

A Literary Approach to Assessment of Style in Translation of Biblical Narrative

▪Case-study: Russian Translations of Ruth

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Contents

I. INTRODUCTION	3
II. THEORY OF TRANSLATION AND NARRATIVE CRITICISM	4
II.1 THE ESSENCE OF THE LITERARY APPROACH TO BIBLICAL NARRATIVES	4
II.2 TWO CONCEPTS OF BIBLE TRANSLATION IN MODERN THEORY OF TRANSLATION	7
II.3 RUTH THROUGH THE EYES OF LITERARY CRITICS	10
III THE BOOK OF RUTH: ASSESSMENT OF THE STYLES OF RUSSIAN VERSIONS	14
III.1 INTERRELATION BETWEEN STYLE OF ORIGINAL AND TRANSLATED NARRATIVE TEXTS	14
III.2 RUSSIAN TRANSLATIONS OF THE BOOK OF RUTH: GENERAL ANALYSIS OF THE STYLE	23
III.3 RUSSIAN TRANSLATIONS OF THE BOOK OF RUTH: ANALYSIS OF THE ELEMENTS OF NARRATIVE STYLE	37
<i>III.3.1 The translational situation for the book of Ruth in Russian</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>III.3.2 Spatiotemporal elements</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>A. Time expressions in the narrative</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>B. Orientation in space</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>III.3.3 Emotional-ideological elements</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>A. Referential names</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>B. Conventional elements</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>C. Elements presenting points of view</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>D. Direct speech</i>	<i>50</i>
IV. CONCLUSIONS	51
V. BIBLIOGRAPHY	54

I. Introduction

The last decade of the XX century in Russia was marked by an increase of interest in the Bible. For more than 70 years of atheism, most Russian speakers did not have access to this book; and it is no surprise that now the Bible has become very popular. At the same time, the only complete translation of the Bible into Russian, the Synodal Version, was accomplished more than a hundred years ago. Now this translation has become obsolete from the point of view of its language and the translational principles used in it. In the beginning of the 90s, the Russian Bible Society resumed its activity, but till now no alternative to the Synodal Version has become available. The lack of newer translations is a great obstacle for contemporary Russian readers in their attempts to become acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, a situation which challenges Russian Bible translators to explore new ways of fulfilling their task and gives new impetus to the study of the theory of translation.

There is plenty of literature on the theory of Bible translation. Nevertheless, all of these books and articles do not deal directly with the peculiarities of translating the Bible into Russian. In many aspects Russian is a unique language. On the one hand, it has a great literary heritage that cannot be ignored when translating the Bible. On the other hand, Russian is a very flexible language with a stylistic, synonymic, and emotional richness that enables it to render the finest shades of meaning. No doubt, investigations of the specifics of translating the Bible into Russian will have great value for the enhancement of Biblical Studies not only in Russia but also in those countries where Russian is spoken.

This paper deals with an analysis of style in the translation of Biblical narrative. It presents a case study of three Russian translations of Ruth – the Synodal version and the translations of Braginsky and Yunz - and focuses mainly on their style and literary qualities. This paper does not primarily deal with the content of the biblical message but with concrete means of its expression in the language of translation. Its goal consists in formulating, describing, and assessing the stylistic strategies used in these translations and in evaluating their correlation with the literary qualities of the original text.

I have chosen the book of Ruth as a base for the study for two reasons. On the one hand, this book presents a piece of narrative that demonstrates the full spectrum of literary art in the Bible. On the other hand, the artistic value of Ruth attracted the attention of translators even in

times of the Soviet Union; and, as result, it is possible to come up with a certain number of translations needed for comparative analysis.

For the analysis of the translations I use a methodology accepted in the interpretative approach to the Bible that is known under the name of Literary Criticism. Analytic techniques that have been extensively applied for an assessment of Hebrew narrative help to show the correlation between literary qualities of the translations and of the original text. At the same time, I did not attempt to extend the analysis to all of the narrative elements. I focused mainly on such aspects of the narrative that can be changed in the process of translation, namely, on issues of stylistic choice. In order to demonstrate the reception of the narrative by Russian speakers I often appealed to findings of Russian philology.

The study begins with three preparatory parts that include short excurses about the essence of methodology accepted in Literary Criticism, about basic tendencies in modern theories of Bible translation, and about literary critiques of Ruth. In the main part, I consider issues concerning the essence of style and methods for evaluation of biblical translations from the perspective of literary style. Then I will proceed with a detailed analysis of the style in the three Russian translations of the book of Ruth, applying the concept of functional style. Special attention is paid to the examination of narrative art in the translations. The examination is focused on such points as the communicative situation of translation, the place of narrator and addressees in the translated narrative, issues of translating spatiotemporal and emotional-ideological elements of narrative in each of the stylistic strategies observed in the given translations. The results of the analysis will be summarized in the conclusion.

II. Theory of translation and narrative criticism

II.1 The essence of the literary approach to Biblical narratives

Before considering the possibility of applying methods of Literary Criticism to Bible translation, it is necessary to characterize briefly the main ideas of a literary approach to the Bible.

First of all, *literary criticism* is a term that has no single meaning. Thus, M. A. Powel in his book *What Is Narrative Criticism*,¹ following a system of categorisation devised by M.H.

¹ Powel 1993:11-21.

Abrams,² discusses four types of literary theories.

1. Structuralism. The main idea of structuralism is that the phenomena accessible in sensual, empiric perception are manifestation of some inner deep concealed structures. The goal of the structural analysis consists in revealing the common laws of construction of the narrative and, ultimately, in understanding the process of forming the meaning. In the other words, structuralism endeavours to formalise literary study, to draw it closer to exact science.³
2. Reader-response criticism. In spite of a great diversity of theories within this type of criticism,⁴ they all have one central idea: the investigation of a text should concentrate on the process of reading. In reader-response theories the meaning of a text is not a fixed object. Being formed in the interaction between reader and the text, the meaning of a text becomes changeable and flexible. To each epoch, to each culture, and even to each person the text brings its own message.
3. Rhetorical criticism considers the text from the perspective of norms of its contemporary rhetoric. In this approach, the biblical text is compared with historical documents that reveal the literary standards of the time when these texts were written. The purpose of rhetorical analysis is to evaluate biblical discourse from the viewpoint of its first readers.
4. Narrative criticism combines the ideas of structuralism and rhetorical criticism. The distinguishing feature of this approach is that it does not focus on “deep structures”, or response of any concrete “hermeneutical community”, or historical background. Instead, it analyses the interrelations between narrator and reader implied in the text. Narrative criticism always asks the question: “Is there anything *in the text* that indicates the reader is expected to respond in this way?”⁵ Answering this question, it looks for specific peculiarities in the text and explains what role they play in the literary plan of the biblical book.

In the present paper I will use the term ‘literary criticism’ in the sense of Powel’s “narrative criticism”. Moreover, I will limit myself in the application of this approach only to the OT narrative, especially as presented in studies by Alter,⁶ Berlin,⁷ Bar-Efrat,⁸ and Sternberg.⁹

The general characteristics of this approach are the following:

² Abrams, M.H., *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 4th ed. New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1981. Abrams divided all theories into author-centered (expressive), reader-centered (pragmatic), text-centered (objective) and mimetic (which considers the literary work as a reflection of the outer world and evaluates it in terms of the truth or accuracy of its representation). See Powel 1993:11.

³ *Literary Encyclopedia of Terms and Notions*, ed. A. N. Niklukin, Moscow: NPK “Intelvak”, 2003, p.1044.

⁴ Such as Deconstructionalism, Transactive Criticism, Phenomenological Criticism, etc.

⁵ Powel 1993:21

⁶ Alter, R., *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, Basic Books, 1981.

⁷ Berlin, A., *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994.

⁸ Bar-Efrat, S., *Narrative Art in the Bible*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1979, 1984.

1. Literary criticism considers biblical texts as pieces of literary art. Although the theological, historiographic, ethical etc. importance of the Bible is not neglected, the emphasis is put on its aesthetic qualities.¹⁰ The presence of aesthetic, artistic components in the storyline are taken for granted. These components can be found in seemingly unimportant (from a theological perspective) details, specific forms of expression and fine nuances which, being spread throughout the text, form a set of literary techniques used by the biblical authors to create picturesque canvas of the narration. All scholars dealing with literary criticism share Alter's view that the masters of ancient Hebrew narrative were clearly writers who delighted in an art of indirection, in the possibilities of intimating depths through the mere hint of surface feature, or through a few words of dialogue fraught with implication. Their attraction to narrative minimalism was reinforced by their sense that stories should be told in a way that would move efficiently to the heart of the matter, never pausing to elaborate mimetic effects for their own sake.¹¹
2. Literary criticism uses a holistic approach to biblical texts. It presupposes that every single episode appears not in the narrative as result of random compilation, but obeys a general conceptual plan. The plot, being the "body of narrative"¹², is a target of attentive exploration; and every detail is evaluated from a global perspective.¹³
3. It is presupposed that the biblical narrators depicted the heroes and heroines of their literary works in an artistic way. Biblical narrative displays a broad spectrum of techniques of characterisation, from naming and direct description of character to use of skillful play on perspectives and allusions. Literary criticism clearly separates the narrator in the text from the real author of the text,¹⁴ and the figure of the narrator also attracts the attention of investigators.
4. Style plays an important role in the literary analysis of narrative. Literary criticism endeavors to explain how stylistic nuances enrich the narrative picture with additional meaning revealed during a close reading of the text.

Literary criticism opens a new dimension in the understanding of biblical texts. For a Bible translator, a natural question arises after getting in touch with literary criticism: what, if any, is

⁹ Sternberg, M., *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

¹⁰ Indeed, the basis for the legitimacy of a literary approach is an issue of great discussion. For example, while Alter argues that OT narrative is "historicised prose fiction" (i.e., fictional literature following the motives of Hebrew legendary history, see Alter 1981:23-46), Steinberg insists on the historiographic (non-fictional) character of the Bible and that its literary qualities should be explained by peculiarities of the ancient manner of historical exposition (Sternberg 1985:24-35). Nevertheless, in practice, their investigations of literary techniques lead to similar results.

¹¹ Alter 1987:23

¹² Bar-Efrat 1979:93.

¹³ For example, Alter shows that the story of Judah and Tamar (Gen.38), which is considered in source criticism as a later insertion (see von Rad: 356-357), may be logically joined with the previous episode of the selling of Joseph by his brothers (Alter 1981:4-10).

¹⁴ See Bar-Efrat 1984:13-16.

the interrelation between literary qualities of the original and of the translated texts of a biblical narrative?

This complicated question receives central attention in the present paper. It raises a number of problems related to both, issues of objectivity of literary assessment and questions of the nature of translation. Before considering these problems it is necessary to describe briefly the situation in modern theories of Bible translation.

II.2 Two concepts of Bible translation in modern theory of translation

Modern theory of Bible translation¹⁵ is based on two main concepts of translation: literal, word-to-word translation and functional translation (or translation of meaning). In practice, any real translation combines both ideas, but one of them prevails in it. Let us consider these concepts more closely.

According to the traditional understanding of the nature of translation, the task of a translator consists of rendering words and grammar forms literally from one language to another. The degree of literalism in such translation could be different in different Bible versions. For example, one can observe ultimate literalism in the Greek translation of Aquila.¹⁶ Modern word-to-word translations are found in interlinear editions of the Bible.

On the other hand, even in antiquity sometimes translators avoided extreme literalness in order to make their translations clearer. For instance, the Septuagint encompasses parts that slavishly follow the text of the *Vorlage* and parts that allow for free translation, or even paraphrase.¹⁷ In the so called “historical translations,” such as the KJV or Russian Synodal Version (SV), translators tried to be faithful to the original, translating every detail as literally as possible. Nevertheless, one can readily observe their attempts to make their translations comprehensible for average readers.

Despite the diversity of principles followed in different literal translations, the idea of the priority of formal correspondence between original text and translation underlies all of them.

In the sixties of the twentieth century a new concept of Bible translation came to life. This concept usually appears under the name of “dynamic equivalence.”¹⁸ It relies on the model of communication.

¹⁵ When talking about modern theory of Bible translation, we are orienting ourselves along the lines of the ideology presented in editions of United Bible Societies.

¹⁶ Sweet:39.

¹⁷ Ibid:325.

¹⁸ In other terminology, it is a functional or idiomatic translation.

Nida, in his book *The Theory and Practice of Translation*,¹⁹ explains the essence of the new approach toward translation, contrasting it to the idea of formal correspondence. Nida proposes the following scheme for the communication process:



The linguistic forms in this model serve to shape the message the way that it would communicate to the author's addressees. But the words themselves do not determine the content of the message. The shape of the message must be consistent with the linguistic, cultural and historical environment of the literary work; otherwise it fails to communicate properly. When a translator literally transmits the words and forms from one language to another, he distorts the content of the message and, thus, produces a new message which, *a priori*, differs from the message of the source that was received by an original receptor. An adequate understanding of the message of the translation presupposes an awareness of the original message. Therefore, a formal translation communicates only to a scholarly person; but it is vague or misleading for an average reader.

The concept of dynamic equivalence shifts the focus from the formal correspondence between the original and the translated text to the adequacy of reception of the translation. Nida writes:

Dynamic equivalence is therefore to be defined in terms of the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor language respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language. This response can never be identical, for the cultural and historical settings are too different, but there should be a high degree of equivalence of response, or the translation will have failed to accomplish its purpose.²⁰

Each of these translation strategies has its pluses and minuses. The greatest disadvantage of a literal translation is that it presents a meaning that is inadequate to the meaning of the original text.²¹ The fatal shift from the original meaning in a literal translation happens for many reasons. Here are just some of them:

a.) The meaning of a word is not a constant. It depends on factors, such as cultural background and specific circumstances of communication. A literal translation is mostly preoccupied with

¹⁹ Nida 1969:22-24.

²⁰ Nida 1969:24.

²¹ Nida1960: 204 (quoted from Beekman 1965).

the referential meaning of words and does not notice other aspects of their meaning which are crucial for a right understanding of the message.²²

b.) Every language possesses an inimitable signal system with its unique grammar structure, organization of vocabulary, etc. Every language operates with a unique set of categories and resembles specific experiences of the given language group. Therefore, endeavors to transmit literally the speech of one language to another are, on the one hand, abusive for the language of translation because it is injected with material that is *a priori* alien to that language, and on the other hand, does not reach the goal of communication. It always remains unclear, vague or even meaningless.²³

On the other hand, the idea of functional translation has its weak sides. Whang²⁴ lists a series of questions that show the difficulties of the concept of dynamic equivalence. In essence, Whang's objections underline that it is impossible for a modern translator to understand and to transmit the message of texts that were written many centuries ago in a totally different culture about which modern science knows quite little. From Whang's point of view, in spite of the attractiveness of the concept of functional equivalence, it is too idealistic to be embodied in any concrete translation.²⁵ Whang asks: "If the aim of translation is to induce a response from the receptors of the first language, how can a translator confirm whether the response of the former induced by the translation is identical to that of the latter?... How can a translator identify the dialogue between the *Vorlage* and the numerous readers (*who could have very different responses to the same message –Alexander Popov*)?"²⁶ It is obvious that the answers to these questions are hard to find.

Thus, both ideas of literal translation and functional translation are far from being undisputed. The search for additional arguments for or against both of them involves the assessment of these strategies from a new perspective.

The ideology behind literary criticism helps us to look at the theory of translation from another perspective. Indeed, for a literary critic reading a translated text, the primary importance consists not so much in relations between the message of the original and of the translated texts as in the literary qualities of the translation. The literary value of a translation does not depend on its faithfulness to the original text, whatever the word "faithfulness" could mean in this

²² Wendland:37-39.

²³ Gutt 1982:406-409.

²⁴ Whang 1999:52-55.

²⁵ Pearson (p.84) claims that Nida's theory of translation is based on "Romantic hermeneutics" which implies such interpreter who "needs to get into the head, as it were, of the original author, recreating the document in the process of interpretation." In Pearson's opinion, such hermeneutics "is, first, outmoded, and secondly, demonstrably impossible."

²⁶ Whang 1999:52.

context, but on consistency and accuracy in rendering the literary traits of the text. In this study, we will consider Russian translations of a biblical narrative from this point of view.

II.3 Ruth through the eyes of literary critics

The present paper is devoted to a literary analysis of several translations of the book of Ruth. It is necessary to explain the choice of this particular book.

The book of Ruth often attracts the attention of authors dealing with literary criticism. For example, Berlin devotes a chapter to the examination of the narrative of this book. She explains that she chooses Ruth as a model for her literary analysis “because there is no problem defining the boundaries of the narrative, and because its literary qualities have long been recognized.”²⁷ For the same reasons, many other scholars use Ruth to demonstrate the application of ideas of literary criticism.

Let us mention some general characteristics of this book.

First of all, the book Ruth shows a great deal of narrative skill. Sasson writes: “In any event, even among the artful narratives of Scripture, Ruth stands out in the power of its concentration, in the limpidity of its vocabulary, in the versatility of its language, in balanced proportions of its scenes, and above all, in the vividness and integrity of its main characters.”²⁸ This short novel demonstrates almost the entire spectrum of characteristics of biblical narrative: laconic language, use of multiple techniques for characterisation of its personages, gaps that provoke the imagination of a reader to fill them, etc.

Scholars have no single opinion concerning the genre of the book.²⁹ Traditional Jewish interpretation considers the book as didactic, whose goal consists in the demonstration of the principle of exceeding mercy “*hesed*.” Thus Rabbi Zaayara claims that “the book was written to teach us a rule that should govern the life of every man. This rule is an obligation for each one to practice mercy (*hesed*) in relations with his neighbors.”³⁰ Indeed, Ruth’s characters often go much farther in doing mercy than the Torah demands. For instance, according to the Torah, Ruth was not obliged to follow her mother-in-law to the foreign country, no commandment made

²⁷ Berlin 1994:83

²⁸ J.M. Sasson “Ruth”, in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. R. Alter and F. Kermode, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, p.320.

²⁹ The Bible knows no genre division of its text. Nevertheless, a certain definition of Ruth’s genre is important for a successful translation, since a modern reader surely associates the book with some genres in literature he is aware of.

³⁰ Milzar:4

Boaz to feed Ruth at his table and, what is more, to marry her, etc. Würthwein³¹ shares similar insights on the nature of the book. He defines Ruth's genre as "idyll," which implies that the book draws an idealistic picture of pious people doing their best in the given circumstances. But, conversely, the dramatic tension of many episodes³² makes the narration far from idyllic and the behavior of some of its characters (such as Naomi's sons who married foreigners, or the relative who refused to fulfill his duty and easily agreed to the shameful ritual of putting off his shoe) is very ambiguous from the standpoint of the moral and religious norms of ancient Israelites. Nevertheless, the importance of a religious component in Ruth cannot be denied.

Some folklorists claim that the book of Ruth is a folktale.³³ It seems that the best-known analysis of Ruth from the position of a folklorist belongs to J. Sasson. In his examination, he used the methods proposed by V. Propp³⁴ for the investigation of Russian fairy tales. Propp found that the functions of characters in different fairy tales are similar at every stage of development of its plot. Thus, the characters can be classified as "hero", "helper", "villain", etc. These type-characters act and interact according to certain paths. For example, every story begins with a description of an initial situation when a "hero" lives at his/her home. At a certain moment, he/she leaves his/her house; then he/she meets a "helper" or, being tested, he/she suddenly receives a "helper's" support. A universal form of a fairy tale can be described as a sequence of typical situations where the function of each character is strictly determined. Sasson succeeded in describing the plot of Ruth in terms of Propp's morphology; and, thus, he concluded that the form of Ruth is that of a folktale.³⁵

But there are at least two objections to Sasson's conclusion.³⁶ Firstly, Propp's ideas suggested that not only the plot (or *syujet* in Russian terminology³⁷) but also every detail in a folktale³⁸ is determined by the general genre morphology. The basic trait of a Russian fairy tale is its extreme schematism, which Propp explains as due to the close relations between the fairy tale genre and folk rituals.³⁹ This determinism is absent in Ruth's story, whose psychological portraying and skillful use of narrative techniques characterise it as prose fiction rather than as a folktale. In other words, the plot itself says nothing about the genre. Although the *syujet* possibly

³¹ Würthwein, E. *Die Fünf Megilloth*. HAT 18. 2nd ed. Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1969. Quoted from Hubbard, R.L., *The Book of Ruth*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991.

³² The sorrow and the despair of Naomi having lost her husband and sons, Boaz's hesitations about accepting Ruth, etc.

³³ Sasson (1979:198-199) gives a classification of folklorist approaches to the book.

³⁴ Propp, V. Y., *Morphology of Fairy-Tale*, Moscow: Labirint, 2001.

³⁵ Sasson 1979:203-214.

³⁶ One can find an extended critique of Sasson's approach in the articles of R. Milne (1986, 1988).

³⁷ That is the essence of what is told in the story, short description of the event sequence of a given narrative (see *Introduction to Literature Studies*, pp. 167-168).

³⁸ Propp considered only fairy tales, but his methods can be extended to broader class of folktales.

³⁹ Propp 1986:30-31.

was borrowed from a folktale or a myth,⁴⁰ the style of narrating has practically nothing in common with this sort of literature.

Secondly, a pre-definition of certain functions for the characters of Ruth imposes a subjective interpretation of these characters which is *a priori* is not implied by the narrative. Is it possible to claim that Boaz is a “helper”, as Sasson proposes? Or, maybe, his character is more complicated and cannot be inserted into any scheme? For example, Sasson himself in his later work⁴¹ describes Boaz as having a hard internal struggle before making the decision to “spread his wings on” Ruth.

It seems that the most appropriate definition of Ruth's genre is *novelle*. This word appeared in Renaissance Italy to describe the genre of a short anecdote-like custom story and, later, was borrowed by German philology. Goethe was the first one to apply this term for a characterisation of Ruth's genre. Many scholars, Gunkel among them, agreed with this definition.⁴² Jolles claims that Ruth is a *novelle*, because it “endeavors to relate an incident or occurrence of significant import in a way that gives to us the impression of a factual event, and indeed such that the event itself appears to us more important than the characters who experience it.”⁴³ This definition does not touch on issues of style, but a more detailed classification is scarcely possible because of the specifics of Ruth in the history of literature. Today, the characterisation of Ruth as *novelle* is generally accepted.⁴⁴

An analogue to *novelle* in Russian philology is *рассказ* (*rasskaz*).⁴⁵ The word *rasskaz* comes from the verb *рассказывать* – “to narrate, to tell a story”. This genre unites quite different pieces of literature whose common point is the explicit or implicit figure of a narrator who tells the readers about some prominent event that occurred with him or became known to him. No doubt, in Russian literature, this genre corresponds to the book of Ruth in the best way. Among Russian *rasskazes* one can extract a group of *rasskazes* which represent authorised retellings of legends or historical events.⁴⁶ Imitating the style of legends or folktales, they use the style of ancient narrators. As result, many of their literary traits, such as laconism, avoidance of descriptions and, instead, extended use of dialogues for characterizing, etc., are similar to those

⁴⁰ See G. Glazman, “The Origin and Date of the Book of Ruth,” in *CBQ* 21 (1959): 201-207.

⁴¹ Sasson 1999:320-321.

⁴² Bush 1998:Genre.

⁴³ Jolles 1930:192 (quoted from Bush 1998:Genre).

⁴⁴ P. Tribble, *The Book of Ruth*, 1997. There have been endeavors to narrow the definition of Ruth's genre. Thus, Hubbard (1991:47-48) claims that Ruth's genre is “short story”. But taking into account the artificiality of the genre definition of the book in terms of modern classification, a definition that is too exact seems unnecessary.

⁴⁵ *Rasskaz* is a very complicated genre that includes a number of sub-genres such as новелла (a *rasskaz* with a dynamic *syujet*), очерк (a *rasskaz* containing a witness, or report, of some event, or traveling notes), etc. The closeness of Ruth to *rasskaz* genre can be explained by the oral roots of *rasskaz* that originated partly from folk narrative (*Introduction to Literature Studies*, pp. 388-389).

⁴⁶ Such as M. Gorky “Danko”, N. Leskov “The Mountain”, A. Kuprin “Sulamith”, etc.

of Hebrew narrative. Therefore, from a perspective of Russian literary studies, Ruth is best understood as a legendary or historical *rasskaz*.

The plot of Ruth involves three main characters. The central character, according to Berlin,⁴⁷ is Naomi: “All other characters stand in relation to her... We see things through her eyes, feel things as she feels them... To the degree that a character’s perceptual point of view is represented, it is, by and large, Naomi’s.”⁴⁸

While the figure of Naomi is the coherent core of the story, Ruth plays the role of its hero. She appears as a secondary personage, one of Naomi's daughters-in-law. She gradually attracts the reader's attention by her exceptional faithfulness to Naomi and, eventually, gets to the focus of the reader's interest. Ruth's fate becomes a main theme and touches the reader greatly. At the peak of that interest, Boaz, the third personage, enters Ruth’s life; and the narrative continues with their romance, concluding with a bright, happy end.

Beside these, the book of Ruth contains a number of minor characters. These are so-called “agents”, i. e., characters that are involved in the narration just to serve a certain function.⁴⁹ Thus, the narrator needs Orpah and the nameless *goel* just in order to stress the contrast between them and the full-fledged characters, Ruth and Boaz. The women of Bethlehem are necessary to demonstrate Naomi's grief at the beginning of the story; and then, at the end, the author through their mouths expresses the essence of Naomi's happy fate. Naomi's husband and sons, though they do not appear on the stage, are important in forming the situation that shapes the plot.

The composition of the book, consisting of a prologue, an epilogue, and four episodes, can be presented in the following scheme:

Prologue (1:1-1:6)

The prologue gives an orientation and describes the initial circumstances, namely, the move of Naomi’s family to Moab, the death of her husband, and marriage and decease of her sons.

Episode I. Naomi returns to Bethlehem (1:7-1:22)

The episode begins with Naomi’s farewell, accompanied by a series of dialogues with her daughters-in-law and concluded by Ruth’s monologue in which she expresses her strong determination to follow Naomi on her way back. The next act depicts Naomi’s entrance into Bethlehem. In a short dialogue with Bethlehem’s women, the widow describes her present situation, from the material as well as an emotional point of view. The episode is finished with a reference to the fact that Ruth and Naomi have settled down in the town.

⁴⁷ Berlin:83-84.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Berlin:23-24.

Episode II. Ruth meets Boaz on the field (2:1-2:23)

This part describes the day when Ruth became acquainted with Boaz. Ruth leaves Naomi to glean corn in order to prepare a meal for herself and for her mother-in-law. On the field where she works, she meets Boaz. Boaz shows interest in her. He asks his servants about Ruth and then talks to her himself. He allows her to participate at his lunch and gives to his servants an order about the girl, while inviting her to continue gleaning on his land. Ruth returns home with the bounty taken from her new protector and tells Naomi about all that happened. In the dialogue it becomes clear that Boaz is one of their relatives and, consequently, can help them (though at this stage the real possibility of such help is out of question).

Episode III. Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor (3:1-3:18)

Ruth, following the advice of Naomi, goes to Boaz's threshing floor where she has a conversation with him. She asks for his protection, and he agrees to marry her. Nevertheless, there is an obstacle on the way to their marriage. Ruth has a *goel* closer than Boaz. Boaz promises to solve this problem and lets her return to her mother-in-law.

Episode IV. Boaz at the city gate (4:1-12)

Boaz talks with Naomi's relative who is responsible for the widows and their real estate, convincing him to pass on this right to him. After completing official formalities, he receives the blessing of the local elders.

Epilogue. (4:13-4:22)

Boaz marries Ruth. The happy end is expressed in the episode after the birth of Ruth's son when Naomi, praised by the women of the town, adopts her grandson. The book ends with the pedigree of David the King, Ruth's offspring.

III The book of Ruth: assessment of the styles of Russian versions

III.1 Interrelation between style of original and translated narrative texts

Many elements of a narrative are transmitted during a translation "automatically." A translator is limited by the original text and has to translate each semantic unit in some way. The meaning of the text should not be changed. The translator cannot affect, say, the plot of the

narrative, basic characteristics of its heroes and heroines, etc. But the way how meaning is expressed strongly depends on the translator's preferences regardless of his translational strategy.

The area where translators have freedom of creative work can be shown using Bar-Efrat's concept of the three-fold structure of a narrative.⁵⁰ According to Bar-Efrat, a narrative consists of three strata: the stratum of language associated with style, the stratum of meanings,⁵¹ and the stratum of ideas. The stratum of language includes the use of concrete words and sentences that form the stratum of meanings. In turn, the stratum of ideas devolves from the stratum of meanings through reasoning and generalization. On the one hand, the first stratum displays a great deal of narrative technique. On the other hand, the first stratum, which can be seen in the choice of concrete words and sentences, is the final result of any translation. From the point of view of literary criticism, the way of expressing meaning in the translated text has no less importance than preciseness of correspondence of the meaning.⁵² In other words, literary criticism raises the question of correlation between the style of the original and translated texts.

There is no single definition of style in modern philology.⁵³ In general, English language scholars usually define style descriptively. For instance, Nida and Taber characterise style as "the patterning of choice made by a particular author within the resources and limitations of the language and of the literary genre in which he is working."⁵⁴ Such definition is too general. It does not explain the nature of the linguistic choice. As a result, style can be understood very narrowly. Thus, some authors explain stylistic features of a text by the individual traits of the writer or by the *modus operandi* of the text.⁵⁵ Sometimes translators consider the stylistic issues only in the context of rhetoric techniques⁵⁶ and thus exclude individual and social components of style. Some scholars even ignore the problems of style altogether.⁵⁷

This lack of interest in style can be explained by the idea, prevalent in circles of English-speaking authors, that semantic analysis must cover all aspects of a word or an expression. Therefore, the shades of meaning concerning style should be included in the general characteristic of a semantic unit. Nevertheless, this approach has its minuses.

⁵⁰ Bar-Efrat:197.

⁵¹ Bar-Efrat calls this stratum "the stratum of what is represented ...by words"; and, thus, he implies the semantic fields of words. Therefore, this stratum can be named, in linguistic language, the stratum of meanings.

⁵² It is very clear in the translation of poetry where translators often miss some shades of meaning in order to preserve the aesthetic form.

⁵³ The most well-known theories of style for today are descriptive (textual) and functional (pragmatic) stylistics, both of which are considered in the present paper. Besides, there is a structural approach to the study of style which is close to the pragmatic approach. It concentrates mainly on study of stylistic layers in language, while pragmatic stylistics is concerned with-stylistic use in communicational situations. See LLED:492-493.

⁵⁴ Nida, Taber:209.

⁵⁵ Nida 1964:221.

⁵⁶ See De Waard, Nida:103-144.

⁵⁷ See Beekman, J., J. Callow, *Translating the Word of God*, Russian Edition, Noah, St. Petersburg, 1994.

Firstly, it is too complicated. For example, Beekman and Callow propose 9 stages of a semantic analysis of a word. The example of analysis of just one word takes 12 pages in their book.⁵⁸

Secondly, it is not exhaustive. Even knowing all semantic aspects of an idiom, a translator still has innumerable ways of expressing it in the language of translation. It is especially true for modern languages with a long literary history, which are much more flexible and synonymic than Biblical Hebrew. For example, the semantic expression “old man” is quite clear. But it can be translated into Russian as *старик* (emotionally neutral word), *старичок* (“a small old man”), *старикан* (“an unpleasant old man”, slang), *старец* (“a respectable old man,” archaism), *старикашка* (“a funny old man”, slang), etc. *A priori* semantic analysis does not regulate the word-choice of a translator. Thus, it is very hard to explain why the word זָקֵן is translated as *старик* in Judge 19:16 of the Synodal Version and as *старец* in 2 Kings 6:32 of the same translation.

An alternative to the descriptive approach to style was proposed by the Russian philologist Vinogradov and was commonly accepted in Russian philology. It is a so called “functional definition of style.” According to Vinogradov, “style is... a totality of techniques of use, choice and combination of means of communication in a certain sphere of language, ... (the means) that contrast with other means of expressions which serve for other goals and fulfill other functions in the linguistic social practice of the given nation.”⁵⁹ Style is defined by a particular socio-communicative situation of its user and, therefore, can be understood only together with an understanding of this situation. An explanation of a given stylistic use is possible only after an analysis of the personality of the speaker (his individuality, social position or even mood), his interlocutor, the character and goal of the communication, etc.⁶⁰ For example, the word *старец* (“old man”, see above) can be used in a conversation with religious Orthodox individuals, but it is inappropriate in the official language. This word may carry a nuance of sarcasm as in a description of an extravagant (from the point of view of the speaker) old man but it can also show special respect for a certain person.

According to Vinogradov, fictional literature has the most compound stylistic character. Style of literature is formed from a complex mixture of styles of oral and written speech.⁶¹ There are a number of factors that influence the style of a piece of literary art: general development and tendencies of the written language, genre, individuality of the writer, etc. But the basic situation that governs the style of fiction is a monologue. It is very clear in respect of narrative (*сказ*),

⁵⁸ Beekman, Callow: 78-89.

⁵⁹ Vinogradov 1955: 73 (In the present study, all translations from Russian and Hebrew are mine – *A. P.*)

⁶⁰ Anichkov: 203-205.

which is a transitional form of literature on its way from oral to written speech. Vinogradov defines narrative as “a kind of combined stylistic form of literature, which is realized by combination of homogenous monologue formations appearing in social practices of communication.”⁶² A narrator speaks before his audience and wants to get its interest, to attract its attention, to affect its opinion and influence its mood.⁶³ To reach this goal, he uses all skills available to him that he acquired in the process of everyday communication: retelling of events, persuasion, polemics, etc. Also, he follows certain patterns accepted in the society for telling stories, and this forms the genre of narrative. He relies on his rhetorical experience using techniques that were successful in previous acts of communication, and thus he creates his individual style.⁶⁴ In other words, the style of the narrative depends on three factors: general stylistic norms, genre of the narrative, and individuality of the narrator.

The style of narrative absorbs many other styles when a narrator depicts situations where these styles are appropriate. For example, often narrative involves dialogues which show characters and individuality of its fictional heroes through imitation of their individual styles.

Assessment of style is an inevitable process during reading of or listening to a text. Even if a speaker or a writer does not display any consistent style, his reader or listener notices this and draws certain conclusions. For example, Golub shows that semantic inconsistency of lexical use produces a comic effect that can be used as a specific stylistic technique.⁶⁵ Confusion of styles may serve as a characterization of a speaker as an uneducated person.⁶⁶

The great importance of style in the process of communication makes the task of a Bible translator very difficult. Indeed, a translator and his readers live in the same linguistic environment and this demands a definiteness and clarity that cannot be reached during the translator’s reading of a biblical text in its original language.⁶⁷ Therefore, the translator should involve some stylistic nuances that are absent in the original to make explicit literary qualities of the narrative for modern readers.

Stylistic assessment of a text is an unconscious action. The aesthetic value of the text must be understandable for a reader without additional explanations. Different languages have different means of expressiveness. Therefore, the rhetorical techniques used in translation should not necessarily be the same as in the original text. For example, an accumulation of synonyms

⁶¹ Ibid, pp. 50-54.

⁶² Ibid, p. 34.

⁶³ For a detailed description of the situation of narrating and classification of deixical elements of narrative see Paducheva (pp. 258-271).

⁶⁴ Vinogradov believes that individual style is a late phenomenon. For example, in Russian literature it appeared only in XIX century (Ibid, p. 73).

⁶⁵ Golub: 15-16.

⁶⁶ This stylistic technique was commonly used in the novels of M. Zoshenko, N. Leskov and other writers.

⁶⁷ See Nida 1964:222-223.

for emphasis is an acceptable rhetorical tool in both, Russian and Hebrew.⁶⁸ On the other hand, close repetition of the same word is a norm in OT narrative, but it is a serious defect from the point of view of style in modern literary Russian. In this case, a translator should use other linguistic means (for instance, using the richness of Russian synonymy) to reach the given rhetorical goal.⁶⁹

In this paper, we present a stylistic analysis of three Russian translations of the book of Ruth: the Synodal Version and the translations by Braginsky and Yunz. *A priori*, stylistic analysis of a translation means to explain the choices for verbal expressions for the message without focusing on the content of the message. It can be divided into two parts, analysis of style *per se* and analysis of literary style.

1. Analysis of the style *per se*

This analysis includes the translator's understanding of the nature, character, and goal of the text, alongside with an explanation of lexical and syntactic choices of the translation from the perspective of its appropriateness to certain stylistic norms. The style of translation should be consistent and free from mistakes, complying with stylistic rules of the language of the translation. This aspect of stylistic analysis is extensively considered in the books on the theory of Bible translation.⁷⁰

2. Analysis of the literary (narrative) style

The style of translation should show consistency with narrative art. It should present valid characters of the narrative, clear points of views of the narrator and his personages, appropriate emotional background, etc. The translator may change some narrative techniques or involve new ones according to norms of the modern literary language. But he should demonstrate clear and consistent understanding of the artistic character of the narrative and ability to create adequate pictures by means of his native language.

The interrelation between artistic qualities of the Hebrew narrative and its different translations can be understood after an analysis of the linguistic situations⁷¹ of the translations. According to Lyons, the peculiarities of a text, which we identified as style, "can only be

⁶⁸ Bar-Efrat:216-217; Golub:28.

⁶⁹ Exceptions are acceptable if the word-repetition plays a specific stylistic role. For instance, in John 1:3, it demonstrates John's individual style and, hence, should not be changed.

⁷⁰ E.g. Nida 1969:157-159.

⁷¹ The definition of linguistic situation was proposed by Gak (p. 359-361). According to Gak, "the situation is a part of reality that is reflected in the language... The situation is formed as a result of coordination of material objects and their conditions, and it is expressed in a saying." Zvegintzev (p. 176-189) develops this definition and shows that a linguistic situation in general is equal to the reflection and comprehension of the world, perceived and logically expressed in the human mind. Zvegintzev claims that every particular communicative situation is a realisation of a global situation in a concrete act of communication. In other words, to analyse the communicative situation for a narrative means to explain the narrator's state of mind during the production of the text: his understanding of his role and goals in the communication, his expectations from his audience, etc.

explained on the assumption that they have developed for communication in face-to-face interaction.”⁷² Lyons involves a category of canonical situation. According to his definition, the canonical situation should satisfy three conditions:

- 1). contextual unity: both sides should be involved in the same communicational context;
- 2). time unity; and 3). space unity: both sides share a certain space and time moment.

All communications that do not comply with these conditions are considered by Lyons as non-canonical. Such communications should involve a certain correlation for the use of deixical elements.⁷³ This correlation defines certain deixical and emotional projections, that is, a communicative strategy that allows to find common points between the messenger and the receptor. For instance, the note “I will be back soon” is very ambiguous, if it is found by a person who knows nothing about its origin. This note raises questions, such as: “Who will be back? To which place? When?” The deixical projection for this case consists in the answers to these questions. On the other hand, the sentence “I will be back soon” may have very different tinges: threatening, comforting, flirt, etc. The emotional projection should specify the emotional background for the writing of this note.

A priori the situation of a written narrative is not canonical. Apresyan⁷⁴ proposes the model of deixical projection in narrative involving a figure of an Observer (*Наблюдатель*).⁷⁵ Narrative can be interpreted as the Observer’s report to the Listeners about the events happening in the narrative fictional world. Paducheva claims that the narrator’s appearance in a text may be divided into two categories: spatiotemporal and emotional-ideological.⁷⁶ The spatiotemporal elements include orientation in time and orientation in space of the narrator and personages of his narrative. The emotional-ideological sphere of a narrative is focused on elements that present the emotional condition, worldview and value system of the narrator and his personages. The emotional-ideological narrative stratum is important for techniques of characterisation and the presentation of points of view.

In biblical narrative, the relationship between Observer and Listeners is very primitive. The Observer is placed in some neutral place “somewhere in Israel”. He narrates past events and implies that his listeners share his context. The biblical narrator can be compared to a storyteller speaking before his audience. Therefore, the linguistic situation implied in biblical narrative is very close to the canonical one.

⁷² Lyons:637

⁷³ Lyons (*Ibid*) defines deixis as “the location of persons, objects, events, processes, and activities being talked about, or referred to, in relation to the spatiotemporal context created and sustained by the act of utterance.”

⁷⁴ Apresyan, Y. D., “Deixis in Lexica and Grammar and Naïve Model of the World,” in *Semantics and Informatics*, v.28, Moscow, 1986.

⁷⁵ It is analogous to the notion of a “narrator” in Narrative Criticism (Bar-Efrat:14-16).

⁷⁶ Paducheva:215

The appearance of a translator seriously complicates the situation. The role of the translator cannot be defined unambiguously.

For example, a simultaneous interpretation represents one of the possible situations. A simultaneous interpreter receives the information contained in the text only by small portions. He does not see the whole picture of the narrative and, hence, he cannot analyse its literary specific, cannot render the nuances that are important for forming the characters. Many of the artistic traits are lost during such translation. This situation of a formal written translation is similar to the situation of a simultaneous interpretation. Such translation reproduces a formal replica of narrative rather than narrative itself.

Another situation is when the translator retells the original text. In that case the translator is concerned mostly with rendering the message of the narrative, paying little attention to literary techniques in the original text. This situation can be demonstrated in the translation methodology of “mental pictures”⁷⁷. According to this method, while reading the original text the translator forms in his mind a picture of the narrative which he recreates in his translation by means that are appropriate to the language of translation. The main principle of the situation of retelling is that the translator substitutes the narrator. The great plus of this strategy is that the translator receives the opportunity to reproduce the text of a great artistic value. On the other hand, the strategy of the replacement of the narrator is very subjective. Much depends on the translator's understanding of the text, his narrative skill. It is hard to establish in this strategy any rules or restrictions. Sometimes the retold text has little in common with the original text,⁷⁸ though it is not an inevitable feature of the strategy of retelling.

I propose an analysis of retelling based on the scheme of narrative communication proposed by Shmelyov⁷⁹ and Schmid⁸⁰.

According to Shmelyov⁸¹, the model of communication in narrative or poetry differs from that in canonical situations. In a literary communication, both Messenger (Narrator) and addressees are fictional. The object of the writer's communication is not a reader but an addressee depicted in the narrative explicitly⁸² or implicitly. The scheme⁸³ of narrative communication may be presented as following:

⁷⁷ Daniel C. A. Jr., What Is The Picture?, *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 31 No. 4 (October, 1980): 423-430

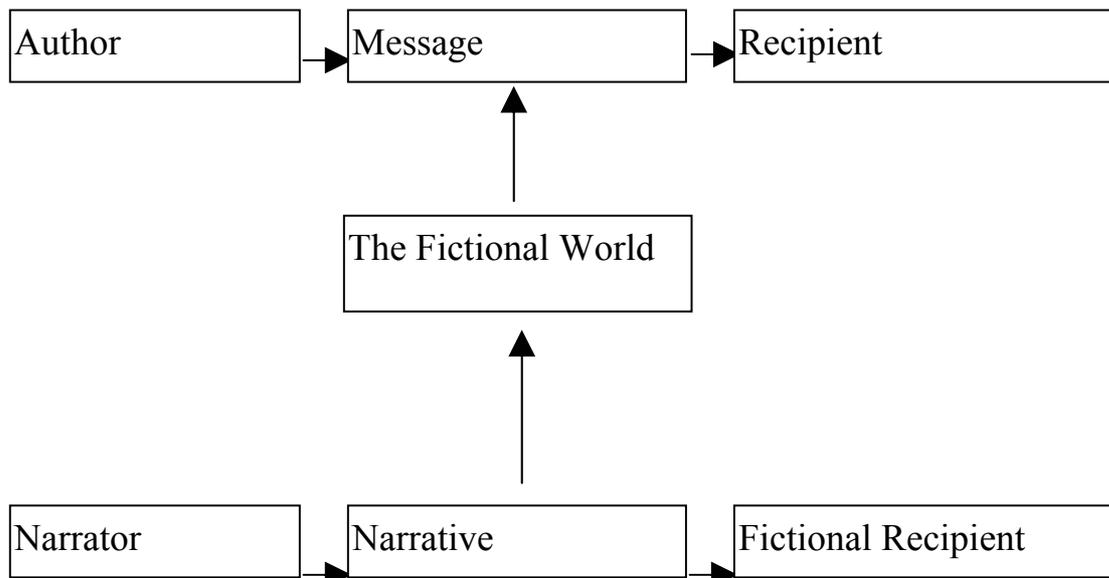
⁷⁸ For example, so called socio-semiotic translations place the biblical narrative in relation to modern reality drastically changing spatiotemporal, ideological, social, and cultural elements of the original text (see Waard, Nida:223-224).

⁷⁹ Shmelyov, A. D., *Russian Language and the Reality Beyond the Language*, Moscow: Yaziki Slavyanskoy Kulturi, 2002 (in Russian).

⁸⁰ Schmid, V., *Narratology*, Moscow: Yaziki Slavyanskoy Kulturi, 2002 (in Russian).

⁸¹ Shmelyov:239-243.

⁸² For instance, in novels which are designed as a diary, or letters, or a report.



Schmid develops this scheme involving the notions of “abstract author” and “abstract reader.” In his opinion, the narrative communication includes the following elements:

1. Real Author: A person who writes a book.
2. Abstract Author: An image of the Real Author in the text. An abstract author is not a fictional figure but rather “a totality of the signs that describes the personality of the writer.”⁸⁴
3. Narrator: A fictional person who tells the story which is the object of the narrative.
4. Secondary Narrators. Personages of the narrative who narrate inside the narrative.
5. Fictional Addressee (Reader). Fictional person(s) to whom the narrative is addressed. A fictional addressee can be seen, on the one hand, in the narrator’s expectation of certain reaction of his addressees and, on the other hand, in sharing of a certain communicative codes and linguistic norms.⁸⁵
6. Abstract Addressee. An implied reader, an image of a real person who understands the aesthetical and ideological position of the author and to whom the narrative factually is directed. The difference between Abstract and Fictional Addressees is clear, if the Fictional Addressee is expressed explicitly. It can be seen vividly in the case of irony, parody, etc. Nevertheless, sometimes the distinction between these two categories is quite uncertain.⁸⁶
7. A Real Reader. A real person who reads the book and whose reaction to the narrative may differ from what was expected by the author.

⁸³ The scheme is taken from Schmid:35.

⁸⁴ Schmid:51.

⁸⁵ Schmid:100-101.

⁸⁶ See Schmid:62-63.

During the process of retelling the Bible, a translator inevitably replaces the Abstract Author. Indeed, any Bible translation shows not so much the ancient author as the translator's interpretation of this person. In translation, the hermeneutical and theological preferences of the translator come into particular prominence. The Abstract Reader of any Bible translation also does not coincide with that of the original narrative. The Abstract Reader is always a representative of the social group for which the given translation is meant.⁸⁷

The problem for a translator consists in reproducing the figures of Narrator and Fictional Addressees. Here are two basic options:

1. A translator may show Narrator or Fictional Addressee or both as contemporaries for recipients of his translation. In other words, the translated text may present a narrative told by a modern person to modern persons. This strategy may be chosen either deliberately (for example, to make the Biblical message relevant) or unintentionally (if the translator does not understand the roles of Narrator and Fictional Addressees in the narrative).
2. Narrator and Fictional Addressee can appear in the translation as persons of an ancient world. In that case a translator presents the communication that took place between the people of antiquity and that was not addressed to modern readers, though he makes this communication clear using codes and norms accepted in the modern language.

Summing up, we can distinguish three important points of analysis of the literary style of a translation:

1. Situation of translation presented in the text that defines the "literariness" of a translated text.
2. Characters of Narrator and Fictional Addressee in the text.
3. Spatiotemporal and emotional-ideological elements which express the narrative situation on lexical levels.

Let us begin the analysis of the translations of Ruth with the consideration of their style *per se*.

⁸⁷ See e.g. Nida, Taber:31-32.

III.2 Russian translations of the book of Ruth: general analysis of the style

The Synodal Version

An average Russian reader is familiar with the book of Ruth from the so-called Synodal Bible (or Synodal Version), that is, from the most authoritative Russian Bible translation. The commission of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, with Khvolson as its head, worked from 1869 to 1876 to accomplish this version.⁸⁸ The translation appeared as an alternative to previous translations⁸⁹ which did not pay much attention to Orthodox traditional interpretation of the Scriptures and had provoked a rapid growth of Evangelical movements in Russia. The Synodal Commission for the translation of the Bible into Russian was interested in such a translation that would conform to the Orthodox doctrine⁹⁰ and could be a guide for Orthodox believers in their understanding of the Bible. The Synodal Version did not have the goal to replace the Slavonic Bible in its liturgical and doctrinal use, but to help people who did not understand Slavonic.⁹¹ This purpose of the translation defined the character of its style.

1. The Synodal Version is a literal translation. It means that there is a tendency to translate each Hebrew word with its single Russian equivalent⁹² whenever possible. The Synodal Version translates literally even all phraseological expressions. For example, מְצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ is always translated as *я нашел (снискал) благоволение в очах твоих* (“I have found mercy in your eyes”).

The expression תְּמוּלֵי שְׁלוֹשׁ (3:11) throughout the Synodal Version is translated as *вчера и третьего дня. Позавчера*, that means “the day before yesterday”, would be the more

⁸⁸ Getse:161-162.

⁸⁹ Such as the translation of the Russian Bible Society, published in 1823-1824 and banned in Russia soon after its appearance.

⁹⁰ Even a superficial comparison of the Synodal Version with the previous translations (translation of the Russian Bible Society, translation of Pavlovsky) shows that the Synodal Commission actively used the versions against which it fought. The work of the Commission consisted, to a considerable extent, in censorship of those translations.

⁹¹ It must have been for people who did not have even an initial education, because Slavonic was studied in all gymnasia.

⁹² This equivalent may be expressed with more than one Russian word.

regular Russian word, but it is avoided because it does not contain the root *trpi* “three” that would correspond to the Hebrew root שָׁלֵשׁ.

Sometimes the context does not allow the same correspondence between Hebrew and Russian idioms in different passages. In that case, the Synodal Version translates the Hebrew expression with two different Russian words; but, as a rule, these words must have the same root.⁹³ This rule is not so strict in translating different morphological forms of the same Hebrew word. For example, the word נַעֲרָה (2:5; 4:12) is translated as *молодая женщина* (“a young woman”) but the plural form of the same word (נַעֲרֹת) is rendered as *служанки* (“maids, female servants”).

2. Since most of the Church Fathers and the Orthodox teachers used the Septuagint and the Slavonic Bible in their writings, the Synodal Bible is strongly influenced by these Bible versions. Some members of the Commission even proposed to use the Greek Bible as a base for the Old Testament portions of the new Russian translation; but bishop Phylaret, the chief editor of the Synodal Version, insisted on translating from the MT.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, in all instances where the Hebrew text seemed unclear the translators followed the Septuagint.⁹⁵ Chistovich notes: “All the translations of the biblical books used the Hebrew Bible, but they were accomplished under the authority of Greek Bible.”⁹⁶ Some modern editions of the Synodal Version⁹⁷ represent a “unified” translation from MT and LXX. It is noteworthy that the “translation from Septuagint” differs from the translation from MT only in certain phrases, which are given in parenthesis.

The dependence of the Synodal Version on the Slavonic Bible is very clear. Sometimes the Synodal Version follows the Slavonic text literally.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, in the translation of Ruth the

⁹³ For example, it renders the derivations from the root נָכַר (with the meaning “to recognize, to acknowledge”) with the forms of the verb *принять* (“to accept”) in 2:10,19 or *распознать* (“to recognize”) in 3:7, because the previous word is irrelevant in the given context.

⁹⁴ The reasons for that decision was a certain stability of the MT and lack of some passages of the Hebrew Bible in the Septuagint (see Chistovich:334-335).

⁹⁵ The Commission used the text of the Septuagint published in Leipzig in 1697.

⁹⁶ Chistovich:338.

⁹⁷ For example, the Jubilee Edition of the Moscow Patriarchy (Moscow, 1988-1991).

⁹⁸ Compare, for example, different translations of Ruth 1:3: “И умре Елемелех муж Ноеминин и остася она и оба сыны ея” (Slavonic translation), “И умер Елимелех, муж Ноемини, и осталась она с двумя сыновьями своими” (Synodal Version), “Потом Елимелех, муж Ноемини умер, оставив ее с двумя сыновьями”(Yunz’s Translation).

Synodal Version almost never borrows Slavonic words.⁹⁹ Moreover, it takes into account the change in meaning of Slavonic words that have the same root or even coincide in form with words in modern Russian.¹⁰⁰

3. From the standpoint of modern stylistics, the Synodal Version contains an innumerable number of stylistic mistakes, such as pleonasms, frequent repetitions of the same word, lexical insufficiencies, disharmonies, etc.

But it makes no sense to speak about the style of the Synodal Version in terms of a literary approach. The Russian Orthodox Church denies the possibility of considering the Bible as a piece of literature and insists on a confrontation between the “sacral” language of the Bible and the “secular” style. Thus, the Orthodox publicist D. Nazvanov writes: “They (*the Bible Society – A.P.*) promise us to translate texts from Greek into Russian in the style of secular prose and poetry of the 19th century. But what is good for novels and love elegies is unsuitable for prayers and ecclesiastical hymns. The style of the language is determined by its content. The Holy Script and Sacral Texts are alien namely to “literarity” (*литературности*), that is, to everything that is valuable in the works of fictional literature: ... figment of imagination, imaginative language of descriptions, psychological nuances and human *passion and feelings* (*italics of Nazvanov*) as its content.”¹⁰¹ The translators of the Synodal Version did not care about stylistic redaction.¹⁰²

Moreover, they did not focus on the clarity of the text.¹⁰³ Sometimes the translation of the Synodal Version is confusing. For example, literal translations of idiomatic constructions seem very unclear. Thus, the phrase from 3:7, וַיֹּאכַל בְּעֵז וַיִּשְׂתֶּה וַיֵּיטֵב לְבוֹ, is translated as *Вооз наелся, напился и развеселил сердце свое* (“Boaz ate, drank and cheered up (or amused) his heart”). An average reader, unfamiliar with the specifics of the Synodal Version, will surely understand that “cheering up one’s heart” was a separate action that took place after Boaz’s supper, though it is not clear what it consisted in.

⁹⁹ The Synodal Version was envisioned for uneducated individuals who could not read the Slavonic Bible; therefore, it made no sense to include Slavonic words in its text. The vocabulary of the Synodal Version is very simple. Borrowings from Slavonic or Greek are accepted only in the translation of special religious terms (e.g. *skhnh/--скинья*) or foreign words (e.g. *porfu,ra – порфира*). Other borrowings (such as *сей* instead of *этот*) are commonly spread archaisms existing in the modern language.

¹⁰⁰ For example, the Synodal Version translates *הַמְטִפֵּחַ* “veil, cloak” (3:15) as *верхняя одежда* (“outwear”), though the translation of the Slavonic Bible *покрывало* (“veil” in poetic style) is also acceptable. But the word *покрывало* has many meanings, the most common of which is “cloth, coverlet;” and, to avoid confusion, the Synodal Version changes it to a simpler and monosemantic one.

¹⁰¹ Nazvanov:283-284.

¹⁰² On the other hand, the Synodal Version has been forming ecclesiological Russian for more than a century; and now its language has become almost normative in some marginal sociological groups, such as Russian evangelicals.

¹⁰³ It can be explained by the general attitude of the Orthodox clergy to the Bible. Thus, Bishop Mephody claims that sacral mystical texts are vague in the original language; and, therefore, it makes no sense to make them clear in Russian translations (Mephody:110).

The lack of clarity in the translation produces an effect of mysticism in some places of the text. Thus, the standard formula of blessing in 3:11, **וְעָשָׂה-חֵיל בְּאַפְרָתָהּ**, which is translated with a very vague phrase *приобретай богатство в Ефратах* (“do acquire riches in Ephratah” or “do buy precious things in Ephrafah”), should be interpreted as a prophecy which should be understood metaphorically or allegorically.¹⁰⁴

There are a certain number of cases in the text of the Synodal Version which show unusual interpretation of the MT. In these cases the translators did not consider the LXX or Slavonic Bible. The analysis of the translation of these passages shows that, as a rule, they either could be interpreted as contradictory or might have caused some unethical associations, from the Orthodox point of view. Seemingly, here we deal with censorship which was noticed in the Synodal Version by many of its critics.¹⁰⁵

Let us demonstrate some examples of such translations.

1:16

וּבְאֵשֶׁר תִּלְיִנִי אֲלִין¹⁰⁶ (MT) kai. ou- eva.n auvlisqh/j auvlisqh,somai (LXX) и идеже водворишеса водворюся и азъ (Slavonic) и где ты жить будешь, там и я буду жить (Synodal Version)

Here the Synodal Version changes the sememe “to spend a night,” as used in the original text and all the significant translations, to the sememe “to reside” (*жить*). It is noteworthy that in 3:13 the word **לִינִי** is translated as *переночуй* (“spend the night”). The change is made to avoid contradiction: Ruth promises Naomi to spend the nights with her, but in chapter 3 she spends a night with Boaz. Therefore, Ruth can be suspected of breaking her promise.

2:21

עִם-הַנְּעָרִים (MT) meta. tw/n paidari,wn (LXX) к отроковицам (Slavonic) с моими служанками (Synodal Version)

¹⁰⁴ Glagolev:223.

¹⁰⁵ For example, Rizhsky (pp. 27-28) claims that “the worst defect of the Synodal translation ... is the deliberate distorting of the meaning of the original text in order to adjust it to the Christian doctrines.”

Here one finds a textual difference between MT, LXX and the Slavonic Bible.¹⁰⁷ While MT and LXX use the masculine form of the word נַעַר the Slavonic translation has its feminine form. But since in 2:8 Boaz orders Ruth to be with his maidservants (נַעֲרֹתַי), the use of the masculine form may be considered as a contradiction. Besides, Ruth’s being with male servants could provoke unethical associations. Therefore, the Synodal Version chooses the Slavonic variant.

3:1

מִנְחָה אֲבַקֵּשׁ לָךְ (MT) mh. zhth,sw soi avna,pausing (LXX) не поищу ли (Slavonic)
не поискать ли тебе (Synodal Version)

The sememe “to seek” in the Hebrew, Greek, and Slavonic texts is expressed with forms of the 1st person. The Synodal Version changes it to the form of the 2nd person. Indeed, Naomi claims that she will seek “rest” for Ruth. But, in practice, she did not do anything to accomplish her intention. It could be interpreted as a contradiction.

3:3

וְרָחַצְתָּ (MT) lou,sh (LXX) | измыйся (Slavonic) умойся (Synodal Version)

The Synodal Version changes the word “to wash oneself” to “to wash one’s face” in order to avoid the possible understanding that in cleansing her whole body Ruth prepared herself for the sexual contact.¹⁰⁸

4:5-6

נַחֲלָתוֹ (MT) klhronomi,aj (LXX) наследие (Slavonic) удел (SynodalVersion)

¹⁰⁶ Here the underlying shows the parallels in different translations.

¹⁰⁷ This difference is not justified by early texts. Mihaylov (1908, p.12-15) showed that the Slavonic (Cyrillic) translation was made from the Lucianic Version which possibly differed from MT in this passage. On the other hand, he claims that “the translation is not literal at all. Oppositely, it often departs from a letter of the original text for the sake of demands and refinement of Ancient Slavic” (p.13, quoted from Kamchatnov:33). So the textual difference between the Greek and Slavonic Bibles can be explained either by *Vorlage* peculiarity or by the translator’s redaction.

¹⁰⁸ In Russian Orthodox tradition taking a bath was considered a “fleshy pleasure” and was associated with moral impurity.

The Synodal Version specifies the meaning of the word מַלְחָנָא replacing the broader sememe “inheritance” (resembled in LXX and the Slavonic Bible) with the narrower sememe “real estate.” Probably the translators decided that the fact that Boaz’s son was considered as Mahlon’s heir makes Jesus Christ’s genealogy (Matt 1:5) doubtful.¹⁰⁹ The Synodal Version makes the reader think that Mahlon’s name will be restored only on the fields but not on the heirs.¹¹⁰

The Translation of Braginsky

A more recent translation of Ruth was prepared by I. Braginsky for the World Literature Library project.¹¹¹ Braginsky believed that biblical narrative gives expression to the conflict between humanist and religious anti-humanist tendencies in the life of ancient Israel.¹¹² He contrasted Ruth with Judges. In his opinion, while Judges expresses the official ideology of religious authorities, Ruth represents a voice of the people. While Judges is written as an aloof ideological historiography that substitutes any human feeling with obedience to the upper class in the name of Yahweh, Ruth represents a story “about love, about everlasting conjugal faithfulness that comes to self-denial in its devotion and the aspiration for perpetuating the name of the beloved man.”¹¹³ While Judges recounts deadly feuds between nationalities, Ruth is full of ideas of internationalism.

This evaluation of Ruth determined the translation’s style, which presents the narrative as a folktale. Stylistic peculiarities of Braginsky’s translation can be described as following:

1. Of the three translations considered in this paper, Braginsky’s is the most poetic. The aesthetic expressiveness of his translation is reached by the use of peculiar wording. Braginsky uses archaic language intrinsic to rural religious folklore. His lexicon includes many old-fashioned,¹¹⁴ poetic words,¹¹⁵ and loan-words from Slavonic.¹¹⁶ His texts show examples of archaic morphology: *ляг* instead of *ложись* (3:4), *крыла* instead of *крылья* (2:12), etc. On the other hand, one can find a great number of words and expressions that belong to the stylistic norm of rural dialects: *возвернул* (1:21), *заплакать в голос* (1:10), *ломоть* (2:13), *отсель* (2:8).

¹⁰⁹ See *Full Orthodox Theological Encyclopedic Dictionary*, ed. by Moscow Patriarchy, published by P. P. Soykin pp. 1971-1972.

¹¹⁰ Glagolev:22-23.

¹¹¹ It was first published in *Poetry and Prose of the Ancient East*, Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, Moscow, 1973.

¹¹² Braginsky, *At the Root of Artistic Word*:31.

¹¹³ Braginsky, *The Book of Ruth*:714.

¹¹⁴ *изножье* (3:4), *доброхот* (2:19), *молодка* (2:5), *чужеземка* (3:10).

¹¹⁵ *родич* (3:12), *вызволить* (3:13), *простри крыла* (3:9).

¹¹⁶ *чрево* (1:11), *десница* (1:13), *отрок* (2:21), *пестовать* (16), etc.

Many words of Braginsky's translation are very dynamic and expressive. For example, Braginsky translates the words of Naomi when she tries to persuade her daughters-in-law: 3:11, *הֲלֹהֶן תִּשְׁבְּרִנָּה*, (*неужели вы протомитесь взаперти*, "will you really languish under lock?"). Already this one phrase vividly pictures the regretful life of women who spend long years like being in prison.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, it shows Naomi's ardent wish to save her daughter-in-law from this sorrowful fate.¹¹⁸ This phrase differs strikingly from the colorless, formal translation of the Synodal Version: *можно ли вам ждать* ("could you wait").

2. Braginsky does not present the book as a text designated for modern readers. Rather, he invites his reader to look at the text of Ruth from the perspective of a historian¹¹⁹ and to understand, if possible, the ancient narrator with all his superstitions, primitiveness, and naivety.¹²⁰ As a result, his translation has a tendency to literalness.¹²¹ Sometimes it is very close to the Synodal Version, but it avoids breaking the norms of literary Russian.¹²²

3. Braginsky's aspiration to render the original text as literally as possible from the viewpoint of literary norm caused him to create a lot of pseudo-idioms, i.e. expressions that do not exist in Russian as idioms but seem to a reader to be idioms in a foreign language.¹²³ Occasionally, Braginsky simply follows the Synodal Version.¹²⁴ As a rule, it happens when he translates idioms frequently used in biblical narrative. Possibly, Braginsky hopes that his readers are familiar with these expressions from the Synodal Version that had existed for almost hundred years by the time his translation was published. On the other hand, in the Soviet Union an average reader did not have access to Bible translations.

Usually, Braginsky shows the idiomatic character of an expression more explicitly than the Synodal Version. He does it in different ways. One of Braginsky's techniques of constructing pseudo-idioms is the use of similarities between Hebrew and Russian phraseological

¹¹⁷See Shmelyov:354.

¹¹⁸ by the use of the word *неужели*.

¹¹⁹ In fact, we will see that often Braginsky's translation presents his original interpretation of the text. The idea of "historical" translation means a specific translational strategy rather than a special closeness of the translation to the original text.

¹²⁰ Braginsky, *The Book of Ruth*, p. 714.

¹²¹ Such literalness is typical for the translation of ancient sources. Nida (1986, p.221) calls this type of translation "philological translation". The general idea of such translation is that its main interest concerns thematic structure and style of the original text.

¹²² E.g. compare three translation of Ruth's words in 3:9 «я Руфь, раба твоя; простри крыло твое на рабу твою» (Synodal Version); «Руфь, раба твоя. Простри крыла над твоею рабой» (Braginsky); «Рут, служанка твоя. Возьми меня под защиту» (Yunz). Braginsky follows the Synodal Version very closely, but adjusts the governing function of the verb *простереть* that was used incorrectly in the Synodal Version.

¹²³ In this paper, the word idiom is understood in Anichkov's definition (Anichkov:146-164) as words and word-combinations appropriate to a given language. According to Anichkov, it includes a broad spectrum of turns of speech from typical phrases to proverb and sayings. Here we do not apply the terms "figurative" or "metaphorical" to the expressions (though some of them have a metaphorical character) in order to stress that they are peculiar in a certain language and cannot be transmitted automatically during translation.

¹²⁴ E.g. 3:7 "Boaz ate and drank and cheered up his heart".

expressions. Table 1 shows some examples of such constructions. The underlined elements show the similarity between Russian idiom and Braginsky’s translation.

Table 1

v.	Hebrew idiom	Braginsky’s translation	Russian idiom
1:11	הַעוֹד־לִי בָנִים בְּמִעֵי	Родятся <u>во чреве</u> моем еще сыновья ¹²⁵	Зачать <u>во чреве</u>
2:4	יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם ¹²⁶	Господь вам <u>в помощь</u>	Бог <u>в помощь</u>
3:13	חַי־יְהוָה	Как <u>жив Господь</u>	<u>Жив Господь</u> ¹²⁷ ог Ей <u>Богу</u>
4:10	וְלֹא־יִכָּרֵת שֵׁם הַיְמִת מֵעַם אֲחִיו וּמִשְׁעַר מְקוֹמוֹ	Не исчезнет из ворот родного города	<u>Не исчезнет</u> из памяти народа

Another of Braginsky’s techniques consists in a deliberate use of abnormal phrases, introduced for the effect of creating the impression of foreign speech. For example, the expression אֲלֵיָּהּ לְדַבֵּר in 1:18, if translated literally, presents a stylistic mistake; the insufficiency of words results in a lack of clarity.¹²⁸ To avoid this problem the Synodal Version and Yunz concretise the translation of the word לְדַבֵּר (speak): *уговаривать* (“persuade”), *отговаривать* (“dissuade”). Braginsky preserves the original construction but does not translate the confusing word אֲלֵיָּהּ: *и больше уже не говорила* (and she stopped speaking; *к ней* (to her) – omitted). He uses a phrase whose stylistic wrongness can be explained by its idiomatic character. On the other hand, the concreteness of the Synodal Version and Yunz’s translation results in a too straight-forward interpretation of the character of the dialogue between Ruth and Naomi. Did

¹²⁵ The expression “to be born in a womb” is very extravagant. Indeed, “to be born” means “to get out from a womb”. Moreover, it makes the whole sentence meaningless: It sounds as if “sons will be born and marry you in my womb”.

¹²⁶ A literal translation of this idiom is unacceptable because it leads to a change of meaning. *Господь с вами* (The Lord be with you) is an expression of forgiveness.

¹²⁷ An expression from the Synodal Version.

¹²⁸ “She saw that she was insisting, and she stopped speaking to her”. It is not clear who stops speaking to whom and what kind of speaking is meant.

Naomi really dissuade Ruth from following her, or did she just test the seriousness of Ruth's intention? Braginsky invites his readers to answer this question on their own.¹²⁹

Along with creating new idioms, Braginsky incorporates a great number of regular Russian idioms that impart a poetical expressiveness to the language of his translation.¹³⁰

4. One of the characteristics of Braginsky's translation is an extensive use of word order inversions in sentences, with the goal of reproducing the expressive character of the language.¹³¹

Omissions of pronouns that belong as subjects to verbs¹³² create an impression of laconism.

5. In his translation, Braginsky strives to demonstrate explicitly peculiarities of Hebrew poetical style.¹³³ Thus, he maintains very clearly all cases of parallelism in the Hebrew text of Ruth.¹³⁴

Translating 2:15-16, he tries to show the rhyme created by the words תְּכַלִּימוּהָ-תְנַעֲרֵיהָ בָּהּ וְלֹא: *не обижайте ее – не укоряйте ее (nye obizhayte yeyo – nye ukoryayte yeyo)*.

Sometimes Braginsky imitates Hebrew turns of speech even when the original text does not contain them. One can see a very interesting solution to translating the wordplay in 1:19-20. Here the meaning of the name Naomi ("pleasant, sweet one") is used to contrast the name of the woman and her present sorrowful situation. Translators usually explain this play on words in footnotes. But Braginsky includes the explanation in his text, creating a parallelism that is absent in the original. Thus he translates the women's rhetorical question, הֲזֹאת נְעָמִי as *это ли Наоми, это ли сладкая* ("whether it is Naomi, whether it is a sweet one"). Accordingly, Naomi answers: "Do not name (*зовите*) me Naomi – a sweet one, but name me Mara – a bitter one".

Several times Braginsky imitates the use of a verb with an absolute infinitive that is not a characteristic of Hebrew poetry but rather an emphatic construction.¹³⁵ In the Slavonic Bible and

¹²⁹ It seems that Braginsky answers this question negatively (see part V.2 C of this paper).

¹³⁰ Compare, for example, translations of the expression אַל-תִּפְנְעֵי-בִי in 1:16: не принуждай "do not force" (Synodal Version), не вели "do not order" (Yunz), не гони прочь "do not get away" (Braginsky).

¹³¹ MRL:671.

¹³² e.g. 1:5 прожили (lived) instead of они прожили (they lived).

¹³³ It is not that Braginsky considers Ruth as poetry. The inclusion of elements borrowed from Hebrew poetry produces in Russian an "ornamental prose" (Schmid:263) rather than a poem.

¹³⁴ The translation of 1:21 provides an example of Braginsky's correction of the Synodal Version. The parallelism of the phrase אָנִי מְלֵאָה הַלְכֹתִי וְרִיקָם הֵשִׁיבֵנִי יְהוָה: is not seen in the Synodal Version: я вышла отсюда с достатком, а возвратил меня Господь с пустыми руками (I left from here well-off, and the Lord returned me with empty hands). To create the parallelism, Braginsky takes the Synodal Version translation of the lexeme וְרִיקָם: с пустыми руками "with empty hands" and constructs the first part of the parallelism in a similar way, translating מְלֵאָה as руки полны добра: "hands full of goods".

¹³⁵ Davidson:117-118.

the Synodal Version, such expressions were translated as verbs with nouns which have the same root;¹³⁶ and, this grammar construction is defined as a characteristic of “biblical language.”

Braginsky uses the “verb + noun” construction (imitation of Hebrew construction “verb + absolute infinitive”) even when translating word-combinations of heterogeneous words¹³⁷ or even single words.¹³⁸

5. Braginsky’s translation is not free from ideological bias. His style in describing the background of the story reveals his negative attitude to exploiters in society.

For example, Braginsky calls **הַנֶּעֶר הַנֹּצֵב עַל-הַקֹּצְרִים** as *отрок, надзирающий над жнецами* (the boy supervising the reapers). The word *надзирать* (*надзиратель*) – “to supervise (supervisor)” had a neutral connotation in the 19th century; but gradually it was replaced by its synonyms in most spheres of life, except for the area of prisons. In the second part of the 20th century, the sememe “jailor” became its main meaning. Although Braginsky may have referred to its archaic semantics, it has a strong negative association for the modern reader.

When translating the phrase **מִשְׂבֵּעַ הוֹתֵרָה** in 2:18, Braginsky does not use the sememe *сытый* (“full, well-fed”), which occurs in the Synodal Version and in Yunz’s translation. It is conforms to the atheistic commentaries on this passage presented in Yaroslavsky’s book “The Bible for Believers and Unbelievers¹³⁹” there the word **שְׂבֵעַ** is interpreted as a peculiar biblical euphemism for the feeling after having eaten the scanty meal.¹⁴⁰

The Translation of Yunz

E. Yunz published a new translation of Ruth in 1998. After graduating from Moscow State University, he worked as a translator of ancient Greek and Roman literature.¹⁴¹ Then he was invited by the Russian Bible Society to participate in a new translation of the Bible into Russian. He studied translation theory at Amsterdam Free University under the supervision of

¹³⁶ A similar construction exists in a narrow class of Russian idioms (e.g. ненавидеть лютой ненавистью, hate with bitter hatred). More often, the noun in this construction has a different root, but is close to the verb in its meaning (увидеть своими глазами (see with one’s own eyes); встать на ноги (get up on one’s feet)).

¹³⁷ 2:13 **וְהָיָה מִשְׂכָּרְתָּךְ שְׂלֵמָה מֵעַם** - наградит наградой “will reward with a reward.”

¹³⁸ 3:3 **סִכַּת** – умастись умашением “anoint with anointment.”

¹³⁹ Yaroslavsky, E., *The Bible For Believers and Unbelievers*, Moscow: GIPL, 1959 (in Russian).

¹⁴⁰ Yaroslavsky:358.

¹⁴¹ Yunz’s first special emphasis can be seen in his textual preferences. In the footnotes to his translation, Yunz many times refers to LXX and Vulgate and follows these translations in all unclear places of the MT.

Jan de Waard. It is no surprise that Yunz accepted ideas of functional equivalence. In his work, he followed methods popularised by Nida and de Waard.¹⁴²

In the preface to his book, Yunz characterises Ruth as “a miniature novel which skillfully depicts family relations and the system of moral values of that society.”¹⁴³ Yunz often stresses the story’s fictional character, which becomes apparent in its genre as well as in multiple historical discrepancies.¹⁴⁴ According to Yunz, the time of the narrative, the period of Judges, was chosen to create a specific utopia, in which people lived an ideal life without inter-tribal hostility and racial prejudices. For Yunz, the central character of the book is Ruth. In spite of apparent passivity, Ruth possesses great moral strength, expressed in the Hebrew word *hesed*. She endures all the vicissitudes of immigrant life with great courage and achieves a well-deserved position in the society.

The stylistic analysis of Yunz’s translation reveals the following features:

1. The vocabulary of Yunz’s translation contains many words and idiomatic expressions taken from modern colloquial Russian used in every-day communication. Examples are these:

1:19 *Да это никак Наоми?* “it looks that here is Naomi”

3:3 *Принарядись* «deck yourself up»

3:15 *Держи крепче* “hold fast”

3:17 *С пустыми руками* “with empty hands”

3:18 *Уладит* “will fix up”

3:22 *Прекрасно, ...что ты ходишь с его работницами.* “it is fine... that you walks arm-in-arm with my workers.”

At the same time, it is possible to find several examples of “officialese” or even bureaucratic language (*канцелярский стиль*).¹⁴⁵ This style is demonstrated very explicitly in the dialogue between Boaz and the other *goel*.¹⁴⁶

4:4 *я извещаю* «I advise»

4:4 *заяви об отказе* «announce renunciation»

4:6 *ставит под угрозу* “to jeopardize”

4:7 *участник сделки* «participant of transaction».

¹⁴² See, for example, J de Waard and E.A. Nida, *From One Language to Another. Functional Equivalence in Bible Translating*, Nashville, Camden, New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986.

¹⁴³ Yunz:38.

¹⁴⁴ For example, Yunz sees such discrepancy in the description of the escape of Naomi’s family from the fertile land of Bethlehem to the desert of Moab. At the same time, Bush (Act 1, Scene 1, Comment) explains that “the amount of rainfall in Palestine in a given year in modern times has varied widely from region to region.” Therefore, “a famine in Judah could well have left parts of Moab sufficiently unaffected to provide a haven.”

¹⁴⁵ E.g. 2:6 *уроженка*, “a resident”.

¹⁴⁶ Yunz, apparently, considers this dialogue as embedded in an official ceremony of renunciation of *goelut*. Yunz’s translation of the word *נָעַל* in 4:7 with a low colloquial word, *башмак*, must be considered a stylistic inconsistency.

Unlike Braginsky, Yunz never creates new forms for the translation of Hebrew idioms but looks for parallels in established expressions.¹⁴⁷ In 2:11, we can see that Yunz omits the idiom **תְּמוּלָּהּ שְׁלֹשׁוֹם** because he cannot find an appropriate correspondence for it.

The style of Yunz's translation is not impeccable. For example, 4:12 demonstrates an obvious stylistic mistake. Here Ruth is called *юная жена* ("young wife"). The epithet *юная* means "a very young one", "an adolescent;" and, obviously, is inappropriate to characterize thus a widow who has lived with his husband for ten years (1:4). It seems that Yunz confuses this phrase with the idiom *молодая жена* ("just married wife").

The great problem of Yunz's style consists in the use of archaisms alongside very modern words and expressions.¹⁴⁸ The analysis of these misuses shows that it is not just a stylistic defect. The problem is rooted in an inconsistency between the denotative space of Ruth (its fictional world) and the reality of the modern world.

For example, Yunz translates the word **נְכַרְיָהּ** in 2:10 as *чужеземка*. *Чужеземка* is an archaism that one rarely ever meets in modern colloquial or formal speech. The normal word for a female foreigner in Russian is *иностранка*. But Yunz could not use this idiom in the given context, because *иностранка* is a relatively new word,¹⁴⁹ associated with a wealthy person from abroad, a tourist.¹⁵⁰ Russian does not have a native lexeme for economic refugees. Therefore, Yunz is forced to appeal to historical lexicology. We should take into account that the semantic fields of both words are the same.

2. The syntax of Yunz's translation abounds with the use of complex sentences, participial clauses, and adverbial participial clauses. Sometimes, this kind of syntax is justified by the specific style. For example, Yunz presents the dialogue of Boaz with the other *goel* as a juridical procedure where the use of complex elements is quite appropriate. But, in general, these elements are alien to the style of oral speech. Their presence in the text (especially, in direct speech of dialogues) contradicts the spirit of narrative (*сказ*), whose roots lie in forms of oral speech.

3. One of the characteristics of Yunz' translation is its aspiration for maximal clarity. It does not contain any ambiguity or vagueness. For example, while Braginsky translates the vague phrase **בִּי יִדְיֶהוּנָה** in 1:14 almost literally: *тяготеет надо мной десница Господня* ("the

¹⁴⁷ Compare, for example, 3:9: *прости крыла* "spread your wings"(Braginsky) *возьми под защиту* "protect"(Yunz); 3:7 *ублажил сердце* "gratified his heart" (Braginsky), *пришел в доброе расположение духа* "got into a good mood"(Yunz).

¹⁴⁸ The confusion of modern and archaic styles is usually not acceptable in Russian, but can be used on some specific occasions (e.g. irony). See Golub:90.

¹⁴⁹ It appears in literary just in XIX century.

¹⁵⁰ For the last two centuries Russia was an isolated country and this formed a special attitude to foreigners as to rich, wealthy persons.

Lord’s hand weighs heavy upon me”), Yunz replaces the sememe “hand” with the sememe “wrath” (*гнев*) and, thus, eliminates any ambiguity. Sometimes the clarity of translation is achieved by narrowing the semantic of the original text. For example, Yunz translates *הלכתי וריקם מלפני* in 1:21 as *я уходила богатой, а он вернул меня бедной* (“I went out being rich, and he returned me as a poor one”). It is obvious that the economic situation is not the single or even main object of Naomi’s jeremiad in this passage.

Yunz’s sentences are ultimately concrete. The concreteness of Yunz’s text becomes obvious in the comparison with Braginsky’s translation. It is achieved in several ways:

a) Yunz usually unambiguously defines the subject of the sentence. For example, compare his translation with that of Braginsky in the following:

1:6

Braginsky: *Собрались тогда она и ее невестки покинуть поля Моавитские, “She and her daughters-in-law made up their minds to leave the fields of Moab.”*

Yunz: *Решила она со своими невестками вернуться домой, “She decided with her daughters-in-law to return home.”*

b) Yunz’s sentences include just one *rema*,¹⁵¹ when the parallel sentences of Braginsky have two *remas* or more:

1:3

Braginsky:

Вот Элимелех умер и осталась Наоми одна с двумя сыновьями
R1 R2

Yunz:

Потом Элимелех, муж Наоми, умер, оставив ее с двумя сыновьями
R1

1:19

Braginsky:

Вошли в Вифлеем, и весь город всполошился из-за них
R1 R2

Yunz:

Как только они пришли туда, взволновался весь город
T1 R1

¹⁵¹ The term is taken from the theory of communicative strategies which involves the notions of rema (that is what is said in the sentence) and thema (what is characterized in the sentence). In the schemes rema and thema are designated with the capital letters R and T. See Yanko:82-84.

c) Yunz very clearly designates illocutive acts in the dialogues of the narrative's characters.¹⁵² As a rule, he translates verbs of communication ("to say", "to tell", "to ask", etc.), used to introduce direct speech, with performative verbs that show the illocutive functions of the given communication. For example, the verb אָנאָר in Yunz's text is translated as *спрашивать* ("to ask") - 1:19; *поздороваться* ("to greet") - 2:4; *объяснить* ("to explain") - 2:6; *приказать* ("to order") - 2:15; *прибавить* ("to add to saying") - 2:19; *ответить* ("to reply") - 3:5; *окликнуть* ("to hail, to call") - 4:1; *обратиться* ("to address") - 4:3. Such exactness makes no sense from the point of view of semantics, because the illocutive acts are clear in the text without the need of any additional characterization. But, on the one hand, it imparts a great dynamism to the sentences; and, on the other hand, it forms two planes of the narrative: the narrator's and the personages'. These planes produce an effect of several voices, as demonstrated in the following example:

2:4

Он поприветствовал их: «Бог в помощь», а они сказали в ответ: «Благослови тебя Бог».

He greeted them: "May God help you" and they answered: "God bless you".

We can see that the meaning of the sentence would not change if the direct speech would be excluded from it. The sentence can be interpreted as the narrator's monologue, illustrated with voices of his personages (possibly the narrator's imitation of these voices):

Narrator: He greeted them

Boaz: "May God help you"

Narrator: and they answered

Workers: "God bless you"

¹⁵² **Illocutive act** is an aspect of communication that stresses the practical goal of the communication. It stands in opposition to the **locutive act**, which consists in pronouncing of a saying. Illocutive acts may consist in expressions of request, gratitude or order, asking a question. An illocutive act is designated through a **performative sentence** (for example, I congratulate you; I promise you, etc.). A sentence gains a performative character through the use of **performative verbs**, which have the meaning of fulfilling some illocutive act (see Paducheva: 225-231).

III.3 Russian translations of the book of Ruth: analysis of the elements of narrative style

III.3.1 The translational situation for the book of Ruth in Russian

The three translations of Ruth, considered in the present study, represent three different understandings of the position of a Bible translator in the communicative situation of the narrative.

The Synodal Version represents a situation of formal translation. Here, the role of the Bible translator can be compared with that of a simultaneous interpreter who interprets the narrator for his readers. This translation does not presuppose any deep understanding of the narrative's plan and goals. It arrives at the referential meaning of each syntagma separately, with minimal redaction. The obvious problem of applying the referential translation to the Bible consists in the discontinuity between the narrator and recipients. The narrator did not mean to communicate with modern readers; these are "eavesdroppers" on the conversation; and, thus, such translation cannot be, in its totality, clear to them as outside listeners.

Yunz and Braginsky propose another situation of translation: the situation of replacement of the narrator. They do it in two different ways. Yunz tries to restore the simplicity of the initial situation. His narrator and fictional addressees are persons contemporary to his implied readers. Yunz's narrator speaks to modern people using their language and referring to modern context. As we have seen, the greatest disadvantage of Yunz's approach consists in the discontinuity between the narrative's world, implied by the plot, and the world of the modern Russian readers. In other words, the events told in the story of Ruth could not happen in the modern reality. As result, the style of Yunz's translation demonstrates certain inconsistency and insufficiency of expressiveness.

In contrast to Yunz, Braginsky does not attempt to place his Observer or Fictional Addressees into the modern world. Due to the specific style of Braginsky's translation the narrator and his hearers appear as foreigners from the legendary past, living in a totally different environment. They communicate in their own language, operating with concepts which often seem strange to the mentality of modern people. Braginsky strives to clarify the narrator's

context for his implied readers, but he does not expect that they will share the narrator's worldview and assessment of the events.

A comparison of Yunz's and Braginsky's translations of 4:7 demonstrates the difference between their understandings of the translational situation. This verse contains deixical elements of time and space of the narrator. The narrator's explanation of the custom of taking off a shoe is framed with two elucidative phrases **בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְפָנַי וְזֹאת הַתְּעוּדָה** and **בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וְזֹאת הַתְּעוּדָה**. *A priori*, their deixis cannot be understood unambiguously. In Yunz's interpretation, 4:7 is a reference note of a narrator who addresses his message to readers outside of the context of ancient Israel: *А было тогда (at that time, not now) в Израиле (in Israel, not here) принято делать так*. The translation of Braginsky shows the narrator as a tradition keeper, transmitting the information of old times to the new generation. The addressees are regarded as successors of the tradition.

Braginsky's narrator does not address his message to modern readers. Unlike Yunz, Braginsky demonstrates the communication between the fictional "ancient story-teller" and fictional "ancient Israelites." To some extent, Braginsky's position is close to the position of the Synodal Version. Indeed, both present a communication that is not addressed to the expected readers. The only difference between them is that the Synodal Version does not control the narrator and, as result, contains a lot of vagueness and contradictions that are avoided in Braginsky's deliberate imitation of the narrator.

Of course, Braginsky's Observer is not equal to the narrator of Ruth in Hebrew. While the narrator of the Hebrew text could be envisioned as a real person, Braginsky's narrator is an apparently fictional figure. The cardinal difference between the narrative of MT and that of Braginsky's translation consists in interrelations between the Abstract and Fictional Authors (Addressees). In the Hebrew narrative the gap between abstract and fictional participants of communication is invisible while in Braginsky's translation it is significant.

Let us consider narrative elements in the translations of Ruth. We will focus mainly on the translations of Yunz and Braginsky because the Synodal Version does not present Ruth as a piece of literature.

III.3.2 Spatiotemporal elements

A. Time expressions in the narrative

Indication of time is an element that can fulfill at least three functions in the narrative:

- a.) Orientation. It indicates the time frame of events in the narrative.
- b.) Deixis. It shows the position of the narrator (and, possibly, of the readers) in relation to the events.
- c.) Attitude. A concrete expression of time indication may show a special attitude of narrator toward the events.

Let us consider, for example, the time expression in 1:1: **וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם שֶׁפָּט הַשְּׂפָטִים**.

Although the indication of the time is typical in the first verses of OT books, the syntax of this sentence is unique.¹⁵³ Such very general time references quite rarely occur in biblical narrative. This short introduction, first of all, explicitly indicates the time of the story described in the book. All the events of the book of Ruth happened during the time when judges ruled over Israel. But since the historical background plays almost no role in Ruth's plot,¹⁵⁴ one can conclude that its real purpose is to show that the story belongs to days long passed (for the narrator). Berlin notices that such a beginning defines the temporal context of the story "as a time span that is both long, and long before the time of the narrator."¹⁵⁵ On the other hand, the traditional Jewish interpretation points to another possible function of the sentence. It claims that the expression **וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם** that occurs five times¹⁵⁶ in the books of the Old Testament, is always used in the case when the story talks about some problems (**צָרָה**). Therefore, it has a touch of the tragic.¹⁵⁷

The aspect of orientation is the only aspect that coincides in the time description of all of the three translations of Ruth. All of them use this time-pointing phrase in the dependent clause

¹⁵³ Campbell:49. Campbell finds a close syntactical construction in Gen.36:31.

¹⁵⁴ Sometimes the narrator refers to ancient customs of that time (cf. 4:7). But any correlation between these historical details and a specific period in Israel's history is not readily obvious. On the other hand, the mention of that period possibly indicated to first readers that violations of the Mosaic Law in the story should not have been judged by strict norms of later times (cf. Hubbard:84).

¹⁵⁵ Berlin:102.

¹⁵⁶ Gen.14:1, Isa.7:1, Jer.1:3, Es.1:1.

¹⁵⁷ Meltzar:aleph. This statistic alone cannot be considered as a proof. Nevertheless, one cannot exclude the possibility that here we meet a certain convention.

of the first complex sentence that talks about the famine in Israel. The translations correctly designate the time as the period when “the judges ruled.”¹⁵⁸

With its tendency to be literal, the Synodal Version translates **בַּיָּמִים** as *во дни* “in the days”. This formula is commonly used to designate a certain time period. But in modern Russian, the expression *во дни* usually is appropriate for a relatively short time period which is presumed to be so important that even a day is taken into account (for instance, “in the days of the war”, “in the days of the crisis”).¹⁵⁹ It is not obvious that the translators (and all the more the author of the Hebrew text) indeed endeavored to stress the extreme significance of the period of Judges, but the reader can in any case see this special attitude. On the other hand, the expression *во дни* implies that a narrator has a lot of information about this time, since he is able to report about every single day. Therefore, as a rule, the time gap between the narrator and the event is not too long.¹⁶⁰

Braginsky’s revision of this translation seems quite justified. He replaces “in the days” with “in the times” *во времена*,¹⁶¹ referring to a certain historical period without any designation of the distance between that time and the present.

Yunz’s translation departs most significantly from the Hebrew text. He obviously wants to make explicit the remoteness of Ruth’s time from the time of the narrator. He adds an introductive expression *давным давно* (long ago) and a particle *еще*, “still”. *Давным давно* is a conventional opening phrase of Russian folktales, like the English “once upon a time”; and, hence, it automatically marks the narrative as folklore. This expression leads Yunz’s reader to doubt the historicity of the story. Whether or not the book of Ruth reports real events, it is clear that the narrator’s intention was not to give the impression that the story was fictional. Even Sasson, who is very close to considering Ruth as a folktale, does not dare to apply English analogies of the Russian phrase *давным давно* in his translation. He writes: “We have avoided translating with ‘once upon a time’ or ‘long ago’, lest it be assumed that an ancient audience perceived the opening as a mark of ‘fiction’”.¹⁶² Moreover, the very indication of a certain period implies the difference between that period and contemporaneity. Therefore, Yunz’s modification of the text seems more like an unnecessary tautology. But he has almost no choice.

¹⁵⁸ Braginsky substitutes the indeterminate form of the word *управлять* (“to rule”), used in the Synodal Version, to the more precise *править* that usually is associated with authorities.

¹⁵⁹ *Extensive Explanatory Dictionary of Russian Language*, St.-Petersburg: ed. S. A. Kuznyetsov, Norint, 2002 (in Russian), p. 251.

¹⁶⁰ According to Orthodox tradition, following the witnesses of the Talmud (Baba-Batra:14,b), Samuel, the last judge in Israel, was the author of Ruth (Glagolev:210).

¹⁶¹ The plural form here is preferable, not only because this is close to the original text where the plural is used but also because it helps to avoid the formal style of historical scientific books.

¹⁶² Sasson 1989:14-15

Without marking the narrative as a fantasy, he could hardly justify the gap between the denotative space of the story and the modern reality, implied by his style.

The translation of 3:14 provides another example of different understandings of time expressions in the narrative. After a night at the threshing-floor, Boaz and Ruth wake up very early: **בְּטָרֵם יָכִיר אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ**. The reader does not see the reason why Boaz and Ruth get up so early and therefore seeks for an explanation of this time specification. In translating this idiom, the Synodal Version takes into account only the local context. There was no one around but Boaz and Ruth. Therefore, they woke up before they could recognize “each other” (*δρῶν δρῶσα*). The Synodal Version does not seem concerned about the fact that such a choice of words produces an understanding that, no doubt, was objectionable for its translators. The phrase “before they could recognize each other” seems to be used to explain why they got up so early; but it is still not clear why they could not see each other. In the search for clarity, the reader applies an intertextual approach and remembers other cases in the Bible when a man and a woman spent a night together and did not recognize each other: the story of Lot and his daughters and the story of Jacob and Lea. Therefore, the reader concludes that the relations between Ruth and Boaz were analogous to the relations between the heroes and heroines of the stories mentioned above. Boaz’s further request to keep it secret that Ruth had spent the night at his threshing-floor supports the reader’s conclusion.¹⁶³ Such an interpretation is quite possible and has been suggested by other scholars. For example, Fewell and Gunn demonstrate the parallels between Ruth and the narratives of Lot and Jacob. They are claiming that it was Naomi’s intention for Ruth to have sexual intercourse with Boaz in order to demand his protection.¹⁶⁴ But certainly, the Orthodox translators did not intend to allude to such a possibility. In the Orthodox perception, the scene at the threshing-floor presents “a model conduct for a couple preparing for marriage.”¹⁶⁵ Any presence of sexual allusions in the text is denied.

Yunz links the time indication with the general development of the plot: *еще до того, как человек может различить соседа*¹⁶⁶ (“even before a man can recognize a neighbor”). According to Yunz, Boaz and Ruth wanted to escape the gossip of a “neighbor”; and this was the reason to wake up so early. Yunz’s narrator just duplicates Boaz’s words that he says later, excluding any misunderstanding.

From Braginsky’s point of view, the expression **בְּטָרֵם יָכִיר אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ** is a standard idiom indicating time, such as “a cock’s crowing.” So he translates it as an idiom: *noka*

¹⁶³ This is the argumentation of Yaroslavsky (p. 358).

¹⁶⁴ Fewell and Gunn:78-79.

¹⁶⁵ Nikiphor:611.

еще нельзя отличить одного человека от другого (“when it was yet impossible to distinguish one person from the other”). Braginsky’s narrator expects that his addressees are familiar with this kind of time indication and that the expression is clear for the reader, merely an adverbial modifier of time and not a parenthesis that explains the previous statement.

B. Orientation in space

From the viewpoint of semantic pragmatics, the functions of space and time, as determining deixical elements in narrative, are similar. On the other hand, geographical conceptions usually differ more drastically in different languages than time notions. A translator should be very careful selecting appropriate equivalents of space expressions.

The translation of 1:1 demonstrates some difficulties that appear in transmitting the geographical setting of the story. The first verse of Ruth talks about the move of Naomi’s family from Israel to

Moab in order to escape the famine. It involves two geographical items: **בְּאֶרֶץ** and **מוֹאָב**

בְּשָׂרֵי. The translation of these expressions shows the difference between the styles of Braginsky

and Yunz. Yunz translates them using modern geographic terminology: *страна* “country”,

равнина Моава “plateau of Moab.”¹⁶⁷ Braginsky translates **אֶרֶץ** with a poetical epithet

*земля*¹⁶⁸ and considers **שָׂרֵי מוֹאָב** as a geographical name: *поля Моава*.¹⁶⁹

Braginsky’s translation contains a difficulty. Indeed, the lexeme **אֶרֶץ** in 1:1 means **אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל**. The omission of the attribute modifier is important for the deixis of the phrase. It shows that both the narrator and his listeners are placed inside Israel, which is considered as **their** country in contradistinction to all the other countries. The suggestion of de Waard and Nida¹⁷⁰ to translate **אֶרֶץ** as “Israel” may cause (at least in Russian) a shift of the narrator’s location. Both Braginsky and Yunz feel this and translate the idiom without mentioning Israel, in spite of the problems that they get as result.

¹⁶⁶ The lexeme *сосед* literally corresponds to Hebrew **רֵעֵד**. But the semantics of the Russian word does not include the meaning “mate”.

¹⁶⁷ Such a translation raises, at least, two problems: 1) The Hebrew word **שָׂדֵה** does not have the meaning “plateau” (Fry:415); 2) In the rest of the Ruth narrative it refers to an agricultural area. Therefore, the replacement of the lexeme in 1:1 causes a loss of the parallelism between the sememes “fields of Moab” and “fields of Boaz”.

¹⁶⁸ *Земля* is a multi-semantic word, meaning “earth”, “the Earth”, “land”, “soil”, etc. Its use as a synonym of the word “country” is analogous to the use of the English word “land” with this meaning.

¹⁶⁹ In modern Russian *поле* is not a geographical term. It occurs only in historical geographical names (e. g. *Ходыньское поле*).

¹⁷⁰ Waard, J, E.A. Nida, *A translator’s handbook on the Book of Ruth*, UBS, New York, 1978 in CD Translator’s Workplace 3.0.

Braginsky translates בְּאֶרֶץ as *на земле*. But *на земле* is a modern Russian idiom that means “everywhere on the earthly globe.”¹⁷¹ So the reader assumes that the famine happened not only in Israel but also in Moab, but that it was easier to survive the famine in Moab for some reasons that are not clear from the narrative. Apparently this interpretation is not implied in the Hebrew text. The only possibility to avoid this wrong understanding is to show that here *на земле* does not have an idiomatic character. To a certain extent, Braginsky manages to avoid an inappropriate interpretation by attaching to this expression the verb *случился* (“it happened by occasion”), which usually does not apply to global events. Nevertheless, the possibility of the interpretation mentioned above is not excluded in Braginsky’s translation. At the same time, Yunz easily evades the problem of Braginsky’s text, translating בְּאֶרֶץ as *в стране* (“in the country”).

Possibly, Braginsky did not choose the same word in order to maintain stylistic consistency of his translation. The word *страна* derives from the word *сторона* (“side”) and initially meant a foreign country.¹⁷² Its historical semantic field is reflected in the Synodal Version, which contrasts it with the lexeme *земля*, meaning “native country”. Therefore, Braginsky who relies in his translation on the archaic style cannot use this word in 1:1. In other words, the problem of Braginsky’s translation consists in a contradiction between the style that he chose for his narrator and modern stylistic norms. Braginsky’s translation is consistent in its style but it is unclear for an uneducated Russian reader.

III.3.3 Emotional-ideological elements

A. Referential names

One of the common narrative techniques to express an attitude or evaluation consists in the use of specific naming.¹⁷³ Most of the personages from narratives have several names. For example, Ruth is called in different contexts הַמּוֹאָבִיָּה (2:2), נַעֲרָה (2:5), נַכְרִיָּה (2:9), שִׁפְחָה (2:13), בַּת (3:11), אִשְׁתַּ חֵיל (3:11). The appropriate choice of equivalents for the names is very important for the quality of translation.

¹⁷¹ or “on the soil,” see *Extensive Explanatory Dictionary of Russian Language*, p. 363.

¹⁷² Dahl, v.4:335-336.

¹⁷³ For an analysis of the technique of naming in Ruth, see Berlin:87-91.

Sometimes the translation of names causes no problems. This happens if the name corresponds to a notion that is well-known in the target language. Thus, the sememes “wife”, “daughter”, “slave”, “lord”, etc., are clear for a Russian reader without any special explanations. But even in such an easy case, a translator is confronted with the requirement of stylistic consistency. Besides, a special use of synonyms may stress a peculiarity of attitudes, characters, and interrelations in the narrative.

For example, the word נַעֲרָה in 2:5 is transmitted in the Synodal Version with a neutral, in terms of its stylistics, expression *молодая женщина* (“young woman”). Braginsky uses here its semantic equivalent *молодка*, which belongs to an archaic vocabulary and, hence, is appropriate for the stylistic strategy he has chosen. On the other hand, the word *работница* (“female worker”), used by Yunz, characterizes a special attitude of Boaz toward Ruth during their first meeting. This word describes Boaz as a supervisor who is concerned about the fact that a new member appears among his “staff”. All three translations show Boaz’s neutral attitude to Ruth at first.¹⁷⁴ But Yunz’s translation characterizes this attitude more precisely. For example, it excludes the notion that Ruth may have appealed to Boaz as a woman.¹⁷⁵ We can notice that Yunz here uses the ambivalence of the lexeme נַעֲרָה that could mean either “young woman” or “female worker”.

Also, translating the idiom יְבִמְתָּךְ in 1:15, Braginsky uses the combination of words *твоя подружка* (“your friend; your mate”) that formally is not an equivalent for the Hebrew word. But here it stresses, on the one hand, Naomi’s attitude to Ruth (Naomi does not make a difference between Ruth and Orpah) and, on the other hand, an especially friendly atmosphere amongst the female members of Naomi’s family.

Referential names that do not have equivalents in modern languages are more difficult to translate. One technique for translating such words is to use descriptive words. For example, a key term in understanding the plot of the book of Ruth is the sememe *goel*,¹⁷⁶ which is unfamiliar to modern readers. This word is always translated in the Synodal Version as *родственник*, “relative”. The word *родственник* could have been considered as an equivalent for *goel* in the 19th century, when family ties were still quite strong.¹⁷⁷ But in the 20th century, social relations inside the extended family changed and *родственник* could not be used in the newer translation with the same connotation.

¹⁷⁴ See Berlin:89.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Fewell and Gunn:41-42.

¹⁷⁶ For a description of the institution of *goel*, see de Vaux:21-22.

¹⁷⁷ The modern Russian idiom как бедный родственник (like a poor relative) refers to the custom of supporting poor members of the family by its rich members (*Extensive Explanatory Dictionary of Russian Language*, p. 363).

The term *goel* appears for the first time in 2:20, when Naomi reveals to Ruth the peculiar role of Boaz in their social position. Braginsky and Yunz use this moment for an explanation of the notion *goel*. Yunz characterizes it with a roughly-corresponding Russian equivalent *заступник*, “protector”. At the same time, Braginsky applies a complex pseudo-idiomatic formula: *кровный и близкий нам; он вызовет нас изволением* “consanguineous and intimate; he will help us out with his help”. The role of such a cumbersome formula becomes clear in his translation of Ruth’s appeal to Boaz at the threshing-floor (3:9). Braginsky’s reader can easily notice that Ruth’s argument is shaped by the combination of quotations of Boaz and Naomi: “Spread your wings on me (Boaz 2:12), because you are consanguineous and intimate; you will help me out with a help.” These words elicit a picture of an immigrant woman who does not dare to be independent in the new environment. She soaks up the elements of the new culture drop by drop and applies her recent experience at the crucial moment. At the same time, the connection of Ruth’s words in 3:9 with the previous narrative is not as obvious in Yunz’s translation. The comparison of Ruth's words in 3:9 with the sources of her quotes may be presented in the following scheme:

2:12: ... под покровом которого ты пришла искать <u>защиты</u> (“...under whose cover you came to seek <u>protection</u>)	2:20 : ...из <u>заступников</u> ...(one of <u>protectors</u>)
3:9: возьми меня под свою <u>защиту</u> как мой родственник и <u>заступник</u> (<u>protect me as my relative and protector</u>)	

3:9 repeats some words from 2:12 and 2:20 (they are underlined in the scheme). But these words are so unspecific that a reader can hardly notice the quotations. As result, Yunz’s Ruth seems much more self-sufficient.

In Boaz's reply (3:12), Braginsky replaces the complicated phrase of the definition of *goel* with a compact word *родич*, which is an archaic form of the word *родственник*.¹⁷⁸ This word is used to translate the lexeme *goel* throughout chapter 4. Yunz follows in the same way, but he interchanges the modern and archaic forms: 2:20, 3:2.9.12, 4:1.3.8 – родственник; 2:3, 4:6 - родич. The principle behind the interchange is not readily apparent.¹⁷⁹

The descriptive method of presentation of new terms should take into account not only their referential meanings but also their roles in narrative. For example, Yunz translates *גִּבּוֹר הָיִל* in 2:1 as *человек влиятельный и богатый*, “an influential and rich man”. Although Yunz

¹⁷⁸ The archaism is used to stress the difference from the modern concept of family.

¹⁷⁹ Possibly, Yunz this way strives to improve his style by omitting repetition of words. On the other hand, the archaism is inappropriate for the bureaucratic style used by Yunz in ch. 4.

accurately defines the social status of Boaz, his translation does not touch on the moral side of Boaz's personality, which is very important for the plot.

The idiom **אִשָּׁת חַיִּל גְּבוּר** forms a parallel to Ruth's epithet **אִשָּׁת חַיִּל** (3:11). Boaz is not only a representative of a certain aristocratic circle but, first of all, a man of irreproachable morality that gives him the right to assess Ruth and to ascribe to her the title of an irreproachable woman. Both main and attributive meanings of this Hebrew idiom can be seen in the Synodal Version, which translates **אִשָּׁת חַיִּל גְּבוּר** as *знатный человек*, "noble man, gentleman". The epithet "noble" implies not only belonging to aristocracy but also high moral standards. At the same time, it is inapplicable to Ruth whose epithet in the Synodal Version is *женщина достойная*, "worthy woman". As result, the parallelism between 2:1 and 3:11 is not seen in this translation.

This parallelism can be seen only in the translation of Braginsky who characterizes Boaz and Ruth as *человек достойный*, "worthy man" and *женщина достойная*, "worthy woman". Of course, Braginsky's translation of **אִשָּׁת חַיִּל גְּבוּר** does not communicate the social position of Boaz; but that position is clearly seen in the subsequent narration.

B. Conventional elements

It is impossible to understand narratives without the knowledge of certain conventional elements accepted in literature. The role of conventions in biblical narrative has been clearly shown by Alter.¹⁸⁰ Alter focused primarily on the place of type-scenes which fulfill artistic tasks of biblical narrators. But conventions contain also smaller elements, such as actions, sayings or words, whose significance cannot be understood adequately outside of these conventions. An understanding of such elements is crucial for the comprehension and evaluation of a narrative. For example, the verb "to bow" in the Bible serves to express respect, gratitude, awe, etc. The meaning of this gesture is clear to a Russian reader, not because it is practiced in modern life but because it is a conventional element which is well-known in literature. The nuances of its meaning become clear through a concrete lexical expression used for the designation of the act of bowing. Thus, the expression *пасть на лицо* or *пасть ниц* (Slavonic form), "to fall upon one's face" is an ecclesiological expression of the highest degree of self-humiliation. When used in the context of Ruth's gratitude, expressed with a bow in 2:10, it characterizes Ruth's self-

¹⁸⁰ Alter:47-62

humiliation as inadequate to the degree of Boaz's kindness to her.¹⁸¹ On the other hand, the expression *поклониться до земли*, "to bow down to the ground," is a historical idiom for expressing great gratitude,¹⁸² appropriate for demonstrating Ruth's extraordinary respect for Boaz's kindness. Therefore, the fact that Yunz omits any equivalent for the expression **עַל-פְּנֵיהָ וַתִּפֹּל** in 2:10 seems quite appropriate.

Even one word may mark a certain part of the narrative as a type-scene. For example, Braginsky translates the word **הַמְטֵפֶחֶת** in 3:15 as *плат*, "shawl". The fact that Boaz measured the grain into Ruth's shawl means that she returned home bareheaded. Not wearing a shawl is a sign of a "fallen woman" in Russian literary tradition.¹⁸³ A Russian reader can easily imagine a picture of Ruth dressed as a prostitute who returns from Boaz to her mother-in-law carrying a suspicious bundle (prostitute's payment?). It is no surprise that, after glancing at Ruth, Naomi's first question is *кто ты, дочь моя* "what are you, my daughter." This question cannot be understood as just an expression of interest to certain events. It deals with Ruth's inner situation and concerns her moral condition.

Harm¹⁸⁴ showed that Ruth, ch. 3 is full of "double entendres" whose role is to demonstrate the balance between sexual purity and sin."¹⁸⁵ According to Harm, "one message of the book is that Ruth and Boaz maintained their righteousness and so demonstrated that the godly can live above their culture." Braginsky reproduces the ambiguity of the situation on the threshing-floor very clearly. However, he does not repeat the techniques used by the Hebrew author (ambiguities of the words **ידע**, **גלח**, **שקב**, etc.), but involves conventions comprehensible for Russian readers.

Moreover, formulating the translation of Naomi's question in this very way alludes to another convention. Russian narrative tradition has a convention of three trials. A positive hero must confirm his status through solving three riddles, fulfilling three assignments, receiving

¹⁸¹ Possibly, Braginsky deliberately uses this expression here in its strongest Slavonic form (*пасть ниц*) to demonstrate unjust human inter-relations in class society. On the other hand, the idiomatic character of this expression is clear. Therefore, Ruth's bow in Braginsky's translation does not seem as realistic as in the Synodal Version.

¹⁸² Cf. *земной Вам поклон* = "thank you very much, I will never forget your kindness."

¹⁸³ Compare, for example, the scene of farewell of Maslova with Nehludov in Tolstoy's "Воскресение."

¹⁸⁴ Harm, H.J., The Function of Double Entendre in Ruth Three, in *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1995): 19-27.

¹⁸⁵ Harm:3.

three recommendations, etc.¹⁸⁶ In Braginsky's translation, the questions in 2:5, 3:9, and 3:15 are shaped in a similar way so that a reader can recognize this tradition in the narrative. The parallelism of the questions of Boaz in 2:5 and 3:9 was noticed by Landy.¹⁸⁷ But adding 3:15 to this sequence completes the picture of Ruth's self-defense. Three times she witnesses to the purity of her conduct (2:7; 3:9; 3:17, though in 2:7, her voice is heard in the quotation of the supervisor).¹⁸⁸

Another example can be shown in the translation of the word **מָדַד** in 4:15. In Russian mentality, a positive hero should perform good deeds without any conditions and without counting them.¹⁸⁹ If someone takes account of expenses for helping other people, he is considered as a stingy person whose help is insulting. So a literal translation of the lexeme "to measure" presents Boaz as a mean person.

We can see that the translations of Braginsky and Yunz present two totally different images of Boaz.

Braginsky comments about Boaz giving Ruth six measures of barley:

"Boaz measured (*отмерил*) the barley." - He is stingy even when relating to his fiancée.

"Then he put (*положил*) this heavy burden on Ruth's shoulders." - He does not care that it is hard for a woman to carry such a heavy load.

Braginsky does not try to idealize Boaz. In his perception, Boaz is a typical exploiter and his conduct resembles ethical norms, which reined, in Braginsky's opinion, in ancient Orient.

Yunz presents a different picture:

"Boaz poured out (*отсыпал*) the barley." - It seems that he took a bag and poured without measuring. It appears that he gave her quite a lot.

"After that he helped (*помог*) Ruth to pick up this load." – While Braginsky shows that Boaz made the woman to carry a heavy load Yunz emphasizes the fact that Boaz helped Ruth.

Yunz's Boaz is generous and helpful. He demonstrates the respectful attitude according to the ethical standards accepted in modern society.

¹⁸⁶ Triple trial is an element of Russian folktale (Propp 2001:39,56-57). It can be observed in imitations of fairy-tales by Russian writers (e.g. Yershov "Konyok Gorbunok"). A similar element can be found in the narrative of gospels (triple temptation of Jesus (Matt. 4:1-17; Luke 4:1-13); three questions to Peter (John 21:15-17)). But it is not a common convention of OT narrative.

¹⁸⁷ Landy:296-297.

¹⁸⁸ Rebera (1987) proposes another explanation of Naomi's question. In his opinion, this question stresses the secrecy of Ruth's return home: even her mother-in-law could not recognize her at dawn. But Naomi's form of address (**יְהוָה**) makes Rebera's interpretation dubious.

¹⁸⁹ We should stress that it is a literary ideal rather than a national custom.

C. Elements presenting points of view

Some elements in the narrative reveal certain different points of view of the narrator, personages and addressees.¹⁹⁰ In translation, these elements can lose their peculiarity and significance. At the same time, other elements may become important for an emotional and ideological characterization.

An interesting example of how the translator re-evaluates the internal world of the character can be seen in Braginsky's translation, which explicitly presents the religious evolution of Ruth. He translates **וַאֲלֹהֵיךָ אֱלֹהֵי** in 1:16 as *твоему богу - моему богу* ("your gods will be my gods"). On the one hand, it is a "wrong" translation, for example, from the point of view of Orthodox Judaism, for whom the words of Ruth (1:16-17) are a formula of incorporation of proselytes to Judaism.¹⁹¹ But, on the other hand, this translation makes very clear Ruth's point of view on Israelite religion. Indeed, translating the word **אלהים** as *богу*, Braginsky shows that, in Ruth's perception, both Moabites and Israelites were polytheists. *Господь* (*gospod'*) was the national God of Israel. Naomi explains the calamities of her life as the wrath of *gospod'*: "*тяготееет на мене десница Господня*" ("*gospod's* right hand is heavy on me"). This is her ultimate argument in dissuading her daughters-in-law from following her. Orpah and Ruth are not affected by this wrath because they have their gods and do not fall within *gospod's* jurisdiction.

Wolde¹⁹² claims that Naomi's intention in her persuasive speech is to distance herself from her daughters-in-law who, in her mind, were the cause of her grief. But Braginsky's text does not allow such an interpretation. Naomi did not want to part with Orpah and Ruth. It can be seen in her saying to Ruth: *Вот и вернулась подружка твоя...* (lit. "Behold, and you mate came back") The conjunctive clause is a marker of disappointment (cf. e.g. proverb *Вот тебе, бабушка, и Юрьев день; вот тебе и раз* «there you are!»; «a pretty business this!»). It is obvious from her speech that she is sorry about Orpah's leaving her.

Ruth shows great courage in following Naomi anyway. When she exclaims: "*твоему богу - моему богу... да совершит Господь по воле своей*" ("your gods will be my gods, let *gospod's* will be accomplished on me") (1:17), it sounds like "let your malicious god be mine in spite of all the evil that he could bring to me". Ruth's love for Naomi is not driven by any religious convictions. Quite in contrast, it is a pure human feeling that contradicts any ideological

¹⁹⁰ The techniques of presenting point of view are analyzed in Berlin:43-55.

¹⁹¹ Milzar:10.

¹⁹² Wolde:11

guidelines. So Ruth's speech (1:16-17) in Braginsky's translation is not swearing an oath¹⁹³ but declaring her love in a desperate situation.

D. Direct speech

Direct speech is an integral part of narrative. It is especially important for narratives with a hidden narrator because, in such narrative, almost all of the expressive and communicational elements are placed in dialogues and monologues.¹⁹⁴ We can see that most of the elements of direct characterisation (referential names, point of view) are contained in direct speech. But at the same time the style of direct speech *per se* also plays a crucial role for indirect characterisation. A good translation should show explicitly the difference in the speech styles of different personages.

A comparative analysis of dialogues in the translations of Yunz and Braginsky demonstrates a striking contrast in their approach to translating direct speech.

The style of Yunz's dialogues is homogeneous. It does not reveal any specific traits of the narrative's characters. At the same time, in Braginsky's translation the speech of each personage is very specific and characterizing.

Thus, Ruth's speech shows her as humble and dependant one.¹⁹⁵ She almost never uses expressions of will directly: *не вели покинуть*, “do not order to leave” (1:16)¹⁹⁶, *дозволь мне пойти*, “permit me to go”(2:2)¹⁹⁷, *дозволь я буду подбирать*, “permit me to glean” (2:7).¹⁹⁸ She often quotes the words of others: 2:21 – quotations from Boaz (2:8); 3:9 – quotation from Boaz and Naomi (2:12, 2:20); 2:7 – self-quotation (2:2). At the same time, none of these quotations can be seen in Yunz's translation. In general, Yunz replaces quotations with indirect speech.

Braginsky's Ruth is not sure in her ability to be successful: *может и наберу за жнецами*, “maybe, I will find something after the reapers” (2:7). Braginsky shows an overwhelmingly emotional reaction of Ruth in response to Boaz's kindness to her humble person in 2:10: *да чем же заслужила я милость в глазах твоих, что ты приветил меня?* “Oh, in what ways have I earned mercy in your eyes that you gave me your greetings full of kindness?”

¹⁹³ Rebera1992:234

¹⁹⁴ See Paducheva: 335-337. In more developed narratives, emotional-ideological orientation can be reached through free indirect discourse (FID), but the author of Ruth does not use FID. The substitute of indirect discourses with direct speech in biblical narrative was shown by Alter (p. 67).

¹⁹⁵ We do not consider such traits of Ruth's speech (e.g. shortness of sentences, incompleteness of answers, etc.) as can be seen in all the translations.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. не гони “do not turn me out” – Yunz.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. пойду я («shall I go») – the Synodal Version.

The emotional complexity of Yunz's phrase "за что господин мой так добр ко мне?" ("why is my lord so kind to me?") is neutral.

Boaz, through his speech, is presented as a volitional person. Braginsky stresses the imperatives used in his speech: *выслушай и запомни*, "listen and remember"(2:8)¹⁹⁹; *вы сегодня свидетельствуйте это*, "be (imperative) you witnesses of that today" (4:10).²⁰⁰

Boaz's wisdom can be seen through his speech in any translation. Boaz's speeches are long and full of advice (2:11-12; 3:10-13; 4:3-5). But Braginsky's translation of 4:4 adds some new traits to Boaz's characterization. Braginsky translates כִּי as *что*, "that", instead of *потому что*, "because" (Yunz). As result, Boaz's argument sounds like "if you do not want (to marry her) tell me that I know (or "testify before me") that there is no other claimant but you." On the one hand, Boaz's discourse seems strange. The other *goel's* refusal does not imply lack of other claimants to this role. But Boaz's cunning argument obviously is intended not so much for the other *goel* as for the people around, in that it excludes the possibility of any of them complicating the situation through pretensions from a third side.

The speech of the other *goel* contrasts with Boaz's. The other *goel* is presented as a naïve simpleton. His replies are extremely short and primitive. For example, when he hears that he should marry Ruth in order to restore the name of her previous husband (4:6), he exclaims: *Нет, тогда я не могу выкупить. Ведь так и мое наследие расстроится*. "No, I cannot, then, redeem. You see, my own inheritance could be wrecked by that."

These words show a person who takes an impulsive decision. He reasons aloud and, at the final verdict, under the influence of strong emotions.

In Yunz's translation, the speech of the other *goel* is similar to Boaz's one. It shows a formal juridical style. Yunz does not transmit directly the retort of the other *goel* in 4:8, but replaces it with indirect discourse.

IV. Conclusions

In the present paper we considered issues of style in three translations of Ruth which follow two types of translational theories: literal (the Synodal Version), and functional (Yunz, Braginsky). The analysis was based on the definition of functional (pragmatic) style which

¹⁹⁸ These words are omitted in Yunz's translation.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. *внимательно меня выслушай* «listen to me attentively» (Yunz)

²⁰⁰ Cf. *вы –свидетели* «you are witnesses»(Yunz)

interprets style as linguistic expression of communication depending on its participants and situation.

A narrative approach to style of biblical translations allows us to re-estimate the essence of the translational strategies.

Literal translation can be understood as formal translation, that is, a translation following a certain set of referential rules without a thorough examination of narrative structures and techniques. It is similar to a simultaneous oral translation. Such a translation does not produce an artistic text and should it contain narrative elements they were not purposefully intended. The Synodal Version of Ruth represents an example of formal translation. Its style is the result of following certain rules of reference between Hebrew and Russian idioms; it depends on certain previous translations and religious insights of the Orthodox Church. At the same time, the Synodal Version does not reveal any literary aesthetic qualities of the narrative.

Functional translation can be associated with the strategy of retelling a narrative. Following this strategy, a translator re-creates the narrative in his translation, using the narrative techniques accepted in the language of the translation. In this case, the quality of the text depends on the translator's literary skills and his/her understanding of the narrative. The literary analysis during the translation process has great importance. The literary meaning of semantic units, i.e. their role in the narrative plan, should be considered alongside referential meaning.

The strategy of retelling is demonstrated in the translations of Braginsky and Yunz.

From the perspective of literary consistency and balance Braginsky's translation is practically irreproachable. He presents the book of Ruth as a fictional narrative and uses the full richness of expressive means of literature. He has a clear picture of the narrative's characters and explicitly demonstrates their peculiar traits, using the techniques of direct and indirect characterisation that are intelligible for modern readers. Braginsky shows the poetry of the Ruth narrative in the fullness of its metaphorical language. The text of Braginsky's translation has great literary value *per se* even without correlation to the original text.

Yunz's translation is much weaker than Braginsky's. Of course, it is impossible to deny that Yunz's translation is clearer and more helpful for the understanding of an average Russian reader than all the other translations. But as a literary text, it contains some serious stylistic mistakes. The text often demonstrates an unjustified confusion of styles, and the contrast of the characters is weak. Many shades of meaning are lost.

A Bible translator who tries to attain a text presenting the Bible as a literary work has basically two options:

a. He can present the narrative as a communication between ancient narrator and addressees. This can be seen in Braginsky's translation. On the one hand, this option makes clear

that the biblical narrative has the character of prose fiction. On the other hand, the translator has at his/her disposal additional expressive techniques: they can create new idioms, use elements of ornamental prose, and involve specific figures of speech.

b. A translator can present the narrative as a communication of a modern narrator to a modern reader. This is demonstrated in the translation of Yunz. Yunz tries to present not only his narrator but the personages of the narrative as modern people speaking a modern language and sharing modern cultural, ethical, and aesthetical stereotypes. Such rendering raises certain problems that apparently are common problems for the strategy of “modernisation” of the biblical narrative during translation.

The first problem consists in a contradiction between the denotative space of modern colloquial language and the world of biblical narrative. This contradiction causes inconsistency of style which can be seen in confusion of different styles: use of archaisms, historicisms and low colloquial expressions alongside with idioms of literary language.

The second problem is that the presentation of biblical narrative as communication between modern persons implies a clear and unequivocal text meaning. As a result, the translator, trying to reach clarity, cuts out many nuances that are important in narrative art.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis of narrative elements in the three translations is that none of them is wholly equivalent to the Hebrew narrative text from the point of view of narrative techniques used in them. Some expressive elements of the Hebrew narrative are missing, while others are present. In other words, no translation guarantees complete faithfulness in rendering the literary qualities of the original text. It means that a variety of different Bible translations is necessary so that could different facets of the biblical narrative can be demonstrated.

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