"Pravda" in the Museum: Zoya Cherkassky's exhibition as a case of cultural (self) translation

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ABSTRACT

This article links, and elaborates on, several concepts related to translation and Translation Studies through the analysis of plurisemiotic artworks, integrating images and words. Translation Studies also provides the framework for analysing the various modes in which these works are received by the audience and artistic establishment. The main concepts referred to are 'intrasemiotic translation', 'self-translation' and 'cultural translation'. The latter two are combined to create the metaphor 'cultural (self) translation'. The works analysed, which form part of what we call 'a self-project', were featured in the exhibition "Pravda" (meaning 'truth' in Russian) – a collection of thematically interrelated paintings by the Israeli artist Zoya Cherkassky, shown at The Israel Museum, Jerusalem in 2018 – and included in the exhibition catalogue. Beyond offering insights into Cherkassky's works, the multifold contribution of this article includes: linking the concepts of 'intrasemiotic translation' and 'self-translation' to plurisemiotic practices; expanding the concept of 'self-translation' and placing it in the context of cultural translation; and employing the latter concept in a discussion about the artist's reception in an immigrant society characterised by constant negotiation regarding the diverse identities of its members.

KEYWORDS

Plurisemiotic practices, intrasemiotic translation, cultural translation, self-translation, art, museum.

1. Introduction

This article connects, and elaborates on, several concepts related to translation and Translation Studies through the analysis of plurisemiotic artworks (which integrate images and words), and the reactions they yield. The main concepts referred to are 'intrasemiotic translation', 'self-translation' and 'cultural translation', as well as a new metaphor, 'cultural (self) translation', a combination of the latter two terms. The analysed works appeared in the exhibition "Pravda" – a collection of thematically interrelated paintings by the Israeli artist Zoya Cherkassky, featured at The Israel Museum, Jerusalem in 2018 – and were included in the exhibition catalogue (Cherkassky 2018).

The concept of 'intrasemiotic translation', i.e., translation within one and the same sign system, was introduced by Toury (1994) in response to Jakobson's 'intralingual translation', which refers to translation between different layers of the same "natural-historical" language (Jakobson 1959)[1]. Toury proposed a broader category that encompasses other kinds of translation in the same sign system, such as the visual and the audial. Possible examples are figurative art reproduced in an abstract style, or classical music recreated as jazz. More recently, researchers called attention to the need to take into consideration plurisemiotic practices,

which are relevant whenever either one of the source or target text, or both, uses more than one sign system or modality (Kaindl 2013; Weissbrod and Kohn 2019). The multiplicity of terms – mode, modality, sign system, multimodal, plurisemiotic, etc. – testifies to the evolution of a new research field, combining Translation Studies, Adaptation Studies and Semiotics[2].

In our case study, paintings which incorporate verbal elements were recreated by the artist herself in an act of 'self-translation'. Self-translation, "the translation of an original work into another language by the author himself" (Popović 1976: 19; Montini 2010: 306) is gradually becoming a focus of attention in Translation Studies (see, e.g., Tanqueiro 2000; Hokenson and Munson 2007; Grutman 2009; Anselmi 2012; Cordingley 2013; Grutman and Van Bolderen 2014). Self-translation can be inspired by a variety of motives, such as the desire of bilingual authors to make the most of their fluency in more than one language, or their striving to breach the boundaries of a non-hegemonic language by translating their work into a hegemonic one (Manterola Agirrezabalaga 2017). In the case under discussion, the artist Zoya Cherkassky, who was born in Kiev, Ukraine in 1976 and immigrated to Israel in 1991, uses self-translation as part of what we call the artist's 'self-project', a project devoted to a critical inspection of her personal and collective biography. In two diptychs analysed in Section 3, she reconstructs the same scene first in a Ukrainian setting, and then in an Israeli one, incorporating Russian and Hebrew into each respectively. The translation is thus twofold, encompassing both visual and linguistic elements. The overall effect of the diptychs derives from the 'co-presence', or 'double presentation' of the pictures comprising them – the latter terms are used in Translation Studies to describe the juxtaposition of source and target in one and the same text, and point out its implications (Kaufmann 2002; Pym 2004).

Each of Cherkassky's diptychs represents the pre- and post-immigration experiences of those who, like Cherkassky herself, immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union (FSU); thus, they can also be addressed from the perspective of 'cultural translation', a concept which expands the limits of translation beyond the realm of texts and modalities. The idea of cultural translation is linked with Salman Rushdie's reference to 'translated men' in his *Imaginary Homelands*: "The word 'translation' comes, etymologically, from the Latin for 'bearing across'. Having been borne across the world, we are translated men" (Rushdie 1991: 16). The 'translated men' can be immigrants, labour migrants and others who manoeuvre between their native countries and host societies, as well as entire ethnic groups and societies caught between their culture of origin and a dominant culture (Cheyfitz 1991; Niranjana 1992; Bhabha 1990, 1994; Bharucha 2008; Buden and Nowotny 2009). Some researchers, e.g., Cheyfitz (1991), explicitly refer to cultural translation as a metaphor. Others combine translation as metaphor with their study of translation in its literal sense (e.g., Niranjana 1992). Persistent use may result in the transformation of

the term 'cultural translation' into a non-metaphoric one (just like intersemiotic and intrasemiotic translation)[3]. Metaphorically or not, researchers who use this term regard translation as the transformation that people, as well as nations and ethnic groups, undergo when they encounter one another, particularly in a situation of domination or asymmetrical power relations. Yet, there are significant differences between researchers who regard cultural translation as imposing a certain value system on a native society, which annuls its independence and erases its original identity (e.g., Cheyfitz 1991), and others (mainly Bhabha 1990, 1994), who also acknowledge its enriching potential.

According to Bhabha (1990, 1994), the site of cultural translation is a 'third space', where cultures acknowledge their incompleteness and open themselves to other cultures in an ongoing process of self-alienation and renunciation of 'the sovereignty of the self' (Bhabha 1994: 213). In the third space, binary oppositions (such as the one between East and West which Bhabha attributes to Said [see Said 1978]) collapse, resulting in hybridity: "The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Bhabha 1994: 211). In the present article, we shall try to locate sites of 'cultural translation' and find out if the tense encounter between the immigrants and veteran Israelis leads to the sort of hybridity that Bhabha describes. This will entail an extension of the concept of 'self-translation', which will be integrated into the notion of 'cultural translation', producing a new metaphor – 'cultural (self) translation'. Similarly, the idea of 'co-presence' will no longer be limited to the texts concerned, but will also refer to the co-presence of two cultures, the source culture and the receiving one, in the art and experience of the artist. Finally, we shall examine how Cherkassky was received in Israeli culture by looking at social media and the museum as potential sites of cultural translation.

2. Cherkassky's work in context

Cherkassky's immigration to Israel took place at the beginning of a wave of mass emigration from the FSU that occurred in the 1990s. The motivation for this was more as a result of the political turmoil and economic hardship that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union than Zionist sentiments. Approximately one million ex-Soviets of Jewish descent migrated to Israel, which was the most accessible destination. This wave of immigration was very different from the previous one, which occurred in the 1970s and was enabled by strong political pressure on the USSR from the West. Reflecting their Zionist ideals, the 1970s immigrants often discarded their former identities, switched to Hebrew, and soon integrated into Israeli society. By contrast, the 1990s immigrants retained their ties with their culture of origin and former homeland, in part because one-third of them were Russians married to Jews or of mixed ethnicity and had family members remaining in the FSU (Remennick 2015).

Immigration of Jewish people to Israel is settled by the Law of Return. Formulated in 1950, two years after the establishment of the State of Israel, this law grants Jews from all over the world the right to immigrate to Israel. Another law, the Citizenship Law from 1952, awards automatic citizenship to anyone who immigrated under the Law of Return. The question of who can be considered a Jew triggered many disputes. Today, the Law of Return is granted to people whose mother is a Jew, and to those who have converted to Judaism. The law also applies to their relatives (Galnoor and Blander 2018). However, to become a 'proper' Jew – which is necessary if, for instance, one wants to get married in Israel and has no other religion – one must convert to Judaism. Conversion is only acknowledged if carried out according to Halakha (Jewish religious law) and confirmed by the Rabbinical establishment.

Cherkassky's immigration took place against this backdrop. Her artistic career, too, associates her with the 1990s wave of immigration. Cherkassky is part of The New Barbizon group of painters. The group, established in summer 2010, has five members – female painters, all born in the FSU, who immigrated to Israel in the 1990s (except for Natalia Zourabova who immigrated in 2004). The name 'New Barbizon' alludes to a French mid-nineteenth century school of art centred in the village of Barbizon. Its members, the painters Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, and others, went out to nature to paint *en plein air*, thus manifesting their rebellion against Romantic and Neoclassic painting. This approach did not relate to nature alone, and instead had a social meaning: by choosing subjects such as working peasants, it opened the door to twentieth-century Social Realism (Adams 1994). Just like the French school, the New Barbizon painters strive to make a social statement. To this end, they arrange outdoor drawing sessions that directly influence the content of their work, particularly in socially charged locations, such as the poor neighbourhoods of Tel Aviv, Bedouin villages and Palestinian refugee camps, and during events such as the 2011 social protests in Tel Aviv[4].

Like other members of the group, Cherkassky – the most prominent among them – has adopted a basically realistic (rather than abstract) style with a caricaturist twist that serves her satirical purposes, and helps promote her ideological and political agenda. Her drawings, which bear the artistic influence of her early education in the Soviet Union, as well as that of the Bezalel Academy of Art in Jerusalem, are often shockingly blatant and make fun of political correctness (Mendelsohn 2018). In her 2003 exhibition "Collectio Judaica" at the Rosenfeld Gallery in Tel Aviv, she used anti-Semitic images to study the self-perception of Jews, which led to accusations of anti-Semitism (Simon 2003). In "The Victims' Ball", a show exhibited at the same gallery in 2004, she used caricaturist, doll-like sculptures to criticise the Israeli government and its ministries, and in

"Action Painting", her 2006 exhibition at The Helena Rubinstein Pavilion for Contemporary Art (part of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art), she mocked insensitive, self-satisfied art consumers (Averbuch 2018). Later she turned her attention to Israel as a country of mass immigration, and employed a realistic style to depict the life of immigrants from the FSU and to recall their past, before they immigrated to Israel. She also dealt with the lives of refugees and prostitutes who live on the margins of society. Many of her works were a direct attack on local culture, using offensive stereotypes in a provocative way, which often provoked heated reactions. One example is the turmoil caused by the painting "Itzik" – a common Hebrew name in Israel, but also a derogatory name for Jews in the FSU (Rosenthal 2016). The painting shows a Mizrahi[5] Jew harassing a waitress who is apparently an immigrant working in the man's cheap-looking falafel eatery. The painting uses stereotypes to depict both characters (Mendelsohn 2018: 162; see Figure 1).

Figure 1. "Itzik."

Despite the provocative nature of her art, Cherkassky has been embraced by the Israeli artistic establishment, and her solo and group exhibitions are displayed at the most prestigious museums and galleries (Mendelsohn 2018). "Pravda", Cherkassky's 2018 exhibition at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem – one of Israel's largest and most prominent museums – included twenty large oil paintings besides other drawings and sketches, all of them showing the life of immigrants from the FSU, in both their native land and in Israel.

The title Cherkassky chose for her exhibition calls attention to her use of irony, even before the viewer encounters the paintings themselves. In Russian, *pravda* means 'truth' but also 'justice' (Sigov 2014). However, it came to embody quite the opposite since it was the name of the USSR's

most important official publication. As the organ of the Soviet Communist party, *Pravda* became the conduit for announcing official policy and policy changes until 1991. Subscription to *Pravda* was mandatory for state-run companies, the army and other organizations until 1989 (Roxburgh 1987; Richter 1995). Over time, readers in the East and West learnt to interpret articles in *Pravda* as meaning something else (sometimes the opposite) than what was stated. The popular saying went: "There is no truth in *Pravda*" (Hecht 1978: 138). *Pravda* left a huge imprint on Soviet citizens, including Zoya Cherkassky's generation and probably Cherkassky herself, who left the USSR when she was 15, after having been schooled in the Soviet system.

By choosing this title, Cherkassky hinted at the expectation that art would deliver a true revelation in the age of post-truth – not the official 'truth' of the party or the state, or the fake truth seen in today's market of commercial images and distributed by profit-seeking media. Rather, it is the complicated and harsh truth about the lives of immigrants from the FSU in Israel (Seter 2018).

3. Cherkassky's diptychs from the perspective of Translation Studies

3.1 Immigration and cultural (self) translation

For Cherkassky, being an immigrant is a process of constantly coping and becoming acquainted with a new culture, accompanied by a continuous examination of her culture of origin. It entails treasuring parts of her life developed within her native culture, becoming partially alienated to it, criticizing it, missing it (in nostalgic paintings such as "The Grandmother"), perceiving it as superior to the new culture, and, eventually, looking at her original culture through the interpretive prism she has acquired through her ongoing contact with the receiving culture. The act of self-translation that is apparent in the diptychs reveals the artist's twofold reflection on her two dominant cultures. Her artistic style and sources of inspiration, as well as her interpretation of the two landscapes, are all fragments of her autobiography, in which her art and her personal and political life merge into one entity. The boundaries between the private person and the artist are blurred. At the same time, her private recollections and experiences reflect a collective experience, shared by many immigrants from the FSU living in Israel. With this in mind, we propose to look at the diptychs, which form part of what we call the artist's 'self-project', as a demonstration of the metaphorical concept 'cultural (self) translation', which in this case is also metonymic because of its representativeness. In the context of Translation Studies, our discussion of the diptychs is in line with our view that translation does not concern only verbal texts; it also concerns intrasemiotic transfer (image for image, in this case) and plurisemiotic

practices – when the texts referred to employ more than one modality, or sign system (see also Weissbrod and Kohn 2019).

3.2 "The Roaring '90s" / "Israilovka"

Figure 2. "Israilovka" and "The Roaring '90s."

The first impression one gets from Figure 2 is the symmetrical contrast between the two parts of the diptych, which was displayed in a large format and prominent location in the "Pravda" exhibition[6]. The colours are strikingly different: the orange hues dominate the Israeli landscape, associating it with the heat of an Israeli summer, whereas the Ukrainian landscape is dominated by the white of winter. The snow-covered land extending to the horizon is reminiscent of Pieter Bruegel's paintings such as "Winter Landscape with Skaters" and a "Bird Trap" (Mendelsohn 2018). The Israeli urban setting has its own typical characteristics, such as the antennas and water tanks on the roofs. The differentiation is also created by the linguistic elements in Hebrew and Russian, respectively. One of the Hebrew signs, in particular, contributes to identifying the locale as Israeli. It reads, *Ha-Am im ha-Golan* [The People are with the Golan]. This popular slogan expresses the insistence of large parts of the Israeli public on retaining Israeli control over the Golan Heights, which has been under Israeli dominance since 1967.

Once viewers start paying attention to the details, they will most likely notice similarities which make it possible to suggest that as in translation proper, the original can be recognised in the translation. Some viewers will probably identify the Soviet architecture of the 1950s in both the Ukrainian and Israeli neighbourhoods. More significantly, both scenes show various kinds of violence, committed in public and in broad daylight, and presented as routine, since passers-by do not pay any attention to it. In the Ukrainian scene, a man is hit by other men, and his blood stains the white snow. Another man exposes himself in front of young children, adding sexual violence to the scene. Far away, in the snow, a man rapes a woman. The typical European landscape, the object of nostalgia for many Israeli authors and poets who emigrated from Eastern Europe, such as Shaul Tchernichovsky and Leah Goldberg (Egoz 2013), is here charged with

negative meanings. In the Israeli scene, we witness economic violence (an old man wearing a skullcap is rummaging through the municipal garbage bin), and the presence of a rocket, which alludes to conditions in the small towns in the south, near the Gaza Strip, with their almost daily traumatic events.

The similarities lead viewers to conceive of the two sections of the diptych as one complete whole whose parts come together to censure violence and people's cruelty to one another. The titles given to them in the exhibition catalogue are loaded with irony. "The Roaring '90s" alludes to 'The Roaring '20s'. This golden decade, which started after the First World War and lasted until the 1929 Wall Street crash and the beginning of the Great Depression, was characterised by economic, cultural, and artistic prosperity in the USA and the West (Stillman 2015). The title and the associations which it arouses stand in sharp contrast to the situation depicted in the painting. "Israilovka", on the other hand, brings to mind the provincialism of Kasrilevke, Sholem Aleichem's imaginary Jewish shtetl (Miron 2000). Together, these two titles frame the artist's critical look. Her very use of the diptych also alludes to classical artworks such as Hieronymus Bosch's "The Garden of Earthly Delights", which juxtaposes three scenes to make a moral statement. As a comment on the situation of the immigrants, this diptych clearly shows that immigration did not fulfil their hope of a better life among people who would treat one another with more compassion. Yet, in a more cynical vein, the similarities also mean that the culture shock experienced by the immigrants was not so great, and that the hardships they had to deal with were not unfamiliar.

3.3 "School Mobbing"

Figure 3. "School Mobbing."

In Figure 3, the observation about violence committed openly in the public sphere is accompanied by the intentional use of stereotypes to illustrate the human tendency for victimizing the weak, especially if they are thought of as being aloof because of their cultural capital. The youngsters dressed in uniforms and red ties, which identify them as members of the Young Pioneers, and the Israeli children wearing school uniforms, are positioned in the same way in both parts of the diptych. Stereotypes are also

reproduced in each version. In the pre-immigration scene, the humiliation of the Jewish boy, who is trying to protect his violin while another boy pisses on his sheet music, is reminiscent of anti-Semitic images that also appear in other works by Cherkassky (see Section 4.2). In Israel, the boy suffers the same abuse, this time as a 'Russian' intellectual. In each of the scenes, his skin colour hints at his otherness – he is a little darker than the non-Jewish children, and light-skinned compared to the Israeli ones (the symbolic glasses, however, remain). In both pictures, the children act freely and shamelessly in daylight – no one tries to prevent or stop the abuse. The culture of origin and the new culture do not differ in this sense, and the caricaturist portrayal of human types emphasises this point – the hoodlum, the 'vulgar-looking' girl, and the ostensibly 'good girl' (who nevertheless does not protest) appear in both pictures. There is no nostalgia for the old country and its culture here; neither can we see any hope for a better life in the new country. Concepts such as democracy, respect, freedom, or even a Jewish state – for which the immigrants supposedly yearn – are destroyed by the encounter with human nature, which, it seems, is the same everywhere.

As in other paintings, the insertion of the written text contributes to the overall meaning. In both pictures, the name 'Mozart' on the sheet music – which is universally known and does not need to be translated – places the young musician in the world of fine arts, totally unfamiliar to his schoolmates. In the Israeli scene, the name of the school imprinted on the children's uniforms creates a contrast between school and true education, and the notion that school provides a protective environment. The word 'sex' stamped on one of the girls' shirts – another word that does not need to be translated – along with her bare belly, characterise her as vulgar and insensitive to the social and cultural meaning of words and music alike. Finally, the graffiti which tells the Jews to go away in the Ukrainian scene and calls on the immigrants to go back to Russia in the Israeli tableau (another graffiti says "Death to the Arabs" – a domesticating addition, not untypical of translation, which only appears in the Israeli scene) makes it clear that the children are part and parcel of their environment.

In the two diptychs we have analysed, the weak sectors of society, whether Jews, immigrants or others, suffer violence and humiliation. The promised land, as possibly envisioned by the immigrants – the third part of an imaginary triptych – has not been found. However, the critical gaze directed at each of the cultures involved in this act of (literal and metaphoric) self-translation, and the humour embedded in the caricaturist depiction of the victimisers who turn into the artist's 'victims', reveal a potential for resistance that will be realised in other pictures.

4. Other pictures demonstrating failed cultural translation

4.1 "We Eat Russian Lard"

Cultural translation in the sense of 'taming' the other[7] is likely to raise resistance. To illustrate this, Cherkassky makes use of inanimate objects, supporting the view that the dualism subjects/objects is too simplistic (Miller 2005: 10). The significance of such objects (e.g., a garbage bin, a violin, school uniforms etc.) has already become clear in the analysis of the diptychs. As suggested above, the realistic style employed to depict them is not just an artistic choice, rather, it serves an ideological and political agenda.

Figure 4. "We Eat Russian Lard."

Figure 4 depicts a food display in a delicatessen, of the type that opened up in neighbourhoods where immigrants went to live after coming to Israel during the mass immigration from the FSU in the 1990s. A small sign gives the name of each product in Russian and Hebrew, as well as its price. In the terminology of Translation Studies, this can be regarded as a case of both 'interlingual' and 'intersemiotic' translation, in which words translate images (Pereira 2008; Weissbrod and Kohn 2019). Russian speakers can easily read the Cyrillic letters and most likely recognise the food products. Hebrew speakers are not necessarily familiar with the food, and it may be assumed that the names are meaningless for them. Nevertheless, they may understand the private joke of the artist, who included in the display the sausage called "Cherkasskaya" (in the front row). The main point, however, is the juxtaposition of dairy products and sausages, which is emphasised by the contrast between the yellowish colour of the cheese and the reddish colour of the sausages. According to Jewish religious law, dairy products and meat should be separated and not consumed together. Moreover, the meats on display are probably non-kosher, making this a twofold violation of Jewish religious dictates. Many immigrants from the FSU are secular and object to the pressure imposed on them to consume kosher food. The success of the Israeli food chain, Tiv-Taam, which produces and markets non-kosher products, testifies to the demand for such food, not only among immigrants (Ben-Porat 2013: 162). In 2017-2019 Tiv-Taam's slogan was,

"the right to choose", which connects the freedom to eat what one likes with human rights in a democratic country.

The title, "We Eat Russian Lard," is intentionally provocative. Ironically resembling a common sign found on the doors of business establishments – 'We speak English and French (or any other language) here', its use of the first person also creates the impression that the artist speaks in the name of her collective. The picture and title demonstrate the resistance to cultural translation on two levels: the exclusion of Hebrew speakers – the hegemonic majority – through the use of Russian; and the mocking of the religious establishment and its struggle to impose its value system.

4.2 "The Rabbi's Deliquium"

Figure 5. "The Rabbi's Deliquium."

Figure 5 differs from previous examples, in that it does not exemplify intrasemiotic or interlingual translation, and yet illuminates cultural translation since it shows a (failed) attempt to change one's identity. As explained, many immigrants from the FSU have to convert to Judaism if they want to be considered Jews, like the majority of the population, because they are the offspring of mixed marriages and are not Jews according to Jewish law, *Halakha* (Haskin 2016). The people undergoing conversion, many of whom are secular, actually assume a role in order to overcome the suspicion and disbelief of the religious establishment (Kravel-Tovi 2017). This is the background behind Figure 5, in which inanimate objects, charged with symbolic meanings, play a significant role side by side with the people who inhabit the picture. One of the figures is the Rabbi, a representative of the religious establishment, who conducts a *Kashrut* examination in the kitchen of a young family that is probably involved in the process of converting. His black garments and thick red beard, along with his bent back, combine to create a caricature which verges on the anti-Semitic. The young man wears a shirt with the caption "Shraga – Cleaning Services", a typical job of a newcomer who has to sustain his family in a

new land. His skullcap and the modest dress and head kerchief of his wife (the baby, too, wears a skullcap) attest to the conversion process they are undergoing. The *challah*, candlesticks and glass of wine on the table intimate that they are preparing for Shabbat. All of them look as if they are wearing costumes that signify their roles in a show. Other elements that contribute to the overall atmosphere are the Star of David on the calendar – apparently a present from an Israeli bank ("Bank Leumi"), and the name "Amkor" on the refrigerator – identifying it as a local, relatively cheap product of Israeli industry. The highlight of the scene, however, is the pork snout peeping out of the cooking pot. Humourously, but very offensively, the Rabbi and the forbidden animal – that also share the same skin colour – seem to be looking at each other with curiosity.

One cannot deduce from the painting whether the young couple meant to hide the pork, or were unaware of its significance. In any case, this 'untranslated' object functions as a clue suggesting that the entire scene is a manifestation of insincerity, and a failed cultural translation from the perspective of both parties – the receiving culture, represented here by the religious establishment, and the young immigrants, who did their best to pass the test. The absurdity of this scene lies in the fact that before their immigration, the immigrants were persecuted because they were Jews, and after their arrival in Israel, they are persecuted because they are not 'good enough' Jews. Beyond the critique of the Israeli religious establishment, this painting hints at Cherkassky's antagonism to any religious doctrine, as she has made clear in an interview (Averbuch 2018).

5. Cherkassky's reception in Israeli culture

In this section, we shift the focus from Cherkassky's works to their reception by the Israeli audience and artistic establishment. Cultural translation is the suggested link between these two topics. As we have seen, Cherkassky resists the sets of values which immigrants from the FSU are supposed to accept and respect. She does not view Israeli culture as superior to that of her country of origin (Section 3), and she teases and mocks the religious establishment, which tries to impose its norms on the immigrants (Section 4). Additionally, she not only violates social norms, but also artistic ones. The contents of her paintings are frequently vulgar and offensive, and the border between utilizing and denouncing stereotypes is far from clear (see Figure 1). Though her works are intended for the field of high art, her "caricaturistic realism" (Seter 2018) often verges on that of comics, a form of popular art. Actually, her "distrust of ambivalence, hesitation, dialectics, the suspension of judgment, [and] meaninglessness" (Seter ibid.; our translation) is a feature she shares with texts on the Internet and in social media. Nevertheless, she is being embraced by the artistic establishment, which is willing to accept her up to a point. One indication of her status is the thorough analyses of her works and exhibitions that have appeared in elitist forums (e.g., Seter 2018; Averbuch

2018; both published in *Haaretz* – a highbrow daily newspaper). The "Pravda" exhibition is the peak of this trend. Seter (ibid.) calls attention to the far from obvious pairing of Cherkassky with the Israel Museum – an institution that houses some of the most precious and sacred treasures of Israeli culture, such as the Synagogue Route. This incongruence is in line with the view of the museum as a 'contact zone', a space of encounters where relations are established between the authoritative discourse of the host institution and other, less powerful voices (Sturge 2007: 164-165) – a view which also conforms with Bhabha's idea of a 'third space' (Bhabha 1990, 1994). In the case under study, the museum handled this incongruence by acknowledging, but also setting limits on the artist's dissidence.

Beyond the very decision to devote a solo exhibition to Cherkassky, the museum consolidated her status by allocating a large space for her huge oil paintings, in much the same way that the grand masters are treated in the world's greatest museums (Figure 6). Due to the size of these paintings, and the straightforward manner in which Cherkassky delivers her messages – through explicit narrative scenes which do not require painstaking deciphering – the impact on the audience was immediate and shocking, like a bolt of lightning (Seter 2018). Viewers were likely to feel that the content and style of these paintings were not a typical match for their sober location.

Figure 6. "Pravda" at the Israel Museum.

The display was basically traditional. The large paintings were dispersed in several rooms according to their themes. Another room was dedicated to small drawings and sketches, most of them depicting life in the FSU. In this room, viewers were drawn into an intimate encounter with Cherkassky's art since viewing the pictures required closer proximity, as if leafing through a family album (Figure 7). Here, small groups of people could be seen, discussing their impressions of the pictures, usually in Russian. As Sturge (2007: 131) notes, the museum itself is a plurisemiotic entity, which offers the visitors a multisensory experience. In our case, the display was accompanied by the screening of an audiovisual interview with Cherkassky,

who talked about her experiences as an immigrant. Otherwise, however, no use was made of technology or interactive means such as visitors' books and computer screens, which invite the audience to take part in the exhibition, and are typical of modern museum displays, especially those dealing with memory and the past (Luke 2002; Noy 2015). In this case, their absence placed the artist in the centre. At the same time, it gave Russian-speakers the opportunity to visit, so to speak, their culture of origin in the heart of official Israeli culture.

Figure 7. "An Invitation for an Intimate Encounter."

Another decision made by the curator attests to the limitations, which the museum – as a national institution subject to commercial considerations, and which is also expected to respect its audience's feelings – must adhere to. While Cherkassky did not hesitate to include provocative content in her paintings such as sexual harassment (see Figure 1), a prostitute exposing her intimate parts (a realization of the offensive stereotype 'a Russian whore'), and a frightened man undergoing a humiliating circumcision ritual, the museum chose to assemble the most offensive works in a separate room (Figure 8). A warning placed at the entrance said in Hebrew, English, and Russian, "Please be advised that this part of the exhibition contains graphically explicit works." In this way, the museum shifted the responsibility to the viewers – the decision to experience these pictures, or not, became theirs. This practice is common and probably mandatory in world's museums and employed when exhibits are blatantly sexual or offensive. In this case, however, it has a specific significance: the dominant culture, represented by the museum, accepts the dissident 'other', but its tolerance has limits, as the separate room indicates.

Figure 8. "The Separate Room."

A relevant distinction in this context is the one between diversity and difference made by Bhabha (1990). In his often criticised but highly influential view[8], diversity is a value nourished by the liberal West, which is convinced that diverse cultures with opposing value systems can co-exist harmoniously. Yet, this is an illusion, because the West actually strives to eliminate otherness by locating the other in its 'grid' (Bhabha 1990: 208). Bhabha suggests replacing 'diversity' with 'difference'. The latter acknowledges the existence of irresolvable contradictions that can nevertheless be negotiated in what he terms 'the third space' (Bhabha ibid.). In the present case, the museum functioned as a third space, where traditional and non-traditional value systems met and conducted a dialogue without eliminating the contradictions between them. If the paintings we examined in Sections 3 and 4 reflect the less desirable aspects of cultural translation, it seems that the encounter between Cherkassky's work and the artistic establishment has triggered the kind of negotiation that is likely to result in the emergence of new cultural hybrid forms.

Another factor in Cherkassky's reception is the audience. The wide range of responses, which appear on her Facebook page and in talkbacks following reportages and interviews in daily newspapers, reflects the ambivalence already discerned in the museum's policies. Readers commented on her artistic achievement and social perspectives, often combining both issues. The result is a vigorous debate about art, racism, anti-Semitism, the attitude of immigrants to the receiving culture and vice versa. The following examples summarise some of the talkbacks published in response to the abovementioned reportages by Seter (2018) and Averbuch (2018):

1. Cherkassky is a champion of public relations. She takes advantage of her relationship with an infiltrator [the writer is alluding to her marriage to a Nigerian refugee] to create a 'buzz' around her works. The works themselves are very 'literal' [straightforward] and shallow (Alona, 10 January 2018);
2. When I read about her, I can understand why Jews perceived Gentiles as offensive ("In the role of an anti-Semite", 6 January 2018);

3. Her blindness regarding the destructiveness of communism proves that she is not an intellectual authority. Her paintings, too, are shallow… propaganda rather than art. The aesthetic aspects of art are naturally more abstract, and as an object of analysis, they are more challenging and interesting (Liran, 6 January 2018);
4. A wonderful painter! I too am married to a Christian and it took him seven years to get Israeli citizenship (Israella, 5 January 2018);
5. Her art is a correct expression of the great disappointment of new immigrants. The sources of her art are everything but indifference, and this is a good basis for the creation of something worthy. She probably refers to those who came from major cities and found themselves in small towns in the periphery. In summary, forceful art that kicks forcefully (Natan, 5 January 2018);
6. She is a racist and a disturbed person. But why does she live in Israel? Why not in Berlin? ("A despised personality", 5 January 2018);
7. A likeable painter with lots of humour (Dana, 5 January 2018);
8. She reviles Russians [the writer is referring to immigrants from the FSU]. She profits at their expense (Nimrod, 5 January 2018);
9. She is gifted, but she is an inferior racist who likes the Red Army and Stalinism. Phooey! ("Escaped from the Gulag", 5 January 2018);
10. She was interesting at first, now she became an assembly line at the service of the local bourgeoisie (A Collector, 4 January 2018).

Some comments clearly identify the writer as an immigrant, who is either offended by Cherkassky (no. 8) or glad that she gives voice to the immigrants (no. 5). Others reveal the hostility of Israelis to the immigrants and what they allegedly bring with them – Stalinism and a liking for the Red Army (no. 9). Her art is highly valued (no. 4), appreciated for its humour (no. 7), or described as shallow (no. 1, 3) and adapted to the taste of the bourgeois (no. 10). The comments are far from harmonious. Instead, using Bhabha's terminology, they come together to create a third space, "a new area of negotiation of meaning" (Bhabha 1994: 211), where opposing views clash, but nevertheless participate in a shared discourse.

6. Conclusion

Beyond offering insights into Cherkassky's works, the contribution of this article is multifold. First, we link the concepts of 'intrasemiotic translation' and 'self-translation' to plurisemiotic practices which merge the visual and the verbal. Second, we expand the concept of 'self-translation' and place it in the context of 'cultural translation', which is interpreted here, based on previous research, in two different and even conflicting ways. In addition, we incorporate into our analysis the artist's reception in Israeli culture. While the works we have analysed illuminate the darker sides of 'cultural (self) translation' as experienced by Cherkassky and her collective, 'negotiation' (to use Bhabha's terminology), which involves the artist, critics, the museum and the audience, signifies the potential for 'cultural translation' in the sense that Bhabha attaches to this term – a process taking place in a third space, where opposing value systems meet, clash, and conduct a dialogue, which may yield new hybrid cultural forms.

This article progressed from an examination of individual paintings to an overview of their reception in terms of cultural translation. In every stage

of the analysis – whether we investigated the role of verbal elements in the pictures, considered the function of their (usually ironic) titles, or examined their placement in the museum – it was clear that a full understanding of the issues under study necessitated taking more than one semiotic system into consideration and discovering how each one interrelates with others. It is our conviction that plurisemiotic sensitivity may prove useful in other cases, including those that focus on interlingual transfer.

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[1] Works which evolved from this starting point include Zethsen (2009) and Karas (2016). The term 'natural-historical' for English, French etc., is borrowed from Petrilli (2003).
[2] One manifestation of this evolution is the conference "Intersemiosis", held 10-12 November 2017 at the University of Cyprus.
[3] For a critique of this conceptualisation of translation, see Trivedi (2007).
[4] See, for example, New Barbizon (no date).
[5] *Mizrahi* (literally, 'Oriental') refers to an Israeli Jew of North African or Middle Eastern origin.
[6] In accordance with the directionality of Hebrew, the order of the paintings is from right to left. The painting on the right depicts life before the immigration, and the painting on the left depicts life after the immigration. The paintings were displayed in this order in the exhibition.
[7] Buden and Nowotny (2009) use the example of the test that immigrants must pass in order to receive German citizenship.
[8] For a summary of the arguments against Bhabha's ideas and their applicability see McEwan (2008: 66).