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## The Poetics of Paraphrase: The Positivist Postmodernism in Mikhail Gasparov's "Experimental Translations"

*Heinrich Kirschbaum*

Two years before his death, Mikhail Gasparov (1935-2005) published his "Èksperimental'nye perevody" (2003, "Experimental Translations," or ETs), an anthology of translated works by authors from different time periods and literary traditions. The ETs are experimental in many ways: in some of his condensed translations, Gasparov shortens the originals drastically, in some cases by 80 percent. However, the ETs are not only experimental due to Gasparov's new "technique of translation," but also thanks to the choice of the originals to be translated. In addition to Hölderlin and Kavafis, Gasparov translates Pushkin and Lermontov from Russian to Russian, shortening and paraphrasing them beyond recognition.

Gasparov was not a completely unknown person in Russian literature, but had no reputation as a writer. He was recognised as a translator and editor of classical Greek and Latin texts, as well as a scholar of modern Russian poetry. He styled his scholarly agenda as old-fashioned positivism in search of "scientific" objectivity in literary scholarship. Evidently, the ETs, ultra-modern provocative translations, contradicted the established image of the positivist puritan. In the main part of this paper, I will investigate how and why Gasparov breaks and displaces not only the norms of literary translation, but also the conventions of the academic idiom. He does so generally in his late writings, and in the ETs in particular. The provocative aim of the ETs can only be understood against the background of Gasparov's specific status in the Russian academia of the late Soviet and post-Soviet times. It is necessary to place Gasparov's translation poetics in the multiplex landscape of post-Soviet literature and academic literary scholarship.

### **Devil's Advocate**

In the academia of the 1960-1990s, Gasparov took on a role of devil's advocate, consistently defending what his friends and colleagues rejected due to the logic of their anti-Soviet identity strategies, or attacking methods and personalities that were considered unimpeachable sanctuaries of the dissident scholarship.

Gasparov's own self-image was much more provocative and aggressive: he presented himself as an obsolete and boring positivist<sup>1</sup>. Originally Gasparov wrote about ancient poetry. Through his whole life, he was translating numerous old Greek and Latin authors, from Aristotle and Herodotus to Cicero and Ausonius. Gasparov turned to studies in Russian literature during the Thaw, when it became possible to avoid the ideological pressures of the official scholarship, and certain niches for more or less independent scholarly thought appeared. The Thaw gave rise to different forms of alternative literary studies: two of them were Tartu structuralism which professed mathematical rationality as a way to the "objective" understanding of literary texts, and Moscow orthodox criticism which revived the pre-revolutionary "intelligentsia" tradition of spiritual and religious interpretation of literature.

"The view of a bystander" (or literally: a view from the corner – "Vzgliad iz ugla") is how Gasparov titled his skeptical memoirs about the Tartu project (1994). Georgii Knabe (2006:42) refers to the idiomatic resources of "vzgliad iz ugla" and interprets Gasparov's "ugol" as visual angle or viewpoint ("ugol zreniia"). One could also remember the idiom "zabit'sia v ugol" (to hide). In any case, the view from the corner/angle does not imply a position of an outsider, but rather that of an insider who keeps and values his distanced position<sup>2</sup>.

The small "corner" in which Gasparov pretended to conceal himself was one of versology (stikhovedenie) that, in the course of time, became his trademark. From this niche, Gasparov made many reconnaissance sorties into the larger spaces of the "alternative" scholarship: the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School, Meletinski's circle, the Tynianov Readings, etc.<sup>3</sup> What was special about Gasparov? Even if he found himself part of the most elitist projects of the alternative literary scholarship between the 1960s and the 1990s, his position always remained a critical and skeptical one. He was simultaneously an active participant, and a careful and independent observer. He tried to criticise and correct the work of his friends and colleagues; it was a look of an insider from the outside and of an outsider from the inside.

It was not only a methodological distance, but a linguistic alternative, too. In the scholarly Esperanto of the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School, the Latinisms

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gasparov's remark during the roundtable discussion in the editorial office of the journal "Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie" (recorded by Zenkin 1996:80), in which, with his usual irony and self-irony, he introspects his role of an old Bourbon and Victorian positivist.

<sup>2</sup> The title "Vzgliad iz ugla" might also contain a reference to the correspondence of Ivanov and Gershenson, "Perepiska iz dvukh uglov."

<sup>3</sup> The research of the activity of the Moscow Meletinskii-Zholkovskii-Circle is still in the initial stage – unlike the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School. Cf. the recollections by Gasparov (2006).

predominated; in some articles, only the declensions appear to be Russian. The language of the Tartu structuralists was oversaturated by mathematic formulas. On the one hand, they acted as shock treatment after the hackneyed slogans of the vulgar Marxist scholarship; on the other hand, however, they seemed to be an end in themselves: they underlined the esoteric and elitist character of the School. When comparing the Gasparov's scholarly idiom with that of the "indigenous" structuralists, one can see oblique criticism and a stylistic alternative: Gasparov writes in short and simple sentences, practically without subordinate clauses. He has a clear transparent syntax and the number of foreign words does exceed the necessary versological terms.

Gasparov also presented an indirect but sensible alternative to the semiotic games with mathematical formulas and graphs: the comparative-statistic method. He turned to the manuscript works of the forgotten Moscow formalist Boris Iarkho, the most consequent partisan of the quantitative method<sup>4</sup>. Throughout his life, Gasparov cherished this method, but it had never been an end in itself for his research. Gasparov's revival of Iarkho should be localised in the methodological debate of the late-Soviet alternative scholarship as a counterbalance to the too- conceptual and esoteric Semiotics. Already here one can observe characteristic features of Gasparov's programmatic strategy of simplification that co-constitutes his poetics of paraphrase generally and in the ETs in particular.

In 1979, Gasparov levelled criticism against Bakhtin in an article published in Tartu, and deemed almost blasphemous by the community of dissident scholars. Once again, Gasparov attacked Bakhtin and Bakhtinism in 2004. This time, his criticism was even sharper. Gasparov's criticism of Bakhtin throughout the decades included an ethical component which exceeded the limits of theoretical and methodical debate. While in 1979 Gasparov tried to put Bakhtin back into the context of the 1920s, 25 years later, Gasparov talked not only as a historian of science but also as a classical scholar: he criticised Bakhtin's grand theory of the menippea, arguing that it to a great degree was founded on ancient texts that have not survived at all or only remain in a fragmented form. He did not only repeat his attack of 1979, although his 2004 paper was also brought in

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Gasparov's publication of Iarkho (1969), provided with a preface that in fact formulates Gasparov's own methodological credo (1969). See in more detail about Gasparov's strategies by the revival of Iarkho and Gasparov's position among the structuralists by Kirschbaum 2008:81-83 and 2007/08:163,166.

correlation with the old Tartu debate, since it was delivered—significantly—during the “Lotman Readings” in December 2004<sup>5</sup>.

There is a linguistic and stylistic dimension in the confrontation between Gasparov and Bakhtin. Bakhtin’s terms of dialogue and polyphony live from their polysemy and its potential for conceptualisation; on the contrary, Gasparov’s language is ruled by the imperative of unambiguity, transparency and simplification, which also determines Gasparov’s strategies of paraphrase in his literary studies and translations. Gasparov’s scholarly idiom forced its way between the elitist hermetic technological language of structuralism and Bakhtin’s tempting polysemy. For the subject of my paper, this urge towards a linguistic alternative, which constituted an important element of Gasparov’s scholarly agenda, is relevant<sup>6</sup>.

Gasparov’s program manifested itself not only in direct utterances, but also in the choice of subjects for research. Very often he addressed the poetry of one of his cultural heroes, Valerii Briusov<sup>7</sup>. In this connection, one has to look at what it meant to study Briusov’s works. This was a time when dissident scholarship avoided Briusov because he was not elitist enough, as opposed to Viacheslav Ivanov, studied by one of Gasparov’s most important friends and opponents, Sergei Averintsev<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> The dress rehearsal of this Anti-Bakhtin talk took place at the Moscow State University in November 2004. The Gasparov-Bakhtin controversy had already become a subject of several historical discussions and meditations (Bocharov 2006, Ėmerson 2006, Sedakova 2001:293-273), written generally by Bakhtin partisans.

<sup>6</sup> Of course one should place Gasparov’s last Bakhtin-attack in the cultural and academic context of the 1990s and 2000s. In many old as well as newly-made Russian universities, in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and the province, Bakhtin’s theories became the Bible of the humanities and are cited in almost every paper in the field of cultural and literary studies. In the Soviet time, it was necessary to legitimize your methods with quotations from the “classics of Marxism-Leninism”; now it has become necessary to back up everything with Bakhtin. However, there is an essential difference between citing Lenin and citing Bakhtin, since the Lenin references were a ritual, and everybody understood—sometimes very allergically—its importunate but nitty-gritty ceremoniality.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the formulations of Gasparov’s own principles of translation with his characteristics of Briusov, articulated already in the 1970s (1977:11-13).

<sup>8</sup> In his ETs (2003:330), Gasparov parodied the “rhythmic frills” of Ivanov’s style (both in his translations from the antique authors and in his own poems). Cf. Gasparov’s critics on Ivanov in the article “The interlinear translation and the measure of exactness” (“Podstrochnik i mera tochnosti,” 2001a:361-372). A future historian of the late and post-Soviet literary studies shall have to study the hierarchy of research topics, the reasons behind these preferences and the ways of their implementation. Another question that should be addressed at some stage is what kind of models, patterns and strategies of scholarly behaviour dissident scholars used.

Methodologically, Gasparov identified himself with the Moscow formalism which did not hide its positivist roots. In addition to Boris Iarkho, he had in mind the works of the emigrant scholar Kirill Taranovsky. As well Gasparov himself, Taranovsky went a long way from the studies of rhythm and rhyme to poetic semantics in general and especially the poetry of Mandel'shtam. Gasparov turned to Mandel'shtam studies at a time when the poet was canonised by the dissident circles in the USSR and the anti-Soviet scholarship abroad. He was seen as a martyr who seemed to begin his tragic way into the Vladivostok Gulag already in 1917. Gasparov destroyed the martyr-myth of Mandel'shtam, which was crucial for the consciousness of several generations of the Russian intelligentsia. Analysing the late poems of Mandel'shtam, the final texts and the draft versions, in his book of 1996, Gasparov showed how Mandel'shtam tried to integrate himself into the thematic and aesthetic system of Soviet literature<sup>9</sup>.

In the 1990s, when parts of the ETs were published, Gasparov was at the top of his academic and public notoriety, and was recognised as one of the titans of the Russian humanities. At least since Dmitrii Likhachev's television lectures during the 1980s, such titans were honoured as keepers and curators of cultural memory, bearers of humanism and the ethic conscience of the nation. Iurii Lotman, with his television lectures on the aristocratic culture of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, came second after Likhachev. In the same perspective one should view the public and ecclesiastical activities of Sergei Averintsev. He used scholarship for religious enlightenment and/or missionary work, accomplished with all the tools of his eloquence. In contrast, Gasparov avoided too much publicity, although he gave several interviews and answered general questions concerning the future of the Russian culture<sup>10</sup>. However, he disappointed and disillusioned his readers; Gasparov's voice was not prophetic enough, and if he was preaching something, it was rationalism as an ethic and cultural imperative.

In the 1990s, at the peak of his late public recognition, Gasparov published in the magazine "Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie" his "Zapisi i vypiski," curious notes, humorous abstracts, caustic remarks around the Soviet and post-Soviet academic life. Mixed into those were personal memories, methodological credos, and statements about the actual situation of the humanities in new Russia. The

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<sup>9</sup> Many arguments of this book were used in Gasparov's essay on the literary life of Mandel'shtam (1995) that seems to be conceived as an alternative to Averintsev's introduction to Mandel'shtam (Cf. Averintsev 1991 or in 1996:189-273). If Bakhtin was Gasparov's main opponent in the past, Sergei Averintsev seems to be his main adversary "in the present."

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Gasparov 2000a: 84-88, 106-109.

positivist Gasparov created a complicated mosaic of genres that was not perceived only as a collection of backstage anecdotes and jokes from the Russian academic scene; for his book “Zapisi i vypiski,” Gasparov received the Andrei Belyi Prize. Experimental translations build a part of this postmodernist puzzle.

### From Russian into Russian

Gasparov’s further step after “Zapisi i vypiski” was the enlarged publication of his old and new experimental translations. The book consists of 18 sections, and contains translations of 74 poets from different periods and languages, including the “translations” from Russian to Russian (2003:169-178). Along with the “honest translations” (“dobrosovestnye perevody,” 2003:53) of *verse libre* and metric originals into *verse libre*, there were numerous “konspektivnye perevody,” summarized translations.

The ETs are synoptic translations: Gasparov shortens the originals and indicates how many lines of the original he eliminates and how many he keeps: for example, out of 211 lines of Batiushkov’s *The Dream* (“Mechta”) only 35 survive Gasparov’s translation (2003:72). Gasparov’s usual positivist precision is transformed into a postmodernist gesture. In the following, we will try to discuss this reciprocal alienation of postmodernism and positivism. We will look on Gasparov’s poetics on the example of his translation of Lermontov’s “Elegiia”<sup>11</sup>. Here is the original text:

- 1 Дробись, дробись, волна ночная,
- 2 И пеной орошай берега в туманной мгле.
- 3 Я здесь стою близ моря на скале,
- 4 Стою, задумчивость питаю,
- 5 Один, покинув свет, и чуждый для людей
- 6 И никому тоски поверить не желая.
- 7 Вблизи меня палатки рыбаей;
- 8 Меж них блестит огонь гостеприимный,
- 9 Семья беспечная сидит вокруг огонька
- 10 И, внемля повесть старика,
- 11 Себе готовит ужин дымный!
- 12 Но я далек от счастья их душой,

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<sup>11</sup> This paper was already in print, as I was able to see Michael Wachtel’s article “Mikhail Gasparov as Stikhoved and Stikhotvorets,” *Slavic and East European Journal*, 52, 2 (Summer 2008), 223-235. In his paper, Wachtel also scrutinizes Gasparov’s paraphrase of Lermontov’s poem.

13 Я помню блеск обманчивой столицы,  
 14 Веселий пагубных невозвратимый рой.  
 15 И что ж? – слеза бежит с ресницы,  
 16 И сожаление мою тревожит грудь,  
 17 Года погибшие являются всечасно;  
 18 И этот взор, задумчивый и ясный –  
 19 Твержу, твержу душе: забудь.  
 20 Он все передо мной: я все твержу напрасно!..  
 21 О, если б я в сем месте был рожден,  
 22 Где не живет среди людей коварность:  
 23 Как много бы я был судьбою одолжен –  
 24 Теперь у ней нет прав на благодарность! –  
 25 Как жалок тот, чья младость принесла  
 26 Морщину лишнюю для старого чела  
 27 И, отобрав все милые желанья,  
 28 Одно печальное раскаянье дала;  
 29 Кто чувствовал, как я, – чтоб чувствовать страданья,  
 30 Кто рано свет узнал – и с страшной пустотой,  
 31 Как я, оставил брег земли своей родной  
 32 Для добровольного изгнанья! (Lermontov 1957:144-145)

Thirty-two lines in Lermontov's poem, Gasparov turned into ten:

1 Берег, ночь, скала, одиночество.  
 2 Вдалеке – рыбаки вокруг костра.  
 3 В черной памяти – блеск и пляска города,  
 4 И сквозь боль – незабываемый светлый взор.  
 5 Жить бы мне здесь –  
 6 Как много был бы я судьбою одолжен –  
 7 А теперь у ней нет прав на благодарность.  
 8 Это юность стала раскаяньем,  
 9 Опыт – пустотой,  
 10 И желанья мои изгнанием (Gasparov 2003:178).

On the phono-rhythmic level, one can observe a tendency to a partial trocheezation of the originally iambic verse. This results in a defamiliarisation of



iambics as the metric constant of Russian poetry<sup>12</sup>. The rhymes of Lermontov's "original" disappear. Gasparov replaces the combination of alternate, pair and enclosing rhymes by an alternation of verses with masculine (2,4,5,6,9), dactylic (1,3,8,10) and feminine (7) endings. One could expect that Gasparov would eliminate rhyme-words as the most programmed passages of text that are the most accidental and incidental. This expectation would be wrong: ten from 32 of Lermontov's rhyme-words are reproduced—in the same or in paraphrased form—in Gasparov's translation; that corresponds to the average reduction (1 to 3). This result is strange, since nobody but Gasparov studied the rhyme clichés<sup>13</sup>. Gasparov eliminates the rhymes not as cliché-passages but as figures of phonic amplification; not the rhyme-words, but the principle of rhyme.

Observing exactly the fluctuations of verse length in Gasparov's "translation" (1<sup>st</sup> verse – 10 syllables, 2<sup>nd</sup> –10, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 12, 4<sup>th</sup> – 10, 5<sup>th</sup> – 4, 6<sup>th</sup> – 12, 7<sup>th</sup> – 12, 8<sup>th</sup> – 10, 9<sup>th</sup> – 5, 10<sup>th</sup> – 10), one can see that Gasparov's *verse libre* is not exactly free. In spite of the conscious destruction of the standard verse length, Gasparov writes with measurable sections: five lines out of ten contain ten syllables (50 percent), and three lines have 12 syllables (30 percent). The verse structure tends towards syllabic segmentation in pieces with even number of syllables (90 percent). The average length in Lermontov's heterosyllabic iambics constitutes 10,906 syllables. Accordingly, Gasparov uses 9.5 syllables per verse. In Lermontov's poem the verse length fluctuates: the shortest lines (10, 19) contain eight syllables, the longest lines (6, 17, 20, 29) have 13 syllables. Gasparov intensifies the variations in verse length: the shortest verse (line 5) has four syllables, the longest (lines 6, 7) – 12 syllables. This means that, although Gasparov's text does not exceed the length of Lermontov's longest lines (13 syllables), he experiments with brevity, or conciseness: it is a kind of "paraphrase" on the syllabic level. If we compare Gasparov's shortest line (four syllables) with Lermontov's (eight syllables), it becomes evident that the fluctuations of verse length are more drastic in the "translation" than in the original. Besides, we should not forget that Gasparov's four-syllable line comes after a ten-syllable line and before a 12-syllable one: a rhythmic interruption is programmed.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. the subtitle of Gasparov's book "Metr i smysl: ob obnom *mekhanizme* kul'turnoi pamiatii" (Gasparov 2000b).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. his research on the rhyme inertia in Gasparov/Skulacheva 2004:91-106.

Punctuation is the next field of Gasparov's experiment in reduction. In his version, most of the sentences end with a period. This is not so in Lermontov's poem, where an interchange of question marks, periods and a single exclamation mark contribute to emotionalising the poetic text. Gasparov's text seems to be more monotonous; maybe the oscillations of the verse length are a substitution for the eliminated emotional punctuation in Lermontov. Through punctuation, Gasparov isolates the tragic element of the poem, separating it from the dramatic. The emotional serenity of the period emphasises the tragic element: Gasparov turns back to the original meaning of "zadumchivost'" as a rational meditation. The emotional theatricality is reduced: Gasparov's concentrated rationality does not disclaim the emotional, but it doesn't allow for its explicit ostentatiousness. Gasparov's punctuation is not that of a lull before a storm, but that of a calm of self-control and self-possession. Gasparov's period is a stoic punctuation mark.

Gasparov's other favourite punctuation mark is the dash. It is a mark of pauses, intervals and omitted details, but it is also an adage mark. Cf. Gasparov's translation from Batiushkov:

Слава – дым, и золото – прах,  
 Драгоценны сердцу – покой и воля,  
 И кому их осенила мечта –  
 Ночью, в хижине, у лампы, – счастлив. (Gasparov 2003:172)

Cf. the same "dash poetics" in another experimental translation:

В розах любви – счастье,  
 В терниях любви – песня (Gasparov 2003:175)

Gasparov's poetics of dashes (and key-words) is that of stressing and pinpointing. He reduces the expressions to concentrated aphoristic wordings.

On the lexical level, Lermontov's poem contains 11 personal and possessive pronouns in first person singular (lines 3, 7, 12, 13, 16, 20 (2), 21, 23, 29, 31); they make it a romantic confession. Only three of them endure Gasparov's translation. However, when we look at these pronouns pro rata to the number of the lines, we see that Gasparov exactly reproduces his original on the structural level: in the original there are 11 pronouns in 32 lines, i.e., about one personal or possessive pronoun in first person singular in three lines (or 34 percent of the lines); in the "translation" we have basically the same picture:

three pronouns in ten lines (or 30 percent), but Gasparov's text sounds more impersonal. Probably the reason for this impression is that not only pronouns, but the conjugated verbs are responsible for a lexical "personification," and they are absent in Gasparov's nominative style.

This nominative style dominates the entire "translation." However, it is significant that Gasparov rarely removes the archaisms completely (like in the case of *chelo* (26); he replaces them by more prosaic forms and synonyms: *breg* (2) becomes *bereg* (1), *rybari* (7) – *rybaki* (2), *mladost'* (25) – *iunost'* (8). This makes the text more modern, but the substantivism in itself, the corporeality remains. Gasparov tries to realise his postmodernist strategies of archiving and cataloguing in his neopositivist programme: such lists or inventories of motifs and figures do exist, but for folklore or the medieval, rather than modern literature, or in poetry itself, rather than in literary studies. Gasparov himself points out such lists of plot and hero constellations in Tvardovskii (cf. Gasparov 2001a:17). He thus legitimates his "inventory" poetics with the help of authoritative precedents; one can see the next manifestation of the reciprocal interdependence between literary and scholarly practices. But is this only catalogue poetics? Is it only a kind of nominative inventory? Only the postmodernist poetics of archiving? What ethic message does it contain?

Gasparov's nominative style has different aims. His first line summarizes a romantic (or Byronic) landscape, but in the following lines the verbless style has another underlying task.<sup>14</sup> By eliminating the verbs Gasparov practices the same restraint, which on the punctuation level was alluded to by the "stoic" period. It is a speech restraint: an action, movement, condition and motif, condensed to its reticence.

The adjectives express qualities and correlations of substantives. Lermontov uses 17 adjectives, Gasparov only two<sup>15</sup>: *svetlyi* (4) replaces Lermontov's *iasnyi* (*vzor*), the second adjective *chernaia* (*pamiat'*) (3) is absent from Lermontov's poem. The third line is an interpretative intrusion: only the word *blesk* is present in Lermontov's "original" of Gasparov's line "V chernoï pamiatī – blesk i pliaska goroda." Gasparov introduces the expressionist "*chernaia pamiat'*" (black memory) und "*pliaska goroda*" (the dance of the city); Gasparov liked the poetry of the German expressionist Georg Heym, whom he also translated (cf. Geim [Heym] 2003). The metonymic substitution of *gorod* for *stolitsa* leaves

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<sup>14</sup> In this connection, one should not forget that Gasparov initiated the study of verbless poems. Cf. his article "Fet bezglagol'nyi" in Gasparov 2001a:27-42. Once again, the practice of paraphrase grows out of a scholarly analysis.

<sup>15</sup> I consider *nezabytyi* (4) as a participle. Cf. the more common adjective *nezabyvaemyi*.

behind the romantic juxtaposition capital vs. idyllic country, but rather refers to the expressionist depictions of the city, the apocalyptic pictures of the infernal urban metropolis.

As a conclusion of this analysis, I can say that Gasparov's reduction is a means of revision. The main procedure of these shortened translations is the paraphrase, in both meanings; as a description of a linguistic utterance with the help of another utterance as well as a free corresponding transmission into another language, in our case, into the postmodernist language.

### **Through the Long Labyrinth of Legitimations**

Responses to Gasparov's book varied and were sometimes quite intense. Viktor Krivulin (2000:296) had assumed that of all the Russian literature of the second half of the 20th century, only this book ("Zapisi i vypiski," which included the ETs) will be relevant for future generations. Some negative responses were reminiscent of Stalinist persecution campaigns. For example, Iurii Kolker wrote in his lampoon "Skopets v serale" ("Eunuch in the seraglio"):

Седовласый, увенчанный лаврами стиховед [...] не понимает поэтического смысла стихов, глух к стиху, не чувствует поэзии [...] сочиняет, паразитируя на шедевре гениального юноши [Баратынского – Н.К.] [...] На дворе – пик эпохи показного потребления искусства [...] эпоха стервятников и мародеров культуры (Kolker 2000:321-323)<sup>16</sup>.

Gasparov abandons the conventional practices of literary translation. Some critics were shocked not only by the act of a "blasphemous" translation from Russian into Russian, but also by the mode in which Gasparov rendered the classical poems of the "Golden Age" of the Russian poetry. The fact of such translations in itself was provocative enough, but its poetics further fuelled the frustration around Gasparov's experiment.

Gasparov grounds his paraphrase poetics in a complicated system of self-legitimations and apologies, in which positivism and the postmodernism mix and point to each other. His position remains provocative in both directions: its postmodernist elements angered traditionalists, and positivist elements irritated postmodernists. It is the same double provocation that we observe in Gasparov's position in the academic life of the 1960-1990s. In the following, we will try to elaborate a guide through this labyrinth.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. a representative reaction of Benedikt Sarnov (2005), too.

Gasparov's paraphrasing strategy forms an interdiscursive and interdisciplinary unity. The meta-device of paraphrase was reflected upon by Gasparov himself; for example in his preface to an analysis of a poem by Mandel'shtam:

[...] мы понимаем стихотворение, если можем пересказать его своими словами (как это делается в школе). Обычно считается, что поэзия не допускает таких пересказов, что при этом пропадает самая суть ее поэтичности. На самом деле наоборот: только имея в голове (сознательно или бессознательно, отчетливо или расплывчато) некоторую формулировку того содержания стихотворения, которое еще не является поэзией, мы можем выделить те выразительные средства, которые делают его поэзией (Gasparov 2001a:261).

Orlitskii (2006:62) points out a similar reflection on paraphrase in Gasparov's article on Pasternak (cf. Gasparov 2001a:176). The subtitle of the article, which contains paraphrases of Pasternak is "Verifying Our Understanding" ("Sverka ponimaniia", 2001a:176): the control of comprehension. Whether analysing poetic structure, interpreting poems or composing summary "translations," Gasparov always professes enthusiastic belief in understanding and its control. Paraphrase is the instrument of this control.

In his works, Gasparov appeals to the ancient tradition of scholarly editions of classical texts, which were accompanied by the *interpretatio*, a very close re-narration, a paraphrase providing synonyms, explaining the metaphors and ellipses and simplifying the syntax (cf. Gasparov 2001a:176). In his ETs, Gasparov uses the same techniques. Here one can clearly observe how naturally and at the same time ingratiatingly Gasparov connects a historical legitimation and the appeal to the ancient authorities with self-legitimation. At the same time he transmits the practices of scholarly commentary into literature. Scholarship turns into a source of literary devices. He lays his cards on the table: he plays a game, but he defines its rules.

Gasparov's self-legitimation goes in different directions. First of all, Gasparov reminds of ancient practices of shortening paraphrase:

В истории поэзии такие переработки появляются не впервые. Когда александрийские поэты III в. до н.э. стали разрабатывать камерную лирику вместо громкой, то они брали любовные темы у больших лириков-архаиков и перелагали в короткие и четкие эпиграммы,

писанные элегическим дистихом. Это была и преемственность и полемичность. Такая стилистическая полемика средствами не теории, а практики была привычна: если Еврипиду не нравилась «Электра» Софокла, он брался и писал свою собственную „Электру“ (современный литератор написал бы вместо этого эссе „Читая Электру“) (Gasparov 2003:15).

Gasparov uses his authority as a classicist and brings his own literary techniques into correlation with the ancient tradition, constructing a tradition of paraphrase<sup>17</sup>. Going even further, he inscribes the Russian classics into this tradition. Now Pushkin and Lermontov are the high authorities that should stand by him. According to Gasparov, Lermontov's poetic translations are "summaries" ("konspekty") of Lamartine, while Pushkin wrote his poem "The Feast during the Plague" ("Pir vo vremia chumy") shortening the 400 lines of Wilson to 240. "Boris Godunov" is twice as short as a Shakespeare drama. "The Captains' Daughter" is three times shorter than a Walter Scott novel. Drawing these parallels, Gasparov uses the same wording for Pushkin's works and his own. Both avoid "prolixities" ("dlinnoty") (2003:12-13). In another place, in the long labyrinth of legitimations, Gasparov declares Russian culture a "translating culture":

[...] конспективный перевод очень хорошо вписывался в творчество Пушкина, потому что ведь все творчество Пушкина было, так сказать, конспектом европейской культуры для России. Русская культура, начиная с петровских времен, развивалась сверхускоренно, шагая через ступеньку, чтобы догнать Европу [...] Я подумал: разве так уж изменилось время? Русская литература по-прежнему отстает от европейской приблизительно на одно-два поколения. Она по-прежнему нуждается в скоростном, конспективном усвоении европейского опыта. Разве не нужны ей конспективные переводы – лирические дайджесты, поэзия в пилюлях? (Gasparov 2003:12).

<sup>17</sup> At the same time some expressions sound autopoetic and programmatic: "chamber" poetry against the "loud" bombastic lyric, short against long. Gasparov became evaluative; you can hear it in the epithet "gromkii" (loud) and rather more distinctly in "chetkii" (clear), which implicates indirect criticism: poetry that he was shortening was not clear enough. However, Gasparov hides his axiology behind neutral statements, and he does so in such way that the reader has the impression of an "objective" scholarly digression into the history of the literary device of the paraphrase.

The summarizing translation contributes to the Russian adoption of the West; Gasparov installs the culturological arguments into the circles of his self-legitimations. It would be too bold to insist that the Gasparov's own *verse libre* paraphrases were designed with a direct aim of an educating adoption of European culture. More precisely, one could note the rhetorical fusion of poetical technicalities with arguments rooted in a grand vision of Russian cultural history. It is not so easy to tell which of the two was more important for Gasparov. One of various different discourses that Gasparov is touching upon alludes to an ambigious private and emotional aspect of scholarly experience:

Я – филолог-классик, моя специальность – переводы из античных поэтов. Здесь спрос на точность передачи формы – повышенный: я должен знакомить читателей с очень далекой культурой. Размером подлинника я перевел столько поэтов-представителей античной культуры, что решил: а поэтов нового времени я имею право переводить – не для читателей, а для себя – не как представителей, а просто так. То есть вопреки размеру подлинника [...] (Gasparov 2003:10).

Only through long-term positivist studies and translations does a scholar acquire the right to write in a postmodernist way. The price is paid. The scholarly sacrifice (or a thanks-offering) is made. Legitimising his experiments in paraphrase through allusions to Pushkin and other classics, Gasparov chooses a deceptive justification. Even Iurii Orlitskii (2006:64) swallowed Gasparov's bait: Pushkin, too, shortened the originals he translated but he did not translate Russian writers. We have to distinguish translations from a foreign language and from the native one, because in the second case, we are dealing with a provocative oxymoron.

Gasparov's paraphrase poetics is similar to those of a shortened interlinear word-for-word-translation (*podstrochnik*). However, it has a scholarly genesis, because nobody but Gasparov made the interlinear translation into a subject of literary analysis. In his translations, he takes a further step: he turns the interlinear translation, which did not exist as an autonomous genre in itself, into a literary fact and thereby introduces it into the literary system<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> The Russian-to-Russian translations continue the paradoxical transmission of the analysing paraphrase into literature. It could have been an oxymoron for Gasparov himself, because he insisted on the strict difference between "scholarship" (*nauka*) and creative work (*tvorchestvo*). For example, he blamed Bakhtin for mixing both modes of writing. It seems that in his experimental

The paraphrase is a metonymy (or maybe a hyperbole) of scholarly approach (*filologichnost'*). Gasparov's pathos of comprehension and its control is that of rationalisation. In the case of Gasparov we can talk about an ethos of rationality, or about the vow of paraphrase, and in the title of this paper we could mention the ethics of paraphrase along with its poetics. The translations by Gasparov are experimental in two senses—as a novelty in literature and as a scholarly experiment:

Пусть это не покажется только литературным хулиганством. Во-первых, мне хотелось проверить: что остается от стихотворения, если вычесть из него то, что называется „музыкой”? Мы читаем мировую поэзию в переводах, о которых нас честно предупреждают, что передать музыку подлинника они бессильны; как относится то, что мы читаем, к тому, что было написано на самом деле? Вот так, как предлагаемые стихотворения к тем, которые мы читаем в собраниях сочинений русских романтиков (Gasparov 2003:170).

Gasparov's technique of reduction and paraphrase does not confine itself, like in his "translation" of Lermontov, to stripping away the "poetic" elements of verse rhythm and syntax. The choice of *verse libre* entails the changes in the lexical and thematic structure of the original text. Gasparov does not try to eliminate all of the romantic and Byronic motifs; he emphasises his choice of the substitutes. The device of the paraphrase is a minus-device<sup>19</sup>:

Во-вторых, мне хотелось дать себе отчет: что я сохраняю из подлинника XIX века, что мне кажется художественно живым и выразительным, а что вялым, многословным и надоевшим? Мы любим притворяться, что нам близко и дорого все, все, все, – а на самом деле? Нам говорят: переводы нужно делать так, чтобы они вызывали у нас те же художественные эмоции, какие оригинал вызывал у своих первых читателей. Я попробовал придать этому

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translations, Gasparov is breaking with his own principles and doing exactly what he criticises Bakhtin for. But this comparison or analogy is also confusing. Bakhtin implants the creativity into scholarship, while Gasparov approaches and attacks literature at the same time. The relationship between scholarship and art was one of Gasparov's main objects of reflection, and not only ad negativum, on the example of Bakhtin and others, but also in a positive way: cf. "Gasparov and formalists" in Dubin (2006b:307-309).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the elimination of ossianic topics in Gasparov's translation of Batiushkov's "Dream" ("Mechta") (2003:172).



переложению такую степень формальной новизны, какую, по моему представлению, имели романтические элегии для первых читателей. Я получил картину своего художественного вкуса: как мало я вмещаю из того, что мне оставлено поэтами. Одну четвертую или шестую часть – как если я читаю на малознакомом языке без словаря. Картина эта мне показалась очень непривлекательной, и мне это было полезно (Gasparov 2003:170-71).

Gasparov underlines the ethic component of his scholarly activity and of his self-fashioning (*zhiznetvorchestvo*): here one could refer to the programmatic title of his small essay “Filologiya kak npravstvennost’” – “Literary scholarship as morality.” The moral aspect of Gasparov’s statements is related to his interest in the fable with its obligatory moral. In a certain sense, the moral of a fable is also a kind of paraphrase. The fable paraphrase is combined with the techniques of a “passive” re-narrative exposition: in this connection let us refer to the school dichotomy of essay (*sochinenie*) and exposition (*izlozhenie*).

Returning to the ethic dimension of Gasparov’s idea of humanities, one has to think about Gasparov’s pleading for historicism (2003:98-99) which he declares to be a methodological presupposition for any work in literary studies. It would be wrong to assume that Gasparov “betrayed” his historicism credo in the ETs. He does use historicism in order to legitimize postmodernist alienation, but this alienation does not provide a ground for conspicuous self-admiration of the alienated self; it is not a postmodernist aestheticism of misunderstanding and incomprehension. Gasparov does not hesitate to reveal his loss. The minus-device explicitly points to what is lost and forgotten.

Gasparov had used the technique of the paraphrasing renarration before<sup>20</sup>. He retold the works of western classicists. In “Zapisi i vypiski” Gasparov underlines the secondarity of his work on ancient authors, which turns out to be a paraphrase:

У меня на стене висит детская картинка: берег речки, мишка с восторгом удит рыбу из речки и бросает в ведро, а за его спиной зайчик с таким же восторгом удит рыбу из этого мишкиного ведра. Античностью я занимаюсь как это заяц, – с материалом уже исследованным и переисследованным нашими предшественниками. А стиховедением – как мишка, – с материалом нетронутым, где все

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Gasparov’s self-projections to Ausonius: „Комментарий к Авсонию, конечно, весь компилятивный [...] но я и сам ведь весь компилятивный” (2000a:142).

нужно самому отыскивать и обсчитывать с самого начала. Интересно и то и другое (Gasparov 2000a:314).

It would take a separate work to discuss the way Gasparov uses childhood *topoi* in his reflexions upon scholarly practice in order to construct a new vision of its cultural significance. He wrote a bestselling book “Zanimatel’naia Gretsiia” (1995b), retelling the basics of ancient Greek history and culture<sup>21</sup>. Childhood *topoi* in Gasparov imply a parallel between the mental outlook of an infant and (post)modern taste. His writings for children in fact address the postmodern reader who is facing the heavy cultural and literary inheritance of the past, defenceless and helpless like a child. In this sense, Gasparov’s paraphrases have an educational aim. The traditional moralism of Russian literature is implied into scholarly practices, and vice versa. This popular appeal is very important for understanding the ETs, since Gasparov legitimates his paraphrases as a concession to modern taste (cf. Gasparov 2003:170).

The analytic and interpretative dimension of scholarly paraphrase reveals itself in literary discourse. Gasparov gives a scholarly turn to literary language. In this sense one could talk about a “positivist” attack; Russian literary scholarship, impersonated by Gasparov, approaches and at the same time attacks postmodernism. However, paraphrase in the scholarly discourse turns out to be a literary device. Postmodernist literature and the language of poststructuralist literary studies exist in reciprocal correlation. The main feature of postmodern literature consists not only in its metapoetics, but in the fact that the literary scholar becomes its main reader. A professional reader becomes a professional writer: the main versologists are experimental *verse libre* poets and translators (e.g. Aleksandr Zhovtis, Iiurii Orlitskii etc.), and vice versa. Gasparov tries to combine these new functions, tries to be the main reader and the main writer at the same time. The paraphrase is the device which allows for such transformations. The literary and scholarly activities are united in Gasparov’s work. Of course, the reader he has in mind remembers his scholarly aura. Gasparov’s scholarly and literary paraphrases were designed to correlate with each other in the eyes of the reader, who keeps in mind all of Gasparov’s intellectual activities. For that reason, the resemblance of his paraphrase techniques to similar methods in postmodernism is deceptive. The differences are determined by the reception context: one thing is a Prigov, playing a recognised clown of postmodernity with an ostentatious autophilia, and another thing is an established literary scholar, a member of the Academy of Sciences, a

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Gasparov’s re-narration of Herodotus (2001b), too.

well-known partisan of militant positivism. The effect of a joke depends on the person telling it, and Gasparov's poetics of paraphrase is a prank. It is a joke, not only a literary one (*literaturnaia shutka*), but a scholarly one (*literaturovedcheskaia shutka*), a joke in a post-modernist spirit, but at the expense of postmodernism, too<sup>22</sup>.

One should not overlook the (pseudo-)kenotic, self-humiliating aspect of Gasparov's self-fashioning (cf. Sverdlov 2004:70-71). His self-reflective formula "Vzgliad iz ugla" alludes to "bednyi ugol." The strategy of self-humiliation and self-belittling corresponds to the (self)-shortening poetics of paraphrase. In textual reflections on Gasparov, including his own, Gogolisms are often used for him. He is an Akakii Akakievich or Khlestakov (cf. the title of Eliferova's article "Revisory priechali?", 2004). Further applying Gogol archetypes to Gasparov, it is possible to see him rather as a Chichikov of Russian poetry: always apologising, but buying the dead souls of Russian poetry<sup>23</sup>.

Of course, Gasparov's paraphrases can be read against the background of postmodernist poetics of fragments and quotations; Gasparov's digest paraphrases correlate with postmodernist remakes (cf. Ėpshtein 2005:55). In his positivist scholarly work he was a postmodernist propagating total

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<sup>22</sup> We can also consider Gasparov's book as an experiment in deconstruction. Paul de Man derives Rilke's poetics from chiasm, Gasparov derives Russian literature from paraphrase. Or maybe Gasparov presents a parody of metarhetorics, carrying it to an absurdity of the omnivorous paraphrase? There are some other points of contact with postmodern literary studies: for example, one can interpret Gasparov's paraphrases in Harold Bloom's perspective, as a revision, as a limitation of influence, and in the case of Gasparov, we could also have to do with an explicit revision exposing its machinery. Gasparov's technique of revision is Bloom's ascesis: that would correspond not only to Gasparov's Spartan translations but also to his self-fashioning, in text and beyond it. His quotidian asceticism was legendary. In the case "Gasparov" we can talk about ascesis as *otshel'nichestvo* (eremitism) and *podvizhnichestvo* (selfless devotion). At the same time it is a gesture of an apologising retreat, ensnaring his opponents into his territory. Cf. Zholkovskii's association (2006:43) of Gasparov with Kutuzov, the master of retreat. Cf. also Avtonomova's notice about Gasparov's "sposobnost' k glukhoi oborone ot naviachivoi ideologicheskoi dogmy" (2006:15).

<sup>23</sup> Discussing some suggestions of this paper, Dirk Uffelmann noticed to me that Gasparov's behaviour and self-fashioning has some neokynic traits. Neokynicism correlated with neokenotics in the figure of the great ascetic of the Russian culture, Nikolai Fedorov. With his paraphrases Gasparov tries to raise the Russian poetry from the dead; it is a new utopia, simultaneously a positivist and postmodern utopia of text-resurrection. In this sense, Gasparov opens a new page in the history of the concept of the word-resurrection began by Shklovskii. However, Gasparov's utopia of resurrection of dead texts is presented as an anti-utopia. Cf. the parallels between Gasparov's poetics of paraphrasing catalogue and his rhetoric of protection of literary monuments with Fedorov's conception of museum.

dismemberment and partition. Many colleagues of Gasparov could not follow the sado-masochistic urge of his splitting strategy. Their incomprehension increased because Gasparov's rage of specification was covered by the mask of scholarly "objectivity." The similar strategy of dismemberment is present in the ETs. Gasparov acts in the name of modern taste and from the position of strength. It is the strength of literary scholarship which knows exactly how literature works.

To conclude, we must remember that translation was always a laboratory of forms. Gasparov's translations reached the readers in the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, and we are only beginning to read his works. The death of Gasparov doesn't mean the end of his history; quite the contrary. His new reader is a post-post-modern one, it is someone in a condition of *proto*. For that reason, Gasparov's positivist and in the same time postmodernist poetics of paraphrase, taken together with his scholarly studies and essays—in short, the whole of Gasparov-Project—will be read and serve as a pathfinder out of the postmodernist crisis.

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