Capturing Crimp's Soundscape.

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Abstract
In this age of postdramaticity (Lehmann 1999) that does away with such definitional concepts as conflict or fiction on a mimetic stage, Martin Crimp relocates "drama" (action, conflict) within language itself. The translator's challenge consists in fleshing out the materiality of sound and in capturing the dramaticity of the form as it is reinvented in musicality and in the underground activity of an often gendered lexis. Lacan's concept of 'moterialism' as well as Roland Barthes's 'signifiance' of language will be helpful concepts both for a theoretical investigation and for addressing the practical translation challenges. French director Marc Paquien's metaphorical use of Chaillot's monumental staircase and Hubert Colas's expressionistic white balloons in their productions of *Fewer Emergencies* will help us visualize what is at stake in Crimp's language and confirm the impression of contained semantic plenitude I could sense and analyze both as Crimp's translator and as an academic.

Keywords: activism, aurality, Crimp, gender, hypotyposis, materiality of sound, 'moterialism', rhythm, signifier, soundstage, translation

Introduction (perhaps with a sub-heading?)

In the most formally radical or experimental plays by Martin Crimp such as *Fewer Emergencies* or *Attempts on her Life*, the only action or 'drama' that takes place onstage is that of speaking. In *Face to the Wall*, the first of the dramaticules that constitute the *Fewer Emergencies* trilogy, the nameless speaking voices unravel a script whose possibility of enactment is denied no sooner evoked:

1. Yes? Says the receptionist, What can I do for you? How can I help you? Who did you want to see? Do you have an appointment?

2. He shoots her through the mouth.

1. He shoots her through the mouth and he goes down the corridor.

3. Quite quickly.

1. Goes ——good——yes——quite quickly down the corridor——opens the first door he finds. (*Face to the Wall*, 9).

Instead of a concrete, visible action (mimesis) taking place in front of the audience, acts of language (diegesis) are all there is to 'see'. The consequence of this is the deconstruction of the opposition between the concept of dramatic space (the landscape conjured up by the fable) and that of scenic space (the actual physical space of the theatre): instead of the 'fictional textual cosmos' proper to the dramatic space and, according to Hans-Thies Lehmann, to 'dramatic theatre' (Lehmann 1998: 31), we are left with actors-characters who may well stand simply for themselves: actors trying to remember or extemporize their lines. Crimp suspends, withdraws, 'absents' so to speak, physical action. Instead, he narrativizes it, thus collapsing such categories as "dramatic theatre" and "epic theatre". If nothing happens onstage, the spectator's attention paradoxically cannot escape concentrating on the very substance of

language in which, in order to maintain the spectator's attention, action is entirely relocated. A chiseller of language, Crimp shapes and forges situations in the very matter of words and language, giving particular importance to signifiers and entrusting them with the materiality of "the thing itself" (Lacan's 'moterialism' [Lacan 1975, n.p.]). This article explores how my own strategies as a translator of a number of Crimp's plays and their translation on the visual stage by two different directors reveal the quality of Crimp's poetics. The translator's challenge - indeed, my challenge as the translator for a number of his plays and texts for the stage - consists in fleshing out the aural visuality elaborated by Crimp's soundscape. The translator needs to capture the dramaticity and theatricality of the form such as reinvented in rhythms and musicality, in what Roland Barthes would call the *signifiance* [Barthes 1973: 97] of language, and eventually in the underground activity of the lexis (technical jargon and gendered words). Intersemiotically, Marc Paquien's metaphorical use of the monumental staircase in Théâtre National de Chaillot (2004) and the expressionistic white balloons displayed by French director Hubert Colas (2006, 2008, 2014) in their respective productions of the *Fewer Emergencies* trilogy will help us visualize what is at stake in Crimp's language. I think you could add a further sentence or two here to set out that this article explores your own strategies as the translator of…. the further collaborative "translational activity" of theatre practitioners in staging your translations…how this exploration demonstrates the issues you are discussing.

Rhythms and Musicality…do you want to add to this heading?

Translating a play by Martin Crimp, or any text by him, requires being a good dancer[1]. One needs to tap the rhythm and to read the text with one's feet as it were, before one starts translating. Crimp's texts reveal the musician he is and read like musical scores. When starting to translate a play by Crimp, I always read it out loud and physically emphasize the rhythmic characteristics of the text. To 'dance' the text, as it were, by tapping it out or by moving to its rhythm, enables a clear perception of the choreography of words and images intended on the visual stage. Often quick-paced, Crimp's language is syncopated, both fluid and jerky, both sensuous and sharp. Crimp often opts for a regime of quick-moving lines and fast-paced dialogue. The incipit of *The Treatment* is a good illustration of his use of stichomythia. It is composed of a dialogue of short descriptive cues, the line of one character being taken up again by the second character, very much in the manner of a musical duet. Please explain the purpose of the bold type below.

> JEN. So **he** comes **righ**t **o**ver to **you** (or **"So** he comes right **o**ver to **you")**
> ANNE. **He** comes **right o**ver to **me**.
> JEN. **He** comes **o**ver to **you**. *I* **see**. (Crimp 1993: 1, stresses in bold letters)

The opening catch-phrase, in medias res, immerses the spectator in a very precise description of a drama taking place off-stage. Language is therefore entrusted with the mission to reconstruct a visuality made of words only and deprived of the mimetic representation. The stage of action is yet another stage convoked thanks to language. The technique Crimp often chooses so as to render the visuality of the scene is that of hypotyposis, a vivid present tense description of the scene aiming at theatricalizing the narrative. In order to make this "invisible

[1] Some of this material has already been explored in a brief online supplement to the Martin Crimp special issue of the *Contemporary Theatre Review*, see E. Angel-Perez « Sounding Crimp's Verbal Stage », http://www.contemporarytheatrereview.org/2014/sounding-crimps-verbal-stage/

visible", to use Peter Brook's words[2], the translator like the author, must rely on the sounding materiality of language. Both author and translator alike turn into verbal painters so that sound becomes image. One can play the opening line in two different ways: either the rhythmic climax of the line is reached with the two stresses in a row in the middle of the line – '**right o**ver' – in a general pattern of 'pure stress'[3] tetrameters – and the following lines would help me chose this solution –, or the line can be read as iambic trimeter with anapaestic acceleration (So **he** comes right **o**ver to **you**). In both cases, the utter violence of the aggression is made palpable by the apex that sounds like a blow, an effect easily managed in English, which non-accentuated French metrics cannot do. The translator therefore has to think of other modes of aggression that fit the syllabic system of French prosody. Alliteration and assonances are the best-suited ones. Here brutal alliteration in (d) was what I naturally opted for: Do you want to use the bold type again here?

> JENNIFER. Donc il se dirige droit sur vous
> ANNE. Il se dirige droit sur moi.
> JENNIFER. Il se dirige sur vous. *Je* vois. (Crimp 2002b: 11)

Stichomythia, which aims at exposing Jennifer's capacity to dispossess Anne from her own language, from her own story and therefore from her own life, is here reinforced by the rhyming pattern: 'me/see' which I have been able to maintain in French with no major difficulty ('moi/vois').

Crimp, by imagining such a signifier-based poetics, imports the synthetic and rhythmic visuality proper to the poem into everyday language. He creates a prosody of his own, sometimes served by traditional metrics but based on demotic language. Crimp frequently uses verse in his texts; for example, the 'Twelve Bar Delivery Blues' in *Face to the Wall* (Crimp 2002a: 18) or the rhyming verse in scenarios 5 and 14 of *Attempts on Her Life* [Crimp 1997: 19 and 59]. In a more subtle and unobtrusive manner, more or less regular tetra- or pentameters can be found in most of his plays; for instance, 'To **si**lence **me**. He **wants** to **si**lence **me**.' (Crimp 1993: 1). Other examples, such as 'You **say** she **rides** her **bike** in all **wea**thers', 'of **all** the **things** that **Anne** can **be**' (reversed in the trochaic "ALL THE THINGS THAT ANNE CAN BE'), or 'It's **kin**da **fu**nny **and** it's **ki**nda **sad**. / I **guess** it's **kin**da **bit**ters**weet**.' (Crimp 1997: 62, 20, 41), demonstrate how Crimp explores and exploits the natural iambic rhythm of the English language, often emphasizing it to produce laughter.

The same attention is paid to an internal rhyming network, most of the time also for comic purposes as when Anne explains the kind of sticky tape her husband sticks over her mouth:

> ANNE. The kind with a silver back. Sometimes silver, sometimes it's black. (Crimp 1993: 1)

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[2] Peter Brook defines one of these four categories of theatres as follows: the 'Holy Theatre' as 'I am calling it The Holy Theatre for short but it could be called The Theatre of the Invisible – Made – Visible: the notion that the stage is a place where the invisible can appear has a deep hold on our thoughts.' (Brook [1968], 1996: 42)

[3] In pure-stress metre, the number of stresses in the line is the only criterion used to define the type of metrics. In each of these lines by Crimp, a similar amount of stresses is found yet they do not follow binary or ternary patterns that would correspond to the traditional iambic/trochaic or anapaestic/dactylic patterns, for instance, nor to those of syllabic metrics. CAN YOU INCORPORATE THIS INTO THE MAIN TEXT, AS NOTES ARE SHOWN AS ENDNOTES, BUT IT WOULD BE MORE USEFUL ALONGSIDE YOUR ANALYSIS? Not sure, this is very well known..

It seemed to me as a translator that the percussive effect of this line is due to its 'nursery rhyme-like' musicality, very much in contrast with the horror of the depicted scene: a scene of domestic abuse and sequestration. I therefore decided (although some might disagree with this decision) to change the colour 'black' in favour of a rhyme:

> ANNE. L'adhésif argenté. Des fois argenté, des fois marron foncé. (Crimp 2002b: 11)

Signifiers have a life of their own and sometimes militate for a meaning which is at odds with that of the traditional meaning of the word. The musicality of this signifier-based language comes quite close to what Jacques Lacan referred to the 'moterialism' of 'lalangue' and to the importance of the word as the 'thing itself': "The word or the concept, for the human being, is not different from the word in its materiality. It is the thing itself. It is not only a shadow, a breath, a virtual illusion of the thing, it is the thing itself." [4] Lacan introduces the very stimulating notion of 'moterialism' which may well be operative here so as to grasp what is at work in the activity of language in Crimp's plays. 'Moterialism' (or 'moteriality') captures the way the unconscious finds the means to translate the material body in language. Lacan, in his "Geneva Lecture on the Symptom " (1975), repudiates an abstract conception of the unconscious and insists on the materiality of words which are the very matter or substance of the unconscious. The plays in which Crimp explores the 'mental stage' are precisely made of this textual fabric in which language is, in a way, the only place left for the body to be heard. Many examples of this can be found in basically all the plays or texts written by Crimp. The middle section of *In the Republic of Happiness* reads as a clear demonstration of this phenomenon:

> — Because my personal wealth and own privately acquired horizons are growing day by day – day by day I am becoming more and more reasonable and more – yes you heard what I said—more so totally understanding of my own enormous capabilities that I can feel – yes can feel the time coming thanks to the indefinite extension of my life I will be in a position to realise the potential not just of my boat, not just of my bike and arse and smiling eyes – not just of my sharp teeth – but of the whole expanding spinning constellation of my intelligence – don't you see ? I said to you: don't you see? (Crimp 2012b: 71-72)

Rhythmically and lexically, the tirade gives the intimate flow a ma/moteriality that helps us grasp what is going on in spite – or perhaps thanks to – the text's inconsistencies and disruptions. The chain of thought – materialised by the anadiplotic repetition of "day by day" for instance, or by the alliterative progression ('boat'-'bike'), or else the oralized interruptions which seem to address more the speaker him/herself than the addressee, or eventually by the impromptu occurrences of an odd association ('boat', 'bike, 'arse', 'eyes') –, is made palpable and may well be the best way to give the unconscious a meaningful physicality or corporeality.

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[4] "Le mot ou le concept n'est point autre chose pour l'être humain que le mot dans sa matérialité. C'est la chose même. Ça n'est pas simplement une ombre, un souffle, une illusion virtuelle de la chose, c'est la chose même." (Lacan 1975 : 201)
"Il est tout à fait certain que c'est dans la façon dont lalangue a été parlée et aussi entendue pour tel ou tel dans sa particularité, que quelque chose ensuite ressortira en rêves, en toutes sortes de trébuchements, en toutes sortes de façons de dire. C'est, si vous me permettez d'employer pour la première fois ce terme, dans ce *motérialisme* que réside la prise de l'inconscient – je veux dire que ce qui fait que chacun n'a pas trouvé d'autres façons de sustenter que ce que j'ai appelé tout à l'heure le symptôme." (Lacan 1985 :12). I wish to thank Julien Alliot for his help on this point.

If the surreptitious activity that consists in delegating meaning to rhythm and musicality characterizes Crimp's prosody, it also reads as the hallmark of his lexis.

Signifiance

The shift in paradigms from visual perception (through mimetic action) to aural perception (through speech and diegesis), present from the very beginning of Crimp's career as a dramatist for the radio, invites us to investigate the materiality of sound as the main vector of *signifiance*. Yet, if in a number of Crimp's plays (in particular, *Attempts on her Life*, the *Fewer Emergencies* trilogy, *The City* or *In the Republic of Happiness*), sound, rather than sight, is definitely the appropriate prism, as demonstrated earlier, semantics remains central to Crimp's poetics. It would be wrong to consider that Crimp's poetics is entirely based on the music of the word's signifier disregarding the signified and the referent behind the sign. The verbal and phonetic material that Crimp relies on, even though detached from the sheer logic of pure logos and from the necessity to produce meaning, is nevertheless buttressed by the meaning of the words used. The most relevant concept here may well be that of *signifiance* as elaborated by Roland Barthes [ref?]. To give a clear account of the place of the signified in a signifier-based poetics, Barthes's concept of phonetics is helpful: *signifiance*, sometimes translated into English as 'significance', is a concept that Barthes creates half way between semiotics and phenomenology: 'What is significance? It is meaning in so far at it is sensually produced', Barthes writes (my translation)[5]. Eliane Escoubas, in a paper dedicated to Barthes as a phenomenologist, ponders this key concept and describes *signifiance* as 'overbrimming the intended meaning', as 'a third level, on top of the signifier and of the signified' (Escoubas 1996: 107.). Crimp's theatre is replete with moments of *signifiance* where meaning emerges thanks to the voluptuousness of (a still signified-based) language, more than because of the 'music of sheer signifiers' (Kristeva 1981: 31). Crimp's libretto for the opera *Written on Skin* thrives on this technique: such formulations as 'Set the earth spinning/faites toupiller la terre' and "Unwrap the trees / Déballez les arbres" acquire full meaning thanks to the unusualness of the lexical associations both semantically and phonetically. Such words as 'toupiller', for instance, that I chose instead of the most commonly used 'tourner', convoke the image of a spinning-top and recreate the playful unusual visuality attached to the English word. To mouth a word such as 'toupiller' is already a sensuous experiment, one in which the signifier acquires a voluptuousness thanks to the very act of uttering. In *Fewer Emergencies*, the long purple patch spoken by "1" also gives a good example of this:

1. (((Well naturally there are candles, boxes of matches, fresh figs, generators and barrels of oil. But there's also a shelf full of oak trees, and another where pine forests border a mountain lake. If you press a concealed knob a secret drawer pops open——inside is the island of Manhattan.))) And if you pull the drawers out spilling the bone-handled knives and chickens onto the floor, spilling out the chain-saws and the harpsichords, there at the back, in the dark space at the back, is the city of Paris with a cloth over it to keep the dust out. There's a wardrobe full of uranium and another full of cobalt. Bobby's suits are hanging over a Japanese golf course. His shoes share boxes with cooked prawns. On one little shelf there's a row of universities —— good ones —— separated by restaurants where chefs are using the

[5] " Qu'est-ce que la signifiance ? C'est le sens *en ce qu'il est produit sensuellement*" (Barthes 1973: 97).

> deep-fryers to melt gold and cast it into souvenir life-sized Parthenons…. (Crimp 2002: 29)

The translation had to render the impression of an accumulative, proliferating rhetoric, resting both on the almost narcotic musicality of the chain-uttered words and on the odd associations between words that never relate to one another in traditional speech. This unbridled logorrhea gives the spectator access to another dimension that both transcends and redynamizes referential vision (thanks to the incantatory musicality of the signifiers) by the unusualness of the associations proposed ('his shoes shared boxes with cooked prawns'). This tirade takes us right into the character's chaotic unconscious, with the apparent and paradoxical logic attached to it. Expressions and link words, such as 'naturally', 'But', 'And if you…', prevent the text from being merely paratactic; on the contrary, these words coax apparent logic back into the mad machine of language.

This complex and antagonistic movement was extremely well transposed onto space by French directors Marc Paquien and Hubert Colas. Marc Paquien created *Face to the Wall* and *Fewer Emergencies* (only a diptych at that time) in 2004 on one of the monumental staircases of the Chaillot theatre: blond barren cold marble with only two dimensions, horizontal and vertical, allowing us to move up and down the characters' mindscapes (see photographs PLEASE INDICATE WHERE YOU WOULD LIKE THE IMAGES TO BE INSERTED here, I should think?). Whereas *Face to the Wall* had us, the spectators, downstairs looking up at the actors on the stairs from a low angle, *Fewer Emergencies* had us on the stairs while the actors were downstairs, as if the reversed perspective helped us into the subterraneous parts of the character's unconscious or subconscious. This gave full meaning to the conception of the stage as 'mental stage', as Crimp puts it when he describes his two 'methods of dramatic writing':

> I have consciously developed two methods of dramatic writing: one is the making of scenes in which characters *enact* a story in the conventional way – for example my play THE COUNTRY – the other is a form of narrated drama in which the act of story-telling *is itself dramatised* – as in ATTEMPTS ON HER LIFE, or FEWER EMERGENCIES, recently produced by Vienna's Burgtheater. In this second kind of writing, the dramatic space is a *mental* space, not a physical one.'[6]

Hubert Colas, the director of the 2006 Marseille production of the Fewer Emergencies trilogy (Théâtre du Gymnase), opted for a sea of white and then colour-changing balloons which rippled like waves each time a character moved. This scenographic device read as the perfect visual 'objective correlative', to put it in T.S. Eliot's words[7], of Crimp's language: each balloon corresponding to a word, and 'the grain of the voice' being materialized by the balloon's simple yet sophisticated and delicate, refined and voluptuous presence. The balloons, like Crimp's words, were constantly on the verge of explosion. Some of them did burst as the actors moved about, which is precisely what Crimp's words do: his language is made of words that create, almost at random, micro-cataclysms, mini-explosions, minute bombings of the whole system, from within.

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[6] (No. 23 - 10/2006, Ensemble Modern Newsletter)

[7] "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." (Eliot 1921: 6)

The underground activism of the lexis

Technical intrusions

These mini-explosions are created by frequent verbal disruptions both in rhythm and in meaning. Ruptures of construction, change of rhythm (including stress pattern, alternation of long and very short cues, and discontinuity because of shift from narrative to free indirect speech) are the hallmark of Crimp's improvisational-like language.

> 1. The children don't understand ——they don't immediately grasp what's going on—— what's happened to their teacher?—— they don't understand—— nothing like this has ever / happened before (Crimp 2002: 9).

Crimp's texts are replete with long dashes that materialize ruptures. The same effects of discontinuity as those analysed above, prompted by the discrepancy between nursery rhyme-like patterns and violent or aggressive contents, can be found at the lexical level. One of Crimp's stylistic characteristics consists in convoking a disruptive vocabulary so as to make an apparently easily identifiable situation look strange. This strategy is visible, for instance, when Crimp's texts punctually disturb the familiar everyday and common sense language by convoking a word belonging to some technical jargon. In *Attempts on her Life*, the detail of, for example, 'chromium bowl' (Crimp 1997: 36) or specific geographic places such as,'the Viennese Ringstrasse'(Crimp 1997: 6), come up as a surprise because of the specificity they bring. In *Face to the Wall* (*Fewer Emergencies* trilogy), the lexical peregrination between everyday demotic language and high-technicity jargon allows for incongruous pairings (not unlike the traditional art of conceit or wit which aims at bringing together images that stand apart). Such words as 'an aerosol' / 'un aérosol' in *Face to the Wall*; or 'a precipitate' / 'un précipité' in *Fewer Emergencies* take us by surprise as they unexpectedly come up in the plays precisely at moments when nothing has prepared us for their appearance:

> 1. [...] — unless it's someone who loves you—a loved one— [...] whole afternoons for example spent simply feeling the spaces between each other's fingers—or looking into the loved one's eyes—the thick rings of colour in the loved one's eyes— which are like something—what is it?— don't help me—the precipitate—the precipitate in a test tube— [...] (Crimp 2002a: 10)

> 1. [...] — sauf si c'est quelqu'un qui t'aime — un être aimé — [...] des après-midi entières par exemple passées à simplement explorer les espaces entre les doigts de l'autre — ou à regarder au fond des yeux de l'être aimé — les larges anneaux de couleur dans les yeux de l'être aimé — qui ressemblent à quelque chose — à quoi déjà ? — ne m'aidez pas — au précipité — au précipité au fond d'une éprouvette — [...] (Crimp 2013: 24)

The 'precipitate' introduces technicity into an otherwise quite lyrical evocation of the 'loved one' and jars with the overall romantic/euphoric/rhapsodic tonality of the cue. The word, however, is not simply chosen for the technical meaning it has in chemistry but also, and perhaps above all, for the image of haste, of fall and insecurity signalled by the other more common uses of the word. The French *précipité* allows for the same polysemy as the English word and inscribes insecurity (perhaps even tragedy?) at the heart of the idyll in a comparable

manner. Sharp and meticulous, Crimp's writing exposes the meaning of words almost in the photographic sense. This degree of precision is part of what makes his texts seem so intimate and at the same time so uncanny and triggers off a process of defamiliarization. What is remarkable, then, is the paradoxical role of the technical disruptions which consists in increasing the precision in order not to circumscribe and restrain meaning but, on the contrary, to open it.

Gendered words

Another underground activity of the lexis is to be found in the use of what could be seen as (sexually) gendered words in Crimp's texts, particularly in the texts dealing with the question of the feminine and of its representation. Crimp speaks French and translates from French, which means that he has a good knowledge and experience of what it means to speak in a grammatically gendered tongue. When translating into a strongly grammatically gendered language, such as French, the question is of particular importance.

In *Attempts on her life* Anne is subject to systematic reification and commodification. She is indistinctly compared to human and non-human referents: 'She's a terrorist threat/She's a mother of three/She's a cheap cigarette/ She is Ecstasy' (Crimp 1996: 59); elsewhere she is a fast-running 'car', the 'New Anny'. In French, Crimp's stage is markedly feminized: 'une machine de guerre, une menace terroriste, une cigarette sans filtre, une pilule d'ecstasy, une lame tranchante' (Crimp 2002b: 183). All the words in Christophe Pellet's French version are grammatically feminine, although not all of them are feminine in other Latin tongues (in Spanish, for instance, a cigarette is *un cigarillo*). The absent woman, Anne, is never to be seen but her 'being female' somehow invades and shapes everything around her, as if the whole physical and material world around us, the world of objects, marked by HER absence, was somehow cognitively recategorized as feminine because used to designate HER. Interestingly enough, the words that Martin Crimp comes up with in English, out of a cognitive process of recategorization prompted by Anne as a MISSING FEMALE, so as to implicitly or analogically denote HER, become explicitly feminine in French. I am here using Pierre Cotte's and Elise Mignot's theory of genders. Pierre Cotte suggests that grammatical gender reflects the categorizing tendency of the mind (see Cotte 1999: 55). Elise Mignot elaborates: 'In [Cotte's] view, gender is metalinguistic, i.e. expresses (in an abstract way) what nouns do' (Mignot 2012: 39-61). Naming allows for a cognitive repartition of the world. This is exactly what grammatical genders do in French. In other words gender doubles the categorization process (or division process) already at work in the act of naming: a thing is either this or that, or, if it is this, it is not that. Like nouns (this is 'a cigarette', this is 'a bomb'), gender categorizes: this is feminine or masculine. Moreover, not only does Crimp's frequent reification of Anne (the New Anny as a car, the TV set, the ecstasy) blur the categorization operated by the nouns, it satirically exacerbates and denounces the belittling or the ancillarisation of Anne as a 'she'. According to linguist Elise Mignot: 'The feminine being construed as second compared to the masculine, it is only logical that "she" is selected, as the feminine suggests in itself a second stage in the categorization process.' (Mignot 2012: 58).

Another example of this phenomenon can be found in *Whole Blue Sky* (*Fewer Emergencies Trilogy*), when 1 is hilariously and pathetically trying to exist as both a mother and a woman; the universe of objects she summons is definitely feminine once translated into French:

> 1. (…) That's when Mummy talks to Mummy: that's when Mummy says "Where did I leave my **hair-clips**, Mummy?" and Mummy answers "Well Mummy, I'm not sure: have you tried looking in the **bathroom**?" Or Mummy might say to

> Mummy "Why when I smile does it always feel like I'm smiling in spite of myself? Why have I stopped feeling alive, Mummy, the way I used to feel alive at the beginning?" Or
> "Why Mummy has my hair begun to turn the **colour** of **cigarette-ash**?" (…)
>
> 1 (…) C'est quand Maman parle à Maman : c'est quand Maman dit « Où est-ce que j'ai bien pu mettre **mes épingles à cheveux**, Maman ? » et Maman répond « Eh bien Maman, je ne suis pas sûre : tu as essayé la **salle de bain** ? » Ou bien il se peut que Maman dise à Maman « Pourquoi quand je souris on dirait toujours que je souris malgré moi ? Pourquoi ai-je arrêté de me sentir **en vie**, Maman, comme je me sentais en **vie** au début ? » Ou « Pourquoi – Maman – mes cheveux ont-ils commencé à prendre **la couleur de la cendre de cigarette** ? ». … (Crimp 2013 : 78)

'Hair-clip' becomes 'épingles à cheveux' (in bold), a feminine noun in French. The same feminization applies to the other elements of the character's décor : 'bathroom/ la salle de bain', 'life/la vie', 'ash/la cendre', 'coulour/la couleur'. All the nouns of this extract are feminine in French. 1's whereabouts is, for the French spectator, clearly feminized, as if the woman that 1 is failing to be somehow informed her environment, if not herself.

In Martin Crimp and George Benjamin's 2012 opera *Written on Skin*, the translation of the title was almost naturally dictated to me by gender. The word 'skin' is importantly and significantly feminine in French ('la peau'): a first draft may have driven me to choose 'écrit sur le vélin' as the skin referred to, in the title, is first the vellum used by the illuminator before it is the erotic skin of Agnès and/or the Boy's. Yet as soon as the story starts unravelling, it becomes obvious that what matters is the sensuous skin of the body (and not the vellum used by the illuminator) and that what the opera is about is precisely the awakening of a woman to her sensuality and to herself as a subject capable of speaking her own words and of having a life of her own.

Similarly, the French text is ostensibly feminine and somehow inscribes the scene on Agnes's mindscape:

ANGELS 2+3 Say there's a page	ANGES 2+3 Disent qu'il y a une page
Where the skin never dries –	où la peau ne sèche jamais –
PROTECTOR Page where what?	PROTECTEUR Une page où quoi ?
ANGELS 2+3 SKIN—STAYS—DAMP	ANGES 2+3 PEAU – RESTE – MOUILLÉE.
ANGEL 2 Wet like the white Part of an egg --	ANGE 2 Mouillée comme le blanc d'un œuf
ANGEL 3 Wet like a woman's mouth	ANGE 3 Mouillée comme la bouche d'une femme

(Aix en Provence, p. 45)

We could argue that Crimp's stage 'becomes' feminine. The Deleuzian concept is particularly helpful here: it shows that the 'becoming woman' of Martin Crimp – "*le devenir-femme*" of Martin Crimp – is not concerned with imitating what a woman is as an entity (what Deleuze and Guattari call 'molar') but with producing 'micro-particles' of femininity, 'atoms of femininity' capable of shaping and of impregnating the social field, and producing within ourselves a 'molecular' woman. (Deleuze et Guattari 1980: 338). In "Devenir-intense, devenir-animal, devenir-imperceptible", Deleuze and Guattari explain that all "becoming" is of a "molecular" nature:

> In a way, one needs to start by the end: all the 'becomings' are already molecular. This is because 'to become' does not mean to imitate something or someone; it does not mean to identify with him or her. Nor does it mean to reproduce his/her form in different proportions. None of these two figures of analogy correspond to the idea of 'becoming', neither the imitation of a subject, nor the proportional reproduction of a form. 'To become' means that, starting with the forms on has, or from the subject one is and from the organs one possesses, or from the functions one has, one extracts particles (between which one instaures a relationship based on movement and stasis, on speed and slowness), that are as close as can be to what one is in the process of becoming, and thanks to which one 'becomes'. (Deleuze et Guattari 1980: 334, my translation).

This is opposed to what the philosophers call the "molar entity": "what we call molar entity here, for instance, is the woman insofar as she is caught within a binarism that opposes her to man, inasmuch as she is determined by her shape, and gifted with organs and functions and assigned as a subject." (Deleuze et Guattari 1980: 337, my translation) [9]

I would not go so far as to suggest that Crimp's text pleads for a 'metramorphic' translation such as theorized by Bracha Ettinger and Carolyn Shread (Ettinger 1992; Shread 1999), i.e. a translation that consists in bringing out the marginal or prevented voices concealed within the text, but one cannot help but notice the feminized soundscape perhaps unconsciously conceived or experienced by Crimp and his gendered use of the English words which, of course, are neutral[10]. This insistence on or awareness of gender can also be paralleled with Crimp's acute conscience of the so-called ancillary (therefore feminine) role of translation: as often remarked, translation is on the side of re-production and not of

[9] "D'une certaine manière, il faut commencer par la fin: tous les devenirs sont déjà moléculaires. C'est que devenir, ce n'est pas imiter quelque chose ou quelqu'un, ce n'est pas s'identifier à lui. Ce n'est pas non plus proportionner des rapports formels. Aucune de ces deux figures d'analogie ne convient au devenir, ni l'imitation d'un sujet, ni la proportionnalité d'une forme. Devenir, c'est, à partir des formes qu'on a, du sujet qu'on est, des organes qu'on possède ou des fonctions qu'on remplit, extraire des particules, entre lesquelles on instaure des rapports de mouvement et de repos, de vitesse et de lenteur, les plus *proches* de ce qu'on est en train de devenir, et par lesquels on devient." (Deleuze et Guattari 1980: 334).
"Ce que nous appelons entité molaire ici, par exemple, c'est la femme en tant qu'elle est prise dans une machine duelle qui l'oppose à l'homme, en tant qu'elle est déterminée par sa forme, et pourvue d'organes et de fonctions, et assignée comme sujet." (Deleuze et Guattari 1980: 337). PLEASE INCORPORATE INTO THE MAIN TEXT

[10] On the topic of gendered words, see Sardin, (2009).

production. Crimp's multifaceted work (he is a dramatist, a musician and of course a translator) is actively engaged in a denunciation of this approach, either by means of the creativity he gives his prominent translator-character Claire, in *The City* (Crimp 2008), or through his own activity, as a translator and adaptor in his work on Sophocles's *Trachiniae* or on Molière's *Misanthrope*, on Ionesco's or Koltès's plays.

This feminization of the lexis can be read as a way for Crimp to carry out his political commitment – and this includes feminist claims – within language itself, although not necessarily through an explicitly and semantically militant language, but through a deeper and more subtle impregnation of the spectator's mind. The sound and the 'coloration' given to the verbal landscape create (political) meaning in a sensuous, rather than only intellectual, way.

Conclusion…

Translating poet-dramatist Crimp, a writer so aware of the deep vertical richness of language and sensitive to its immediate impact as a sound object, is not only utterly enjoyable, it is also an efficient critical prism. Crimp's extreme sensibility to the music of language and to the materiality of sound turns the page into another stage and the soundscape into another theatrical scene, among the most original existing today. Crimp's experimental theatre which takes place in a 'mental space' convokes a conception of language as 'Lalangue', 'motière' and 'moteriality', to use Lacan's concepts. Signifiers and their music, the sensuous semantics of the text appear as the revealers best adapted to this stage, as if to show things onstage could merely invalidate their existence instead of proving it. This text-centred dramaturgy requires a lucid, perceptive and sagacious translator. Conversely, translating Crimp allows the translator-critic to realize how meaning, in his plays or texts for music, is produced – yielded, so to speak – by the impregnation of entire sound-stages and how the most subtle details – alliteration, an unpredictable word, the contrast between the playful rhythm and the grave topic – all connive to construct the poelitical discourse that circulates in his plays.

FOOTNOTES MUST BE CONVERTED TO ENDNOTES

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