supplement, Brunse notes that Crimp has tightened up the text, although he views Crimp's version as 'trofast' (faithful). Brunse makes it clear that he is familiar with the original Russian, pointing out the silences in Chekhov and his use of the unspoken (Bangsgaard 2011: 17); this familiarity and Brunse's own professional authority thus provide implicit support for Crimp's transformative approach in his version, acknowledging the metatheatrical equivalences between Crimp and Chekhov which are developed by translation.

In considering the nuances of translation practice and theory, how does Crimp prepare for the translation of his own works? His popularity in translation renders the transfer of his work into other languages and cultures almost inevitable. Among Crimp's more recent plays, both *The City* and *The Rest Will Be Familiar to You from Cinema* received their first production in German. For the latter production, which at the time of writing awaits production in English, Crimp admits to prefiguring potential translation issues, claiming that he aims to write a clear language that avoids 'verbal tics' that are particular to either himself or the English language, so that 'there should be a really clean or clear transition from one language to the other, without someone having to scratch their heads about micro-details' (2016: 7). Nevertheless, I maintain that Crimp writes and translates in a very specific and idiosyncratic code. Vicky Angelaki studies Crimp's translation of *Rhinoceros* to support her phenomenological approach to an examination of Crimp's translations (2012: 159-76). Angelaki prefers to differentiate Crimp's 'radical adaptations' from his translations or versions, considering that the former (among which she includes *The Misanthrope* and *Cruel and Tender*) 'belong to a discussion of Crimp's playwriting canon' (2012: 154). Angelaki does, however find 'analogies between Crimp's most cutting-edge theatre and translation' in the 'emergence of formal experimentation [...] and the engagement with characters that resist interpretation or empathy' (2012: 156). I contend that the macrothematic analogies that bind together Crimp's oeuvre can also be noted at a micro level, demonstrating the blurred distinctions between text types in Crimp's activity as a writer and translator. Jeremy Munday notes in his study of translatorial style and ideology that the 'personal element of language should not be overlooked: the translator has an idiolect but also emotive connections with specific words and strategies' (2008: 138). Analysis of one lexical example of Crimp's code across his theatrical writings reveals Crimp's presence in translation typology and demonstrates authorship and influence across categories. I have labelled this phenomenon 'the sweetheart factor'.

### **Crimp's sweetheart**

As a member of the audience for the Royal Court production of *The City* in 2008, I was struck by Benedict Cumberbatch’s menacing tones in the character of Chris, who insistently addresses his young daughter as ‘sweetheart’. Returning for Crimp’s *In the Republic of Happiness* in 2012, I noticed this word again, this time spoken principally by Paul Ready as Uncle Bob. I began to look for ‘sweetheart’ in Crimp’s work, focusing on its appearance in three types of writing: *The City*, authored by Crimp; *Rhinoceros*, a direct translation by Crimp from Eugène Ionesco’s French source, and *The Seagull*, in a version by Crimp using a literal translation by the Russianist Helen Rappaport of Anton Chekhov’s play. Part of the reason for this usage catching my attention is the resonance of the word ‘sweetheart’. The Oxford English Dictionary offers six definitions, locating *sweetheart* firmly in the Middle English lexis, with a poignant illustration of its usage as a term of endearment:

c1290 *St. Kenelm* 140 in *S. Eng. Leg.* 349: Alas..þat ich scholde.. Abide þat mi child, mi swete heorte, swych cas schal bitide. <sup>2</sup>[Alas that I should live to see that such a fate should befall my child, my sweetheart.]<sup>3</sup>

The ensuing, more recent, usage examples similarly represent a latent unease or irony that progressively becomes the dominant marker of this term, so that any endearment or sweetness is wholly absent from the most recent example:

1977 F. Parrish *Fire in Barley* viii. 82: Try harder, sweetheart, or I'll plug you in the guts.<sup>4</sup>

Subsequent definitions given in the Oxford English Dictionary highlight the contradictory nature of this term which, depending on its context, can be loving, touching, distressing, contemptuous, malicious, illicit, or, as implied in the above example, bordering on violent. Crimp’s usage illustrates all these characteristics. However, Crimp’s absorption of ‘sweetheart’ into his idiolect is characteristic of his search for the blankness of a contingent vocabulary. ‘Sweetheart’, although a familiar term, is disruptive for the listener: it has undertones of condescension and a perhaps unsavoury quaintness. Inspection of Crimp’s operation of this term of endearment demonstrates the reflexivity of his voice in translation.

Speaker	Receiver	Frequency
Father (Chris)	Daughter (Girl)	10
Husband (Chris)	Wife (Clair)	2
Mother (Clair)	Daughter (Girl)	1
		Total: 13

Figure 1: Interlocutors in *The City*

As Figure 1 displays, ‘sweetheart’ has a usage frequency of 13 in *The City*. Twelve of these instances are in lines spoken by Chris, the husband of translator Clair, who loses his professional employment in a large organisation and turns to working behind the counter in a supermarket. In one exchange with his young daughter, over eight pages in the published playtext, Chris addresses her as ‘sweetheart’ ten times (Crimp 2008c: 41-48). An anodyne utterance is transformed into an insistent mantra, a passive-aggressive exposition of the father-daughter relationship. What might be a light-hearted tussle over taking off a coat becomes a menacing interrogation, echoing an earlier implication that the children had been locked in their playroom, where they may have been

engaging in mutual violence or self-harming. Chris asks about a sticky red substance in the Girl's pocket:

I hope it's not all over the playroom carpet, sweetheart, like it was last time. (Crimp 2008c: 42)

The undercurrent is of bloody violence, resonating with other narrative strands in the play around covert war and a gift of a knife.

However, the 'sweetheart' form of address is not restricted to the father-daughter exchange, or even to husband-wife interlocution. If 'sweetheart' is a marker of the dominant male addressing the subservient female within a hierarchical structure, its repetition by Clair to her daughter towards the end of the play, with the line 'Play us your piece, sweetheart' (Crimp 2008c: 64), displays none of the complexities of the earlier utterances. In this context, 'sweetheart' queries and disrupts the previous usage, destabilizing our perception of the attitudes of both of these parents to their daughter and each other. In its thirteen appearances in *The City*, therefore, 'sweetheart' performs multiple functions, often simultaneously; its fluidity of meaning reflecting the instability of the play's intertwining narratives. 'Sweetheart' thus presents one of many challenges for the agent tasked with addressing the self-reflexivities of translating a play that deconstructs the processes of translation. When translating *The City* into French, Philippe Djian opted for 'ma chérie' for parental discourse, and 'chérie' without the possessive determiner for husband-wife address (Crimp 2008b). This uncontroversial approach, applying a term of everyday usage with a selective modifier, does not highlight either the shifting nature of 'sweetheart' in Crimp's usage, the significance of its repetition or the irony of the term itself. Marius von Mayenburg more consistently translated every occurrence of 'sweetheart' as 'Schatz' in his German version of Crimp's play (Crimp 2008a). Locating a term in the translated texts that will perform the function of the original is elusive for these translators, both award-winning writers and theatre practitioners themselves.

Examining Crimp's style in his own translations provides an indication of a translation approach that his translators might choose to follow.

Crimp translation	Ionesco text	Frequency
sweetheart	mon chéri	4
sweetheart	ma joie	2
sweetheart	chéri	1
sweetheart	chérie	1
sweetheart	mon amour	1
sweetheart	mon chou	1
		Total: 10

Figure 2: Crimp's use of 'sweetheart' in his translation of Ionesco's *Rhinocéros*

In his translation of Ionesco's *Rhinocéros* from French into English, Crimp utilises 'sweetheart' for a variety of terms and interlocutions in the French text: in addition to male and female forms of *chéri*, 'sweetheart' also substitutes for the endearments *ma joie* [my joy], *mon amour* [my love] and *mon chou* [my cabbage]; these are standard terms of endearment in French usage, but can be problematic in a literal English translation. 'Sweetheart' thus appears ten times in Crimp's translation, as shown in Figure 2. Spoken between an elderly couple, it appears to be a genuine expression of regretful tenderness reminiscent of the Middle English lament cited by the Oxford

English Dictionary; thus Mme. Boeuf's call to her husband, newly transformed into a rhinoceros, 'A la maison, mon chéri, rentrons' (Ionesco 1991b: 587) is rendered 'Come on, sweetheart, let's go home' in Crimp's translation (Ionesco 2007: 73). Derek Prouse in his 1960 translation of the same French text translates Mme. Boeuf's calls to her husband ('mon chéri' on each of three occasions) variously as 'my darling', 'my sweet' and 'dear' (Ionesco 1960: 52), choosing a range of options to translate one term. In contrast, Crimp maintains Ionesco's consistency, albeit with a somewhat archaic usage of a term that could nevertheless be justified on the grounds that it is fitting both to the speaker and to the period of the play. However, in a later iteration of the term, spoken as the fleeting affair between the central character Berenger and his lover Daisy disintegrates in the face of societal rhinoserosification, 'sweetheart' operates to reinforce the growing tension between the pair. Berenger's attempt to comfort Daisy with 'N'aie pas peur, mon amour' in Crimp's translation becomes 'Don't be afraid, sweetheart' (Ionesco 2007: 139), reflecting the discomfort of his own fear. Shortly afterwards, Daisy's impatience with her lover is explicit in Crimp's interpretation of 'Tu te répètes, mon chou' as 'You just said that, sweetheart' (Ionesco 2007: 140). The endearment is transformed into a weapon, reminiscent of its usage in *The City*.

It is instructive to compare the choice of 'sweetheart' for 'mon chou' with Crimp's earlier 1997 translation of *Les Chaises/The Chairs*, also by Ionesco. In this play, the character of the Old Woman repeatedly addresses her husband as 'mon chou', as a term of aggression rather than endearment. Crimp substitutes 'mon chou' with 'poppet' or, less frequently, 'poppy' (a diminutive form of 'poppet' which does not reflect the French usage). In this case, Crimp's approach is somewhat less persistent than the original, varying the form of the translation. He uses other strategies to emphasize the recurrence of the term, however; on one occasion 'Mon petit chou, mon mignon' (Ionesco 1991a: 143) is interpreted as 'My poor poor darling poppy' (Ionesco 1997: 2). The choice of 'poppet' might be seen as a less subtle forerunner of 'sweetheart' (which does not appear in Crimp's translation of *The Chairs*) as it conveys a stronger sense of strangeness without the complexity of the multiple definitions. What is evident from this early translation approach, however, is the introduction of Crimp's idiosyncratic language to reflect the unease and insistence of the content.

Crimp's interpretation of *Rhinoceros* sits comfortably within his field of writing. His knowledge of French literature in general and Ionesco in particular, his previous experience in translating Ionesco's *The Chairs*, and his reputation for writing experimental, iconoclastic and surreal plays, make him a good fit for this translation. David Bradby considers that Crimp shows 'less linguistic daring' in his translation of *The Chairs* than the original translator, Donald Watson (Sierz 2013: 210). In my view, the 'sweetheart factor' indicates Crimp's development in his interpretive response to Ionesco's material: he dares to present his own reading, couched in his personal lexicon.

Such daring is even more overt in Crimp's version of Chekhov's canonical Russian play *The Seagull*. Commissioned by his regular collaborator, Katie Mitchell, who also directed the Royal Court production of *The City*, Crimp fashioned a pared-down reading of Chekhov's classic, aiming to make the production 'fully connect with a contemporary audience' by limiting the 'exotic' effect of Russian names, reducing the exposition and cutting asides and soliloquies (Chekhov 2006: 67). Crimp's surreal interpretation of a play popularly considered to be a beacon of theatrical naturalism was controversial, and the production provoked what the reviewer Dominic Cavendish described as 'violent fury' in some members of the audience (2006). Crimp implies that his methodology for this version was consistent with his general approach to translation, even though it was received negatively:



There was quite a big negative critical reaction in this country to Katie Mitchell's staging and to my text, which is weird because actually it was hardly a radical re-writing, apart from changing Konstantin's play to make it less ludicrous and more challenging. (2016: 4)

Among the so-called 'flagrant anachronisms' (Cavendish 2006) in the production, 'sweetheart' again provides conclusive evidence of Crimp's authorial presence within this indirectly translated text, gathering the version into the collectivity of Crimp's oeuvre as a whole.

Speaker	Receiver	Frequency
Male employer (Sorin)	Employee's daughter (Masha)	1
Employee's daughter (Masha)	Male employer (Sorin)	1
Brother (Sorin)	Sister (Arkadina)	1
Male doctor (Dorn)	Ex-lover's daughter (Masha)	1
Mature female (Arkadina)	Younger male lover (Trigorin)	1
Employee's wife (Polina)	Employer's nephew (Konstantin)	1
Mother (Polina)	Daughter (Masha)	1
		Total: 7

Figure 3: Interlocutors using 'sweetheart' in Crimp's version of *The Seagull*

'Sweetheart' is uttered seven times during the play, articulated by five different characters with varied hierarchical and gendered perspectives, as shown in Figure 3. 'Sweetheart' is spoken in contexts of condescension, assertion, affection, tenderness, aggression, supplication and scorn. In accordance with Jeremy Munday's methodology whereby retranslations of a constant source text can be analyzed to identify 'points of divergence [...] that might reveal distinguishing stylistic features' of the translators (2008: 142), Crimp's version can profitably be compared with the contemporaneous version of Chekhov's play created by Christopher Hampton for the Royal Court Theatre in 2007, using a literal translation commissioned from Vera Liber. Figure 4 demonstrates the affirmative choices made by Crimp in selecting 'sweetheart' in each instance of its use.

Crimp (Chekhov 2006)	Hampton (Chekhov 2007)
Masha - sweetheart (4)	Marya Ilyichna (9)
And I'm not your sweetheart (5)	Please don't ask me (9)
Sweetheart (14)	Irina, my dear (21)
my poor sweetheart (21)	my child (28)
Sweetheart (41)	Dearest (55)
Kostya - sweetheart (49)	Dear Kostya (63)
Sweetheart (49)	Mashenka (63)

Figure 4: The sweetheart factor in Crimp and Hampton versions of *The Seagull*

In four of these cases, 'sweetheart' operates as part of Crimp's stated strategy to de-exoticise Russian names, providing a substitute for the Russian diminutive forms that present a constant challenge for Russian-English translators. The choice of 'sweetheart' for this purpose, however, remains a striking marker of Crimp's 'performative self-contradiction'. This translational phenomenon, identified by Theo Hermans in his discussion of the translator's discursive presence in

translated narrative (2010: 198), is even more visible in the exchange between Sorin and Masha shown in Figure 5.

<b>Crimp (Chekhov 2006: 4-5)</b>	<b>Hampton (Chekhov 2007: 9)</b>
<b>Sorin:</b> Masha-sweetheart-would you please please ask that father of yours to untie the dog so it doesn't howl. My sister spent the whole night awake again.	<b>Sorin (to Masha):</b> Marya Ilynichna, would you be so kind as to ask your papa to tell them to untie the dog so it doesn't howl? It kept my sister awake all night again.
<b>Masha:</b> Talk to my father yourself-it's not my job. And I'm not your sweetheart.	<b>Masha:</b> Speak to my father yourself, I'm not going to. Please don't ask me.

Figure 5: Comparison of 'sweetheart' usage in Sorin/Masha dialogue in *The Seagull*

This contextualized comparison gives an indication of the different registers applied by the two writers. Hampton veers towards a more formal dialogue, including slight archaisms ('be so kind as to ask your papa') for the older character, Sorin. Crimp's rendering is more direct, and his double use of 'sweetheart' frames the exchange, creating a tautness and tension that is less evident in Hampton's version. The extract in Figure 5 also displays other evidence of Crimp's 'verbal tics' in the doubling of 'please' unseparated by punctuation. Aside from the lexical idiolect in Crimp's version, Masha's retort, an overtly anachronistic feminist assertion, provides an example of Hermans' concept of "contextual overdetermination", where the text creates a credibility gap, so that readers have to remind themselves that they are reading a translation' (2010: 198). Via this mechanism, Crimp's voice asserts itself, staking a claim to his own writerly authority within the text. Paradoxically, however, this strategy also serves to reintroduce, to the British audience of this Russian play, the humour, excitement and strangeness of Chekhov's original text, acknowledging its groundbreaking status in the history of Naturalism in Stanislavski's early revival for the Moscow Arts Theatre in 1898<sup>5</sup>. In this way, creation and re-creation co-exist to foreground the originality of translation.

### **Conclusion: the authority of reproduction and repetition**

Martin Crimp's fictional translator, Clair, struggles as a writer to make her characters come alive. 'They lived a little', she writes in her diary, but '[i]t was hard to make them speak normally' (Crimp 2008c: 62). Crimp's reflections on the tensions of creation as a writer and translator are apparent from his extratextual interventions, but are also manifested in his theatrical writing, where he interrogates and manipulates issues of repetition. Crimp's approaches to writing, across a range of text types (including translation), demonstrate the significance of his authorial presence across his output; it is possible to identify points of connection at the broader levels of subject and narrative, but also in the detail of lexical resonance. The 'sweetheart factor', illustrated here by a necessarily limited number of examples, could be extended to other works by Crimp. This article examines only three texts representing different writerly engagements by Crimp, but 'sweetheart' echoes through many of Crimp's texts, including authored plays such as *Fewer Emergencies* (2005) and versions such as *Pains of Youth* (Bruckner 2009). 'Sweetheart' in itself does not provide a key to unlocking Crimp's approaches to translation and writing; it is merely one method of analyzing Crimp's authority in his work, although it represents his compositional stance in both lexical and hermeneutical senses. Martin Middeke finds that Crimp's manipulation of the iterability of the sign 'displaces representation, meaning and (complete) understanding in Crimp into an ineluctable presence/absence' (2011: 99). The 'sweetheart factor' evidences the process whereby Crimp's authorial presence exists throughout his work, whether self-authored, translated or adapted, while

simultaneously operating to recognise the plurality of voices within a translated text. In his engagement with the reproductions and repetitions of translation, Crimp harnesses its imperfections to create theatrical writing with a life of its own.

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<sup>1</sup> *Cruel i Tendre*, translated by Marc Rosich, Barcelona, 2005; *Tendre et Cruel*, translated by Philippe Djian, France, 2004; *Tenero e Crudele*, translated by Alessandra Serra, Italy, 2011; *Cruel y Tierno*, translated by Borja Ortiz de Gondra, Madrid, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.oed.com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/view/Entry/195681?rskey=f8ZHU4&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> (Accessed 22 March 2015)

<sup>3</sup> My translation, using Norman Davis's Glossary in *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition reprinted with corrections, ed. J.A.W. Bennett and G.V. Smithers (Oxford University Press, 1974).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.oed.com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/view/Entry/195681?rskey=f8ZHU4&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> (Accessed 22 March 2015)

<sup>5</sup> This was not the play's first production, which was poorly received, whereas Stanislavski's revival was a critical success and considered to be an early example of the Naturalist theatre movement.