

NO. 75 | SUMMER 2018

A QUARTERLY  
PUBLICATION  
OF THE ATA'S  
LITERARY  
DIVISION

# SOURCE



Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition VII* (1913)

## INTO AND OUT OF RUSSIAN

### FEATURING

Interview: Marian Schwartz

Russian Picture Books

C.S. Lewis Poem in Russian

Words, words, words: Biosphere

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LITERARY DIVISION

ata

American Translators Association  
*The Voice of Interpreters and Translators*

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# From the Editors



**Michele Aynesworth**  
**Editor-in-Chief**



**Patrick Saari**  
**Associate Editor**



**Mercedes Guhl**  
**Associate Editor**

At the ATA57 Conference in November 2016 in San Francisco, ATA's Marilyn Gaddis Rose Lecturer, Marian Schwartz, focused on retranslating the classics, a subject no doubt inspired by the publication of her recent translation of Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. Now, on the occasion of last year's publication of Marian's translation of one of the 10 books of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Red Wheel*, a cycle of novels on the Russian Revolution, we have devoted this summer issue of *Source* to the Russian language and literature and interviewed Marian on her career and the project of translating the four volumes of Node III, *March 17*, of Solzhenitsyn's epic work.

Mark Herman and Ronnie Apter provide us with an overview of the difficulties and joys of translating Russian picture books for children, specifically seven illustrated books written in verse by the Paris-based Russian author Diana Malivani. They have chosen four examples of how they've steered their way across taboos, word choices, rhyme schemes, and illustrations, showing us the original in Russian, a literal translation into English, and then their final polished version.

Evgeny Terekhin's participation in a social media group discussing, in Russian, British philosopher Owen Barfield led him to translate a poem by the famous author of *Narnia*, C.S. Lewis, on "The Birth of Language" into Russian. He also gives us a commentary on the poem, which embodies several of Barfield's ideas on linguistics and poetry.

In his article "Translating the Biosphere," Russian-to-English translator Steve McGrath, prompted by his recent translation of *The Biosphere and Civilization: In the Throes of a Global Crisis*, (2018) by former Russian environmental minister Victor Danilov-Danil'yan and journalist Igor Reyf, has examined the history and meaning behind the word "biosphere" and other related words, evoking a wide variety of definitions, terms, and concepts, as well as scientists and thinkers, spanning several continents and centuries.

Our LD Administrator Paula Arturo writes about the Division's lineup of speakers for ATA59 in New Orleans. And we are happy to announce that Mercedes Guhl, who helped us with this issue, has agreed to join our *Source* team as an Associate Editor.

## Upcoming issue

We look forward to contributions on Nordic literature and languages (Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, Danish, and Icelandic) for our upcoming Fall issue 2018.

## ABOUT THE EDITORS

**Michele Aynesworth** specializes in translating Argentine and French authors. E-mail: [michele@mckayaynesworth.com](mailto:michele@mckayaynesworth.com)

**Patrick Saari**, born in Pasadena, California, now living in Quito, Ecuador, writes, translates, and interprets in English, French, and Spanish. Email: [patricksaari@netlife.ec](mailto:patricksaari@netlife.ec)

**Mercedes Guhl** translates English into Spanish for publishing houses in Mexico. She specializes in children's and young adult fiction and graphic novels. Email: [mercedesguhl@gmail.com](mailto:mercedesguhl@gmail.com)

Special thanks to **Jamie Padula** for proofreading and to LD Administrators **Paula Arturo** and **Amanda Williams** for their support.



# SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

As the journal of the ATA's Literary Division, *Source* is both a forum for the discussion of literary translation and a vehicle for LD members and guest contributors to publish their work. Novice translators, as well as those with more experience, are encouraged to submit translations of poetry and prose together with their meditations on the process. We are also constantly on the lookout for submissions from Asia, Africa, and all other less frequently represented cultures.

## TOPIC FOR THE FALL 2018 ISSUE:

- We are now soliciting contributions on Nordic literature and languages (Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, Danish, and Icelandic) for the Fall issue.
- Contributors are asked to follow the format guidelines below.
- **Submission deadline for the Fall: August 21**

## FORMAT:

- Submit articles up to 1600 words, Word or text file, single-spaced.
- Garamond font, size 12, without indented paragraphs.
- Line breaks between paragraphs but no word breaks.
- Unjustified righthand margin.
- Endnotes please, not footnotes.
- Please include a brief, factual bio and photograph.
- Links and illustrations, etc., are encouraged.
- Submissions may be edited.
- Submissions go to [patricksaari@netlife.ec](mailto:patricksaari@netlife.ec) or [michele@mckayaynesworth.com](mailto:michele@mckayaynesworth.com)

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## Letter from the LD Administrator

**D**ear Members,

I hope you're as excited about this year's conference in New Orleans as I am! We've got a wonderful line-up of eminent speakers for you and a little surprise at this year's Division Lunch. So, whatever you do, don't miss out!

At last year's Annual Division Meeting you spoke, and we listened. You said you wanted to hear from someone in the publishing world, and our Leadership Council Member Lisa Carter worked her magic and made it happen. This year's distinguished speaker is Gabriella Page-Fort, Editorial Director of AmazonCrossing and literary translator from French and Spanish.

Her list includes award-winning authors from around the world, such as Laksmi Pamuntjak, Martin Michael Driessen, Laura Esquivel, Dolores Redondo, Laura Restrepo, Zygmunt Miloszewski, and Ayse Kulin. And she was named Publishers Weekly Star Watch "Superstar" in 2017.



**Paula Arturo** is a lawyer, translator, and former law professor. Throughout her fifteen-year career, in addition to various legal and financial documents, she has also translated several highly technical law books and publications in major international journals for high-profile authors, including several Nobel Prize Laureates and renowned jurists. She is an independent lawyer-linguist for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review process of several Latin American states, as well as a legal-linguistic consultant for various international organizations. She is a co-creator of Translating Lawyers, a boutique firm specializing in legal translation by lawyers for lawyers. She is currently serving a two-year term as Administrator of the American Translators Association's Literary Division, Co-head of Legal Affairs at the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters and member of the Public Policies Forum of the Supreme Court of Argentina.

Literary Division Administrator:  
Paula Arturo, [paula@translatinglawyers.com](mailto:paula@translatinglawyers.com)

Assistant Administrator:  
Amanda Williams, [amanda@mirrorimagetranslations.com](mailto:amanda@mirrorimagetranslations.com)

Gabriella will give two presentations at the conference: “Publishing Literature in Translation: How Translators Help AmazonCrossing Bring Stories to New Readers” and “International Literatures: A Data-Driven Approach to Prioritizing Diversity.”

But that’s not all the Leadership Council has lined up for you. Lisa Carter will be presenting “10 Tips for Literary Translators.” Lisa is an award-winning literary translator with over 20 years’ experience in the field. She’s also the mastermind behind Intralingo, a boutique communications company that helps business brands, authors, and publishers. If anyone can provide literary translators with reliable tips, it’s Lisa.

Excited yet? Well, there’s more! Our former Literary Division Administrator, Mercedes Guhl, will be presenting “Translating books: a race for endurance runners,” a two-part presentation in which she’ll cover everything from training and preparing for the arduous task of book translation to making it to the finish line. Mercedes has been in the book industry since 1990. She has a degree in philosophy and literature, an MA in translation studies, and over 60 published translations. She’s one of the most well-respected literary translators at the ATA and someone whose solid knowledge and professionalism I greatly admire.

But that’s not all. Remember that surprise I mentioned at this year’s lunch? We’ll be posting updates on our Listserv and Facebook group. If you’re not in the group yet, look for us here: <https://tinyurl.com/LDFacebk>.

Best,  
Paula

# AN INTERVIEW WITH MARIAN SCHWARTZ:

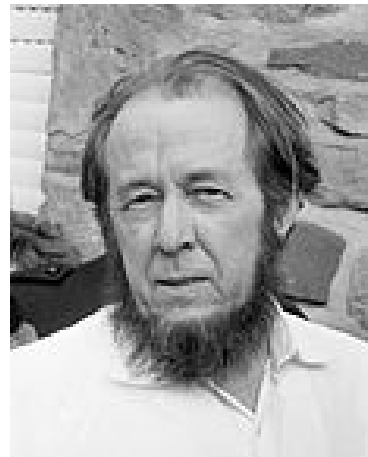
## Translating Solzhenitsyn's *March 1917*

By Patrick Saari and Mercedes Guhl

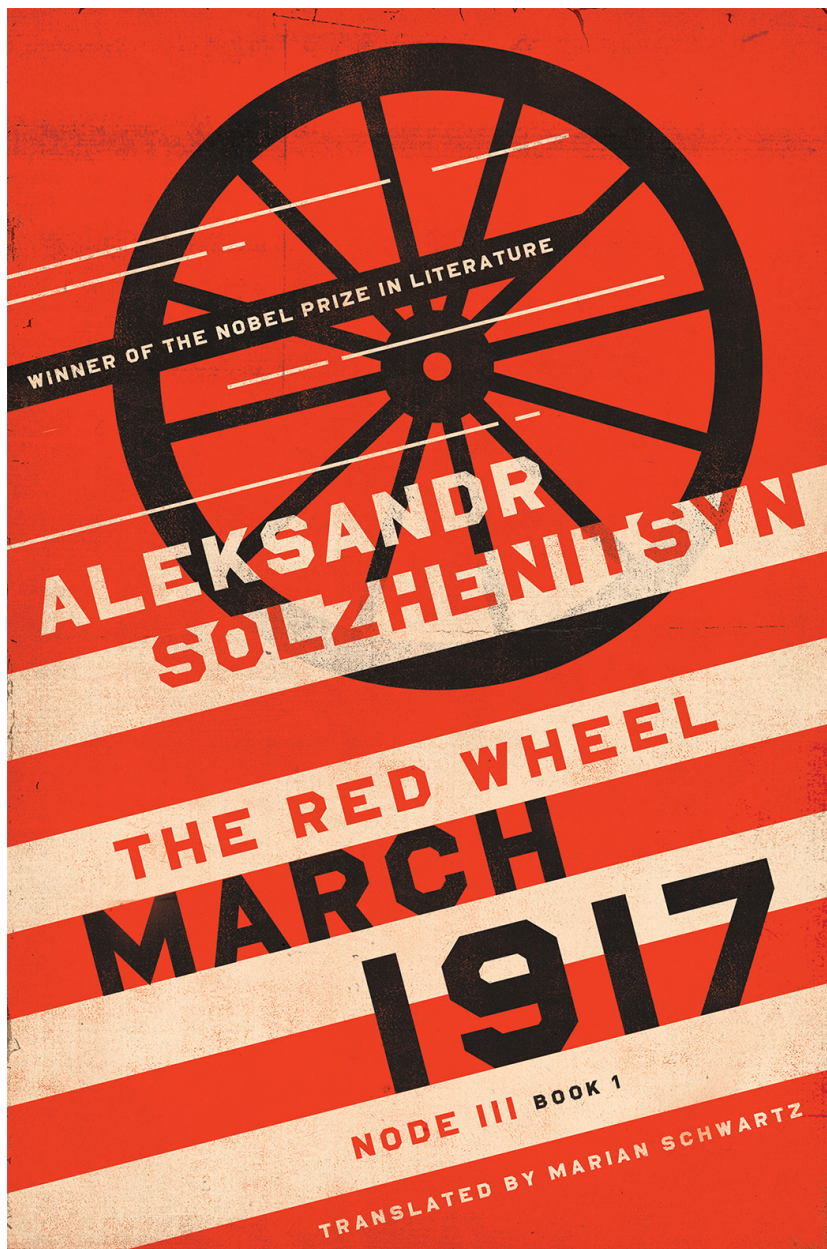


**Marian Schwartz** translates Russian classic and contemporary fiction, history, biography, criticism, and fine art. She is the principal English translator of the works of Nina Berberova and translated the New York Times' bestseller *The Last Tsar*, by Edvard Radzinsky, as well as classics by Mikhail Bulgakov, Ivan Goncharov, Yuri Olesha, Mikhail Lermontov, and Leo Tolstoy. Her most recent publications are Andrei Gelasimov's *Into the Thickening Fog*, Polina Dashkova's *Madness Treads Lightly*, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *March 1917: The Red Wheel*, Node III, Book 1. She is a past president of the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) and the recipient of two National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) translation fellowships and numerous prizes, including the 2014 Read Russia Prize for Contemporary Russian Literature and the 2016 Soeurette Diehl Frasier Award from the Texas Institute of Letters.

**Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn** (1918–2008) is widely acknowledged as one of the most important figures—and perhaps the most important writer—of the last century. A Soviet political prisoner from 1945 to 1953, he set himself firmly against the anti-human Soviet system, and all anti-human ideologies, from that time forward. His story *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962) made him famous, and *The Gulag Archipelago*, published to worldwide acclaim in 1973, further unmasked communism and played a critical role in its eventual defeat. Solzhenitsyn won the Nobel Prize in 1970 and was exiled to the West in 1974. He ultimately published dozens of plays, poems, novels, and works of history, nonfiction, and memoir, including *Cancer Ward*, *In the First Circle*, and *The Oak and the Calf* (a memoir that is continued in *Between Two Millstones*). Few authors have so decisively shaped minds, hearts, and world events as did Solzhenitsyn.







### *March 1917*

Cover and jacket design winner of  
the 2018 Book, Jacket & Journal Show of the Association of  
University Presses (AUPRESSES)

To purchase the book from the publisher, go to:

<http://undpress.nd.edu/books/P03388>

In 2017, to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian Revolution, the **University of Notre Dame Press** published Marian Schwartz's English translation of Book 1 of *March 1917*, the third part of Nobel Prize-winner Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's epic work of *The Red Wheel* about the Russian Revolution. The previous two nodes—*August 1914* and *November 1916*—focus on Russia's crises and recovery, on revolutionary terrorism and its suppression, on the missed opportunity of Pyotr Stolypin's reforms, and how the surge of patriotism in August 1914 soured as Russia bled in World War I.

*March 1917*, however, tells the story of the Russian Revolution itself, during which the Imperial government not only melts in the face of the mob, but also the leaders of the opposition prove utterly incapable of controlling the course of events. The action of book 1 (of four), *March 1917* is set during March 8–12. The absorbing narrative tells the stories of more than 50 characters during the days when the Russian Empire



begins to crumble. Bread riots in the capital, Petrograd (St. Petersburg), go unchecked at first, and the police are beaten and killed by mobs.

Efforts to put down the violence using the army trigger a mutiny in the numerous reserve regiments housed in the city, who kill their officers and rampage. The anti-Tsarist bourgeois opposition, horrified by the violence, scrambles to declare that it is provisionally taking power, while socialists immediately create a Soviet alternative to undermine it. Meanwhile, Emperor Nikolai II is away at military headquarters and his wife Aleksandra is isolated outside Petrograd, caring for their sick children. Suddenly, the viability of the Russian state itself is called into question.



*You have been working as a translator for more than 40 years and your website provides us with a glimpse of the very wide range of your work. We are very interested in hearing about your beginnings as a translator, your background, your connection with the Russian language specifically and languages in general.*

**Marian Schwartz:** Before I ever thought of translating literature, I was deeply in love with foreign languages in general. My grandparents lived up near Columbia University, so we visited (from Ohio, where I was born and raised) New York often, and I have a distinct memory of riding the bus down Broadway and then down the east side of Central Park and listing all the languages I wanted to learn—I think it came to thirteen, with Russian at the top, since I already had very good French, thanks to a fancy public school that started us in fourth grade. That list was a favorite daydream of mine in those years. Impractical young teenager that I was, I thought vaguely I might interpret at the UN. The other strand of this, of course, is literature, and again, thanks to my fancy public school, I went through a three-year Advanced Placement literature course that, along with heavy doses of Shakespeare, Greek plays and epics, and Dickens, eventually meant reading the complete works of Milton in English. I wrote my senior thesis on Chekhov's *Seagull*, arguing that it met the requirements of Greek tragedy.

I went to Harvard, where I started Russian, continued French, and also did a year of intensive Spanish, and from there went to the University of Texas at Austin, where the Slavic Department happened to be filled with professors excited about early twentieth-century Russian literature and . . . translation! Paul Schmidt, Sidney Monas, John Bowlt, and Richard Sylvester were all there, and it was with Sylvester that I co-translated my first published translation, "An Otherworldly Evening," by Marina Tsvetaeva, about whom I wrote my master's thesis under Sylvester's direction. I stayed in Austin for another year after my degree, translating a book for Alexander Yanov that, unfortunately, never found a publisher, and then I left for New York, to go into publishing.

**Excerpt from *March 1917, The Red Wheel*,  
Node III, Book 1, chapter 119, pp. 451-452.**

Over the Nikolaevsky Bridge, another life awaited Veronya and Fanya. Left behind was the dozing Tsarist city they detested—and here they had stepped foot into a city of revolution! What this revolution looked like and what this revolution constituted was still not clear. They had never seen one! Still hanging on building walls and fences were the same proclamations by Commander Khabalov with calls for order and with threats—but only his notices. Nowhere were his bristling hordes. There was no guard at the other end of the Nikolaevsky Bridge, or the embankment, or Annunciation Square—no police guards anywhere and only rare patrols, whereas the freely scurrying public, with their motley, concerned, joyous faces, included a great number of soldiers without formation or command and many who had been recovering in hospitals and were now talking excitedly and waving their bandages.

But there was no rally per se, no red flag—so the young women chose to turn toward the center, closer to events. Before them, though, a little to the right, they saw thick clouds of smoke, and they were told that the Lithuanian Fortress was burning and the prison was being liberated. Hurrah! That's where the girls ran—to liberate the prison!

Before they could get there, though, in front of the Potseluev Bridge, on the Moika, they encountered a procession of already liberated women prisoners—a file of twenty or thirty, all wearing prisoner gowns and shoes—and they walked that way down the snowy street, and even though there was not a hard frost—my God!—they had to be clothed somewhere, fed and warmed! Veronya and Fanya rushed toward the file greatly agitated and confused. So how are you! What's happening? Women, comrades, how can we help you? But the prisoners either had not awoken from their release or had already answered enough on their way. They didn't even turn their heads but dragged along apathetically, single file, no one answering anything, and only one telling them crudely where they could go.

My first publishing job was as an assistant editor at Praeger Publishers, a scholarly publisher that had a Soviet studies series, and within the first month or two a fellow low-level editor said a friend of hers was starting a publishing company and would I like to translate a book for him? That book turned out to be *Landmarks*, a seminal work of early twentieth-century Russian philosophy and my first book publication.

I spent much of my free time at the Slavonic Division of the New York Public Library chasing down leads on forgotten women writers, a couple of whom I translated right away, but more important, this research led to my first NEA Translation Fellowship, for an anthology of twentieth-century women writers, both Soviet and émigré (remember, this was 1985) and of both high and low genres, so Verbitskaya alongside Tsvetaeva, which Russians found frankly scandalous. Thanks to *glasnost*, the project became immediately irrelevant, so virtually all those pieces had to be published separately.

Gradually, translating came to interest me more than publishing, so after two years at Praeger, I went freelance, supported mostly at first by freelance copyediting and gradually exclusively by translating.

Looking back over my career, I think the single most helpful choice I made was to work in publishing, however briefly—in my case, all of two years in house. Translators are in a much stronger position when they understand the editorial process, the economics of publishing, and the editor-translator relationship from the editor's point of view.

*Like August 1914 and November 1916 (the first two nodes of the Red Wheel cycle), the four books of Node III, March 1917, focus on just one month, up to March 31, but pack in many violent dramatic events. The first book, however, which you've just finished translating, covers only a few days, March 8 to 12, but also abounds in characters and crucial events. Can you give us an overview of this book or any special insights?*

**MS:** In fact, that first volume covers five days—the second, which I've translated and is slowly being copyedited—covers just three!

Solzhenitsyn was very concerned to make full use of the vast primary material he had collected, and it's hard to imagine he left any of it out. The first book follows several different plot threads, each focused around individuals, most of them real people, but some invented for the sake of telling a story that could only be told by people who left no memoirs or letters. He also includes proclamations and official orders, as well as snippets from newspapers all over the country, and rather cinematic sections (with the heading “screen”), quick street scenes, usually, very much in the vein of what Bulgakov did in *White Guard*—so a device that was experimental in the 1920s but still seems remarkably so in something written fifty years later.



**Attacking the Tsar's police during the first days of the March Revolution**

Solzhenitsyn's work left me with an unexpected cumulative effect, a deep-seated feeling that I understood how the unplanned February/March revolution could have come about in the first place and, more important, how the state could prove incapable of suppressing a thoroughly disorganized rabble.

*In addition to the 5,000 to 6,000 pages of the Red Wheel's ten volumes, aptly subtitled A Narrative in Discrete Periods of Time, Solzhenitsyn had been planning several other nodes: Node V June-July 1917, Node VI August 1917, and Node VII September 1917, followed by five volumes tentatively entitled Turning of the Tide covering the period from October 1918 to September 1919, then another series of books entitled Brother against Brother covering the Russian Civil War from November 1918 to January 1920, and finally the closing book to be called Roadblocks focusing on the Tambov Revolt, an anti-Soviet peasant movement in 1920-1921. This would have brought the cycle to a close with the end of the revolutionary process, marked by the decline of Lenin's health and his death in 1924, and the rise of Stalin and his 30-year rule from 1922 to 1953. It has been claimed that Solzhenitsyn's original ambition was to write 80 books.*

**MS:** Since I seem to be unable to say no to the Solzhenitsyn family, I thank my lucky stars that he stopped where he did, since I'm already translating all four volumes of *March 1917*.

*On the Notre Dame Press web page for the novel, the blurbs refer to the book's "literary inventiveness" (Daniel J. Mahoney). Solzhenitsyn uses the novel as a platform to tackle history, politics, philosophy, and religion, but also, of the utmost importance, to provide insights into relationships and the human mind and heart. To do this, he resorts to many different approaches, including historical research, newspapers, descriptions of street action, dialogues that turn into debates and arguments, but also "experimental flourishes," "moments of surreal estrangement" and "streams-of-consciousness" (Richard Tempest). Can you provide us with further insights into Solzhenitsyn's writing? How did he handle the different plot threads? How did he adapt his voice to transmit the wide range of historical and fictional characters that people the universe he is depicting?*

**MS:** See my response above, but I would add, as far as voice goes, that Solzhenitsyn gives each plot thread a distinctive voice, largely in the dialogue. Particularly difficult has been the dialogue for common soldiers, who use vocabulary found only in Solzhenitsyn, often with a vaguely Ukrainian flavor. For example, there may be a word the meaning of which is quite obvious, but it's a neologism, and I have to go to my native sources to determine how the new word differs from the existing word and its effect. My query lists are remarkably long. The conversations between Nikolai and Aleksandra, the tsar and tsaritsa, exemplify their well-drawn relationship; the letters, of course, were written by them and are of a piece with Solzhenitsyn's style in these sections. Then there are the old-regime bureaucrats and politicians, as opposed to the incoming democrats and revolutionaries, who use turns of phrase and vocabulary pinned to that era. Fortunately, this is a period I've worked with extensively, so I'm familiar with the nuances among the various players.

*According to the "Publisher's Note" the English translation was made possible through a generous anonymous donation to the Solzhenitsyn Initiative at the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute. Although Nodes III and IV were originally published in Russian in the 1990s, your translation is the first to appear from this project. So there has been a delay of more than two decades for the English translation. By contrast, August 1914 (1971) was translated immediately, first into French in 1972 and then into English in 1973 (by H.T. Willetts) and so was November 1916 (1983), which was translated in 1985 (also by Willetts). And March 1917 (1986) with*



*its four books was translated into French from 1992 to 2001. Why has it taken so long for the other books to be translated into English?*

**MS:** Solzhenitsyn certainly wanted everything translated, but he couldn't find a publisher. Four or five years ago, the Solzhenitsyn family obtained a substantial, anonymous grant to translate all of his untranslated texts. Remarkably, considering how much he wrote, that meant just the six remaining volumes of *Red Wheel* and a memoir he wrote when living in his Vermont exile, *Between Two Millstones*, book 1 of which has been translated by Peter Constantine and published.

*There are still three volumes belonging to Node III that have yet to be translated, as well as the two books belonging to Node IV, that is, April 1917. Will you be working on any of the next volumes? Are there are other translators involved in this project by University of Notre Dame Press and the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture Solzhenitsyn Series?*

**MS:** Yes, I'm translating all four volumes of Node III. The second is being edited now, I'm translating the third, which is due in 2019, and the fourth is due in 2020. The last two volumes, that is, Node IV, *April 1917*, have different translators.

*When translating March 1917, you not only had to focus on this long and complex novel itself, over 600 pages, you also had to keep in mind the previous two volumes and the subsequent five volumes. How have you managed to ensure this continuity? Apart from historical figures that inevitably reappear, are there fictional characters as well who reappear?*

**MS:** The Solzhenitsyns have created a mind-boggling united style sheet based on the Willets translations of Nodes I and II and have added to it as the new translations have progressed. Many style decisions were taken long ago by Willets, and we are making new ones as the need arises, mostly in keeping with his choices, although he wasn't as consistent as we're trying to be.

*Is there a glossary, index, or listing of dates, characters, and historical events provided to help readers steer their way through the novel? Has a preface or introduction been provided as well, to situate the book with reference to the others but also in a more global context?*

**MS:** By way of apparatus, Node III, Book 1 has a Maps section and an Index of Names that includes a subsection entitled "Principal Non-historical Characters." I don't know why there is no preface or introduction, but I think the other types of apparatus you list would simply be impractical, unwieldy. I can't imagine someone completely unfamiliar with the period being able to navigate these books, but for someone with a basic grounding, they are a revelation.

*Unlike Trotsky (b. 1879) who witnessed and participated in the events of The Red Wheel and was able to write his History of the Russian Revolution with that experience in mind, Solzhenitsyn, born in 1918, had to rely on huge amounts of research to write his magnum opus. For the translation did you also have to resort to research yourself? Was there support from the University of Notre Dame and the Center for Ethics and Culture Solzhenitsyn Series? Was there any contact with the Solzhenitsyn family?*

**MS:** My research was almost exclusively linguistic. For questions of fact, I had extensive support from the Solzhenitsyn family, who are closely guiding the entire project.



**Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr Isayevich (Bryansk front, 1943)**

*How did you become involved in this ambitious project? Did you actively seek to participate in it or were you specifically sought out because of your previous work?*

**MS:** I had a cold call from Stephan Solzhenitsyn, one of Aleksandr's sons. I've had a handful of exciting cold calls in my career, and this was one of them. It's hard to overstate the influence Solzhenitsyn's fiction—*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, *First Circle*, and *Cancer Ward*, primarily—had on me at the start of my career (*The Gulag Archipelago* came out slightly later), and I was willing to take on the project sight unseen.

*How long have you been working on this translation and did you work on other projects at the same time or intermittently?*

**MS:** I believe the project began in 2014. I've found over the years that I'm much more productive if I'm working on two different projects at once: mornings on one, afternoons on the other. If there is an urgent deadline, I can, of course, focus on a single project, but my normal rhythm involves two projects.

In that same period, I translated and published Daria Wilke's young adult novel *Jester's Cap* (Arthur A. Levine Books), half the pieces in Mikhail Shishkin's *Calligraphy Lesson* (Deep Vellum Press), Andrei Gelasimov's *Into the Thickening Fog* (AmazonCrossing), Polina Dashkova's *Madness Treads Lightly* (AmazonCrossing), and *March 1917: Node III, Book 1*. I also translated two novels that are forthcoming: Leonid Yuzefovich's *Horsemen of the Sands* (Archipelago Books, due out 2018), and Olga Slavnikova's *The Man Who Couldn't Die: The Tale of an Authentic Human Being* (Russian Library, Columbia University Press, due out in 2019). Plus five shorter pieces for literary journals and another entire novel on spec.

*We noticed that the book, with its Futurist jacket and cover, is one of the entries for the annual Book, Jacket & Journal Show in 2018 of the Association of University Presses (AUPRESSES). Do you know if it has won the prize?*

**MS:** It did! Here is what I posted on my website:

Nobel-prize winner Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *March 1917: The Red Wheel, Node III, Book 1*, translated by Marian Schwartz, was selected by the Association of University Presses for the 2018 Book, Jacket, and Journal Show. Chosen as one of 53 books from over 375 submissions of jackets and covers, the jacket for *March 1917* was designed by Jeff Miller at Faceout Studio, under the direction of the University of Notre Dame Press production and design manager Wendy McMillen.

And speaking of my website, I have just gone live with a new version of it that is more streamlined and up to date, under the same URL: [www.marianschwartz.com](http://www.marianschwartz.com). I hope people will find it easier to use and free of technical glitches.

BTW



*"Tks 4 cming 2 th Twitter confrns in NYC. OMG so gr8 2 c u!"*



# TRANSLATING CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS

by Mark Herman and Ronnie Apter



Mark Herman

**Mark Herman** writes the humor column appearing in the “Bonus Features” section of the online *ATA Chronicle-Online*. **Ronnie Apter** is Professor Emerita of English Language and Literature at Central Michigan University, and the author of books on the medieval troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn and on Ezra Pound’s influence on the translation of poetry into English. Herman and Apter’s translations of children’s books, in addition to the seven discussed in this article, include (from Russian) *Moscow Ballet’s Great Russian Nutcracker* (Pittsfield, MA: Sports Marketing International, Inc., 2003) and (from French) *The Reader’s Digest Bible for Children: Timeless Stories from the Old and New Testaments* retold by Marie-Hélène Delval, with illustrations by Ulises Wensell (Reader’s Digest Young Families, Inc., and Joshua Morris Publishing, 1995).



Ronnie Apter

Over the past several years we, Mark Herman and Ronnie Apter, were commissioned by Diana Malivani, a Russian author and illustrator living in France,<sup>1</sup> to do English translations of seven of her picture books in verse, originally written for her own young daughter Michelle. In English alphabetical order, the seven books are

- a) Базилио и Мышата / Bazilio and the Little Mice
- b) Волшебники - Гномы / The Gnome Magicians
- c) Великолепный Белый Кролик / The Great White Rabbit
- d) Счастливые Поросята / The Happy Little Pigs
- e) Медовые Медвежата / The Little Honey Bears
- f) Потерявшийся Слонёнок / The Little Lost Elephant
- g) Мышата Музыканты / The Little Mouse Musicians

In addition to our translations into English, the books have French and German translations by other translators. They are now available at no cost, in the original Russian or in any of the three translations, in either .epub or .mobi format, from either the author or us.<sup>2</sup>

Our goal was to create publishable English verse, and to make the books as enjoyable for English-speaking children as the originals are for Russian-speaking children.

Most of the stanzas in each book are accompanied by illustrations, which both expand and restrict the choices available to translators. For example, we could not mute (that is, we could not domesticate) events and references not often found in American children's books. In fact their inclusion has a definite foreignizing effect, which we hope enhances rather than diminishes their interest to English-speaking children.

Consider Figure 1, which shows the Great White Rabbit relaxing with a glass of wine.



Figure 1. The Great White Rabbit drinking wine

The accompanying stanza is one of several in *The Great White Rabbit* which refer to wine, drinking, and gambling, usually taboo subjects for American children's books:

Порой, вернувшись поздно,  
Нальёт бокал вина,  
Присядет у камина...  
«Ах, Кролик! Жизнь чудна...»

A literal translation is

At times, returning late,  
He will pour out a glass of wine,  
He sits down by the fireplace...  
“Ah, Rabbit! Wonderful [is] Life...”

Since the wine is clearly one of the main points of the stanza and is in the illustration besides, there is no point in omitting it to cater to American sensibilities about children’s books. Accordingly, we translated:

At times, returning late at night,  
He would pour himself a glass of wine,  
And sit beside a crackling fire...  
“Ah, Rabbit! Life is fine!”

Figure 2 is an illustration from *Bazilio and the Little Mice*, in which the cat (Bazilio) is shown with a broom.



Figure 2. Bazilio and the Little Mice

The accompanying stanza does indeed mention the broom:

И вот хозяин, тут как тут,  
Стоит он у дверей ...  
Погнал Базилио метлой  
Непрошенных гостей!

A literal translation is

And there [is] the owner, there he is,  
He stands at the door ...  
Bazilio started driving with the broom  
The uninvited guests!

Although “door” is in the text, it is not in the illustration, which helps translators end-rhyme on the important word “broom.” This is because “broom” rhymes with “room,” a word which can be substituted for the literal “door”:

Uh oh! Bazilio stands by the door,  
In his hand a broom!  
See the mice run as he tries to sweep  
The intruders from the room.

In translations of children’s books, as in all other literary translations, translators sometimes add meaning to explain something not completely explained in the original text. In *The Little Lost Elephant*, the Russian word “слонёнок” indeed means “elephant calf,” and the word is used throughout the book. However, it is clear from both the verbal and pictorial descriptions, and the fact that the animal begins his journey in the polar regions, that he is not an elephant but a mammoth. Note also that the author did not hesitate to place a non-geographically correct penguin in the frozen north.



Figure 3.  
The Little Lost Elephant  
meets a penguin

Here is the first stanza:

На Севере Крайнем, на льдине большой  
Проснулся Слонёнок холодной зимой.  
Но он не совсем был похож на слонят -  
Мохнатая шёрстка свисала до пят.  
Во всём остальном походил на слона:  
Большущие уши и хобот-труба.



A literal translation is:

In the Extreme North, on a large ice floe  
Woke up an Elephant Calf in cold winter.  
But he did not quite resemble an elephant --  
Shaggy wool hung down to [his] heels.  
In all other respects [he] resembled an elephant:  
Huge ears and trunk-tube.

Though the Russian word for mammoth, “мамонт,” is never used, we chose to state explicitly what the animal really is:

Very far north, in the cold, cold winter,  
A mammoth calf woke on a frozen ice floe.  
A mammoth calf looks like a baby elephant  
Except for the wool hanging down to its toes.  
But otherwise it is just like an elephant,  
With very large ears and a trunk for a nose.

In addition to the explicit use of “mammoth,” note the changed rhyme scheme. In *The Little Lost Elephant*, each six-line stanza in the original has the rhyme scheme *aabbcc*, where the letters represent three different rhymes at the ends of lines. However, we decided that finding three rhymes per stanza, while possible, is not desirable in rhyme-poor English. Instead, we used a single rhyme three times per stanza, rhyming *xaxaxa*, where the *a*'s indicate end rhymes and the *x*'s indicate non-rhymed lines. Also, we frequently used near-rhymes (*o* for “floe” versus *ox* for “toes” and “nose”) rather than true rhymes, since finding even one rhyme sound which could be used three times in a stanza can be difficult in rhyme-poor English.

Finally, translation should be fun. In *The Little Mouse Musicians*, our knowledge of music allowed us to both make a rhyme and add a joke.

A stanza in *The Little Mouse Musicians* is

Мышонок Клаус - виртуоз,  
Играет на рояле,  
Стучит по клавишам хвостом  
И ловко жмёт педали.

A literal translation of the stanza is

The Young Mouse Klaus [is a] virtuoso,  
He plays the piano,  
He pounds on the keys with his tail  
And deftly presses the pedals.

The author's illustration accompanying this stanza is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Young Klaus pounds the piano with his tail

In our English translation, we added the rhyme word “grazioso” to rhyme with “virtuoso,” and also to make the joke that pounding keys with a mouse tail results in music “non grazioso / not graceful.” We also felt free to eliminate the pressing of the pedals since that is omitted from the illustration:

Young Mouse Klaus plays the grand piano,  
A precocious virtuoso,  
He pounds the keys with his flexible tail  
*Marcato non grazioso.*

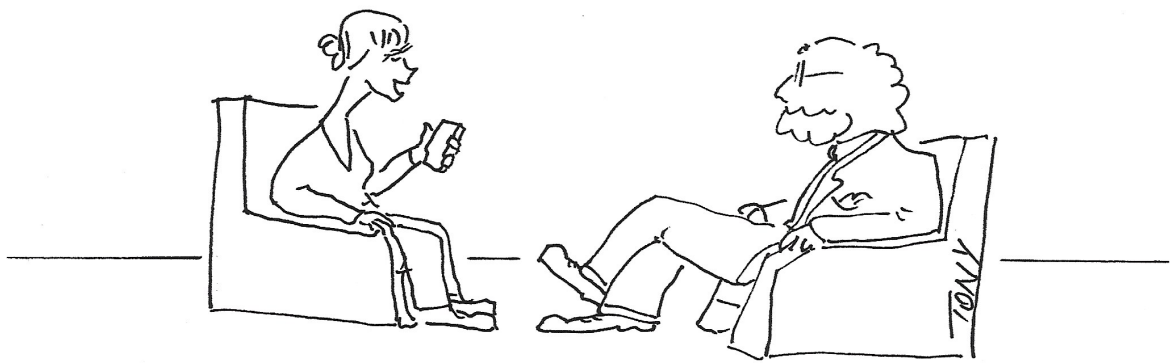
And so we proceeded through all seven books.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> In addition to being an author and illustrator of children's books, Diana Malivani is an MD specializing in sports medicine and nutrition. She is also an oil painter and a cook who devises her own recipes.

<sup>2</sup> Contact the author at [vdmalivani@gmail.com](mailto:vdmalivani@gmail.com) or the translators at [mnh18@columbia.edu](mailto:mnh18@columbia.edu).

BTW



*"The retro thing is fine with me as long as they don't try to bring back fondue."*

# A RUSSIAN TRANSLATION OF C. S. LEWIS'S “The Birth of Language”

By Evgeny Terekhin



Building the Tower of Babel,  
*The Bedford Hours* (1410-1430)

I translated “The Birth of Language” about three years ago as part of an ongoing discussion about the Inklings’ view on “poetic imagination” which was taking place in a Facebook group dedicated to British philosopher and author Owen Barfield (1898-1997) in Russian. The Inklings was a famous English literary discussion group associated with Oxford University that spanned almost two decades, from the early 1930s to 1949, and whose most famous members were J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973), C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), and Owen Barfield. It championed narrative fiction and fantasy but informally engaged in critical readings of each other’s writings. “The Birth of Language” was first published in 1946 in *Punch*, a British weekly magazine of humor, and it provides C.S. Lewis’s personal poetic rendering of several of Barfield’s ideas on linguistics and poetic diction.





C. S. Lewis

Lewis and Barfield believed that, although words were “dim,” “bony,” and “abstract,” they nevertheless had the power to lift the curse of Babylonian confusion once they had descended from above and reached “this Earth.” The poem “The Birth of Language” is therefore a myth-filled depiction of the above-mentioned vision shared by Lewis and Barfield. In Lewis’s imagery, the Sun symbolizes Logos, the center of universal Meaning, “whose burning flings supernal things like spindrift from his stormy crown.” The Sun throws “intelligible virtues down.” Those virtues are the fiery, meaning-saturated words, that come, as it were, fresh out of the mouth of God. The imagery is most suggestive of the tongues of fire at Pentecost.

At this point, the words are full of the creative power of the Sun. And the first “suburb of the Sun” that they “lave and beat” upon is Mercury. As a god of language, Mercury changes those supernal and most concrete celestial virtues into “proper names.” In ancient lore, when visited by muses, the poet would often be described as endowed with the “gift of speech.” Such a person is able to use words in the most powerful way, setting listeners’ souls on fire. Those well-chosen words, or “proper names” inspired by Mercury, become conduits of the uncreated divine energies which transform/transfigure the soul of the listener.

The words, each with a distinct taste, “churn the sky’s abyss” – that is, they leave Mercury as proper names, charged with divine energy. But as they go through the cold of night to their next destination, Earth, they gradually lose their churning and heat, their youth and being. They grow in meaning, true, but in human definitions rather than in the divine Meaning. Devoid of celestial clarity, they cry out for definitions. But the more definitions they acquire, the less clear they get. They are “dimmed” by definitions even more. Finally, as they reach the Earth, “they are born,” that is, they are spoken through the breath of man. But as soon as they are uttered here on Earth, they become practical at best. Cold and lifeless, they are good only for “man’s daily needs.”

Yet there’s a counter-power to break the spell of abstraction and bring words back to their Solar concreteness. “Yet if true verse but lift the curse, they feel in dreams their native Sun.” The art of naming, and bursting forth with a metaphor, will do the trick. Words, at least for a brief moment, regain their fiery power. The curse is lifted and we tremble at the sound. We wake up. Lewis wrote:

In a sense, one can hardly put anything into words, only the simplest colours have names, and hardly any of the smells. The simple physical pains and (still more) the pleasures can’t be expressed in language. I labour the point lest the devil should hereafter try to make you believe that what was wordless was therefore vague and nebulous. But in reality, it is just the clearest, the most concrete, and the most indubitable realities which escape language: not because they are vague, but because language is.... Poetry I take to be the continual effort to bring language back to the actual.

<p>The Birth of Language</p> <p>How near his sire's careering fires Must Mercury the planet run; What wave of heat must lave and beat That shining suburb of the Sun</p> <p>Whose burning flings supernal things Like spindrift from his stormy crown; He throws and shakes in rosy flakes Intelligible virtues down,</p> <p>And landing there, the candent air A transformation on them brings, Makes each a god of speech with rod Enwreathed and sandals fledged with wings.</p> <p>Due west (the Sun's behest so runs) They seek the wood where flames are trees; In crimson shade their limbs are laid Besides the pure quicksilver seas,</p> <p>Where thick with notes of liquid throats The forest melody leaps and runs Till night lets robe the lightless globe With darkness and with distant suns.</p> <p>Awake they spring and shake the wing; And on the trees whose trunks are flames They find like fruit (with rind and root And fronds of fire) their proper names.</p> <p>They taste. They burn with haste. They churn With upright plumes the sky's abyss; Far, far below, the arbours glow Where once they felt Mercurial bliss.</p>	<p>Рождение языка</p> <p>У самого Солнца горячих чертогов Меркурий по небу свершает свой бег; И жгучие волны, пожарами полны, Огнем омывают сияющий берег.</p> <p>С короны царя, как кипучая пена, Слетает в пространство Божественный слог, От Солнца струится, парит и искрится Небесных значений горячий поток.</p> <p>Когда ж на Меркурий обрушатся валом, Неистовым жаром он их изменит, И станут богами, в сандалях с крылами, И истинный смысл в их устах зазвенит.</p> <p>Велением Солнца на запад влекутся, И в огненный лес пролагают свой путь, Где в сумраке алом деревья-пожары Трепещут, как моря подвижная ртуть.</p> <p>И там зазвучат их текущие песни Как будто ручей заструился, забил, Пока не угаснут, послушные власти Ночной тишины и далеких светил.</p> <p>Потом встрепенутся, их крылья взметнутся, И здесь имена для себя обретут – Огнем наливные, как гроздья живые, В лесу, где плоды, словно пламя, растут.</p> <p>Плоды те вкушая, бурля и играя, Они поджигают небесный простор. И в ночь улетают, вдали оставляя Меркурия песен блаженный костер.</p>
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<p>They ache and freeze through vacant seas Of night. Their nimbleness and youth Turns lean and froze; their meaning more, Their being less. Fact shrinks to truth.</p> <p>They reach this Earth. There each has birth Miraculous, a word made breath, Lucid and small for use in all Man's daily needs; but dry like death.</p> <p>So dim below these symbols show, Bony and abstract every one. Yet if true verse but lift the curse, They feel in dreams their native Sun.</p>	<p>Чрез холод и тьму по бескрайнему небу Пускаются в путь, но их юность и жар В ночи остывают, значенья теряют Свое бытие – остается лишь пар.</p> <p>Достигнув земли, обретают рождение, И чудом дыханье даруется им, Становятся словом, разумным, толковым, Пригодным для дела, но мертвым, сухим.</p> <p>Как бледно свечение символов слабых, Как тускло и блекло явление их, Но есть одна сила – поэзии лира, Что снимет проклятье с глаголов живых.</p>
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Evgeny Terekhin

**Evgeny Terekhin** was born and raised in Russia, Omsk, in southwest Siberia. In 1995, he graduated from Omsk State Pedagogical University with a master's degree in English and German. Professional translator, writer, and blogger, he has been living for the past two years in the United States, in Friendswood, Texas. Terekhin has translated works of Martin Luther, John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon, Owen Barfield, and C.S. Lewis and writes about parenting, learning, de-schooling, a spiritually balanced life, rest, and spirituality. His translation of C.S. Lewis' poem "The Birth of Language" into Russian can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/Terekhintrans>.

**Publications in Russian:**

A book of children's fairytales «Сказки с потока»  
[https://ridero.ru/books/skazki\\_s\\_potolka/](https://ridero.ru/books/skazki_s_potolka/)

**Publications in English:** A children's fairytale "The Bridge Who Was a Giant"

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/1977080332?ref\\_=pe\\_870760\\_150889320](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1977080332?ref_=pe_870760_150889320)

**Creative Translations Website:** <http://russiantranslators.org/>

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**Personal blog** in English- [www.restandtrust.org](http://www.restandtrust.org)  
in Russian- [www.lifeismystereee.com](http://www.lifeismystereee.com)

BTW



*"I just got sick of being told I shouldn't do it,  
so I went ahead and reinvented the wheel."*



# WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

By Steven McGrath



Great Falls of the Chuchinsky River in the Altai Nature Reserve, a Russian sanctuary in the Altai Mountains of south Siberia, Russia, and part of UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves

## Translating the biosphere

*The Earth is divided politically, but ecologically it is tightly interwoven.*

— Carl Sagan

Popular science as a genre is a process of translation unto itself. Just as we seek to make written works accessible to those who do not understand the language of the original, so too do popular science writers use their creative gifts to make complex

ideas developed by specialists comprehensible to the general public. Translations of popular science, then, must bridge the gap between scientist and lay reader as well as the language gap. We all know of English-language scientists who have taken on the burden of stepping down from the Olympus of professional journals to make their thoughts scrutable to the masses: Carl Sagan, Richard Dawkins, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Steve Irwin and even, on occasion, the recently departed Stephen Hawking.

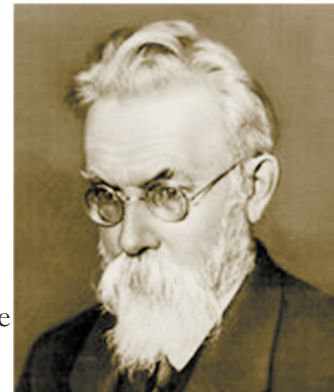
All of them dealt with ecology at one point or another in their public work, yet none of them ever used the term **biosphere**. Outside of the scientific community, few people in the English-speaking world recognize the term. There is still disagreement over the exact definition of the term even among specialists.

*The Biosphere and Civilization: In the Throes of a Global Crisis* (2018) by former Russian environmental minister Victor Danilov-Danil'yan and journalist Igor Reyf uses the standard Russian definition of the term going back nearly a century: the system of interactive relationships between all living things, and the earth, air and water systems whose chemical makeup interacts with said system. It is an ambitious term that disregards the boundaries scientific disciplines set for themselves, such as biology, chemistry, and physics.

The task of bringing these fields together into a unified Theory of Earth requires not only scientists, but also linguists. The evolving terminology has shaped the way that ecologists discuss their field, frequently leading to complaints by laypeople that environmental issues are surrounded by a wall of impenetrable jargon. Unfortunately, some jargon is inescapable. While translating *The Biosphere and Civilization*, I sought to clarify it with definitions where necessary and with context where possible. Repeating such a task within the space of this article is impossible, so let me offer a compromise to the reader: I have highlighted the key terms that have arisen from the history of ecology **in bold**. If you are so inclined, you might easily skip over the densest portions of the text to focus primarily on Russian conceptions of the biosphere. If you are short of work and of a more inquisitive frame of mind, spend the day googling to your heart's content. With that caveat, let us proceed through the history of ecology.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Austrian geologist Eduard Suess (1831-1914) coined the term biosphere as a complement to the previously existing earth systems concepts of the **lithosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere** (the earth, water and air systems). While the word **ecosystem** did not yet exist, Suess drew upon the similar concepts of **landscape** and **biocenose** established by Prussian naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) and German zoologist Karl Möbius (1835-1908), integrated into the discipline of **ecology**, “the economy of nature” defined by German biologist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919).<sup>1</sup>

**Russian geochemist Vladimir Vernadsky** (1863-1945) approached the concept of the biosphere differently. From his early work as a soil scientist, he was aware of how countless interacting organisms had shaped the upper layer of the lithosphere. His research into the effects of plant roots, earthworms and countless bacteria upon the chemical composition and consistency of soil led him to believe that earth could not be separated from the life that grows from it. The upper lithosphere was, in fact, a part of the biosphere. Vernadsky suspected that the same would hold true in the hydrosphere and atmosphere as well. Sure enough, just as with the soil, the distribution of chemical **nutrients** such as oxygen, carbon dioxide and nitrogen in water and air turned out to be mostly regulated by living organisms. The biosphere was not, as Suess put forward, a fourth system, but rather the overarching system which contained and manipulated earth, air and water. This laid the groundwork for the new discipline of **biogeochemistry**.



Vladimir Vernadsky

Publishing the full extent of these ideas, however, would have to wait for the outcome of war and revolution. In 1922, he secured permission for a lengthy visiting professorship at the Sorbonne. There he lectured and finalized his magnum opus, *The Biosphere*, published in both Russian and French in 1926. With its completion, the world had its first glimpse of a holistic approach to life and earth sciences.

Around this time, Vernadsky was approached by two French philosophers, Edouard LeRoy (1870-1954) and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). The Frenchmen believed that Vernadsky's breakthrough supported their own theory that a new, human-organized earth system was developing, the **noosphere**, which would in turn contain the other spheres. The idea intrigued Vernadsky, and he would go on to spend the rest of his life exploring it. The philosophers benefited from the support of an established world-class scientist. Vernadsky's reputation in the West, however, suffered from his association with the dubious mystics. Biogeochemistry had gained a foothold in the scientific world, but the concept of a holistic biosphere would fade into obscurity in the West for decades, along with the name of the man who formulated it.

Vernadsky's international fame protected him and his legacy from political pressure during the last years of his life in the Soviet Union. Soviet biologists of the time fared less well. Stalin fell in with a Lamarckian charlatan who promised him larger grain yields, commencing a persecution of Darwinists and Mendelians. Russian biologist Georgy Gause's *The Struggle for Existence* (1934), which included groundbreaking laboratory experiments on the theories of natural selection and population ecology, was suppressed in the USSR until the Brezhnev era. Nikolai Vavilov (1887-1943), the greatest botanist of his time, starved to death in prison. Soviet biologist Nikolai Timofeyev-Resovsky (1900-1981), hearing of the situation at home, refused to abandon his Berlin laboratory when the Nazis came to power. He was sent to the GULAG when Soviet forces took



the city in 1945. Those life scientists who avoided persecution were forced to publicly declare support for laughably inaccurate models of heredity. For the moment, dialogue between scientists in the East and West had come to a close.

Ecology in the West, meanwhile, was just starting to come into its own. American plant ecologist Frederic Clements (1874-1945) detailed how **ecological succession** gradually forms similar landscapes over the world's main climate zones. English zoologist Charles Elton (1900-1991) presented the idea that each species occupies an **ecological niche** within an **ecological pyramid**. In 1935, English botanist Arthur Tansley (1871-1955) integrated these dynamic interspecies relationships into the physical geography of a given area within the concept of **ecosystems**, establishing the field of ecology as an independent scientific discipline. In 1942, American ecologist Raymond Lindeman (1915-1942) introduced the primary quantitative method for studying how ecosystems work, detailing **energy flows** from photosynthesis in plants, to herbivores, to predators, to the detritovores and reducers who break down dead tissue into plant food. Taken together, these ideas form the theoretical basis for ecosystem ecology still used to this day.

Despite the deliberate hobbling of Soviet biology, talented life scientists in the East pursued similar lines of study in Vernadsky's wake, independently rediscovering the basic concepts of ecology and creating a parallel glossary of terms. In 1942, Russian geobotanist Vladimir Sukachyov (1880-1867) coined the word **biogeocenose**, which is essentially the same as an ecosystem. A corresponding idea of energy and nutrient flows followed soon after.

Independent rediscovery occurred in the West, as well. British-born NASA engineer James Lovelock (b. 1919), in the course of researching the atmospheric conditions necessary to support life on other planets, came upon his own idea of the biosphere, which he called **Gaia** after the Greek goddess of Earth. Gradually coming together with the aid of American biologist Lynn Margulis (1938-2011) during the 60s and 70s, the Gaia Hypothesis called attention to a number of phenomena, natural and unnatural, which had been neglected by researchers in the absence of a holistic theory of global ecology. Vernadsky would have appreciated the renewed interest in how plants and microorganisms accelerate the process of soil formation. More memorable was the use of an instrument invented by Lovelock to detect the growing hole in the ozone layer. That discovery provided a major impetus to organize scientists, concerned citizens and political figures around the world to meaningfully confront an ecological crisis. Lovelock did not hear how similar his ideas were to those of Vernadsky until the mid-80s.

This occurred during a time of rising environmental consciousness in the West. Starting with Rachael Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1961, popular support for pollution controls and the study of ecology increased steadily. In 1971, UNESCO formed the Man and Biosphere Programme,



effectively introducing the term “biosphere” to global English usage. The founding charter of the program, and indeed its website to this day, leave the definition remarkably vague. Is it the exclusive biosphere of Suess, or the inclusive biosphere of Vernadsky? The creation of **biosphere reserves** to study local ecosystems, while surely of great research value, further muddled the linguistic waters. Much of the general public associates the word “biosphere” with the structures themselves. There is also a certain absurdity to presenting an isolated ecosystem as representative of the whole Earth. A desert landscape, for example, separated from the wetter parts of the world, would be as lifeless as Mars.

And so theoreticians were left to discuss Gaia. Even when a holistic theory (or, in this case, “hypothesis”) provides some answers, all its parts must hold water in order for the scientific community to accept it. Many critics found Lovelock’s views to be more descriptive than explanatory. Richard Dawkins, now the best-known popular science writer in the area of evolutionary biology, criticized what he saw as Lovelock’s application of conscious agency to microbes, plants, and ecosystems. Indeed, the mechanism for how Gaia’s life support system came into existence does not show through clearly in Lovelock’s work, and as such satisfies convinced environmentalists more easily than inquisitive scholars.

**Meanwhile, in Russia, Nikolai Timofeyev-Resovsky<sup>2</sup>** was finally released from prison into internal exile. In the closed town of Obninsk, so close and yet so far from the intellectual center of Moscow, the greatest mind of Russian genetics ventured into ecology. In an obscure report to the local geographical society, Timofeyev-Resovsky postulated, “The majority of biocenoses are in a state of prolonged dynamic equilibrium, being very complex self-regulating systems.” In other words, species within an ecosystem must adapt to one another, must *feed* one another in a self-sustaining fashion, or else not only individual species, but the entire ecosystem will die out. Sooner or later, an unsustainable ecosystem must die out. And if this principle can be applied to one ecosystem, it applies just as well to the climate zone of which it is a part, and then to the biosphere. The direst implication of this idea falls upon human civilization, an entity which seeks to occupy the largest possible niche in every ecosystem it encounters, whether or not such a role is sustainable.

*The Biosphere and Civilization: In the Throes of a Global Crisis* deals with current worldwide problems in terms of ecological theory as the authors see it. The authors express sympathy for James Lovelock’s Gaia theory while recognizing its shortcomings. They believe that the evolutionary explanation can be found in the postulation of Nikolai Timofeyev-Resovsky, clarified in part by physicists Viktor Gorshkov and Anastasia Makarieva (in works from 1994 to the present).

Gorshkov and Makarieva present the ambitious grand theory of **biotic regulation**. I have already laid forward its central thesis as an implication of Nikolai Timofeyev-Resovsky’s report

at Obninsk. The theory is further enriched by post-Soviet access to Western sources, particularly the Gaia hypothesis and Dawkins' critique of it. Unfortunately, academic territoriality has impeded discussion of the theory in Russia while limited connections have silted over the flow of these ideas to the West. Of particular importance in the US, given the rash of freak forest fires in recent years, is the scientists' idea of the **biotic pump**: the concept that the flow of rainfall from the coast to the interior of a continent depends upon the constant presence of forests to recycle moisture. The destruction of forests along the Pacific coast, if this aspect of the theory is true, would certainly explain why glaciers in the Rocky Mountains have disappeared sooner than climate models anticipated, and why woodland areas on either side of the range are suddenly prone to combustion.

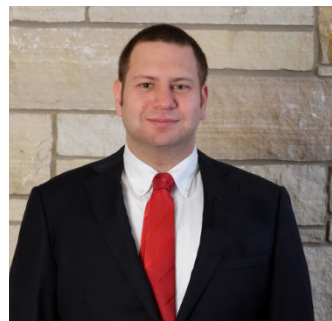
One of the strangest elements of this book is that, in the same volume that may introduce much of the Western audience to Vladimir Vernadsky, the authors also pointedly demonstrate his limitations as a theorist. The noosphere, the authors show, is impossible as Vernadsky envisioned it. Entropy, the tendency of complex systems to break down, prohibits it. A biosphere regulated by finite human minds and technological substitutes cannot attain sustainability in the same way that natural ecosystems have done as the result of eons of mutually adapted natural selection.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was an age without precedent, and the ideas that arose from it warrant metaphor only on the scale of the divine. One may not approve of giving the biosphere the name of a goddess, but to believe that mankind can micromanage all its processes through technology is certainly hubris. Technological hubris recalls another metaphor: The Tower of Babel. Just as humanity overextended itself in the story in an attempt to reach the heavens, so does humanity now overextend itself in an attempt to cover every inch of the Earth. But whereas then, the people were confounded in their speech, here we must agree on common terms. The biosphere is one, and so must be our means of discussing it.

### Notes

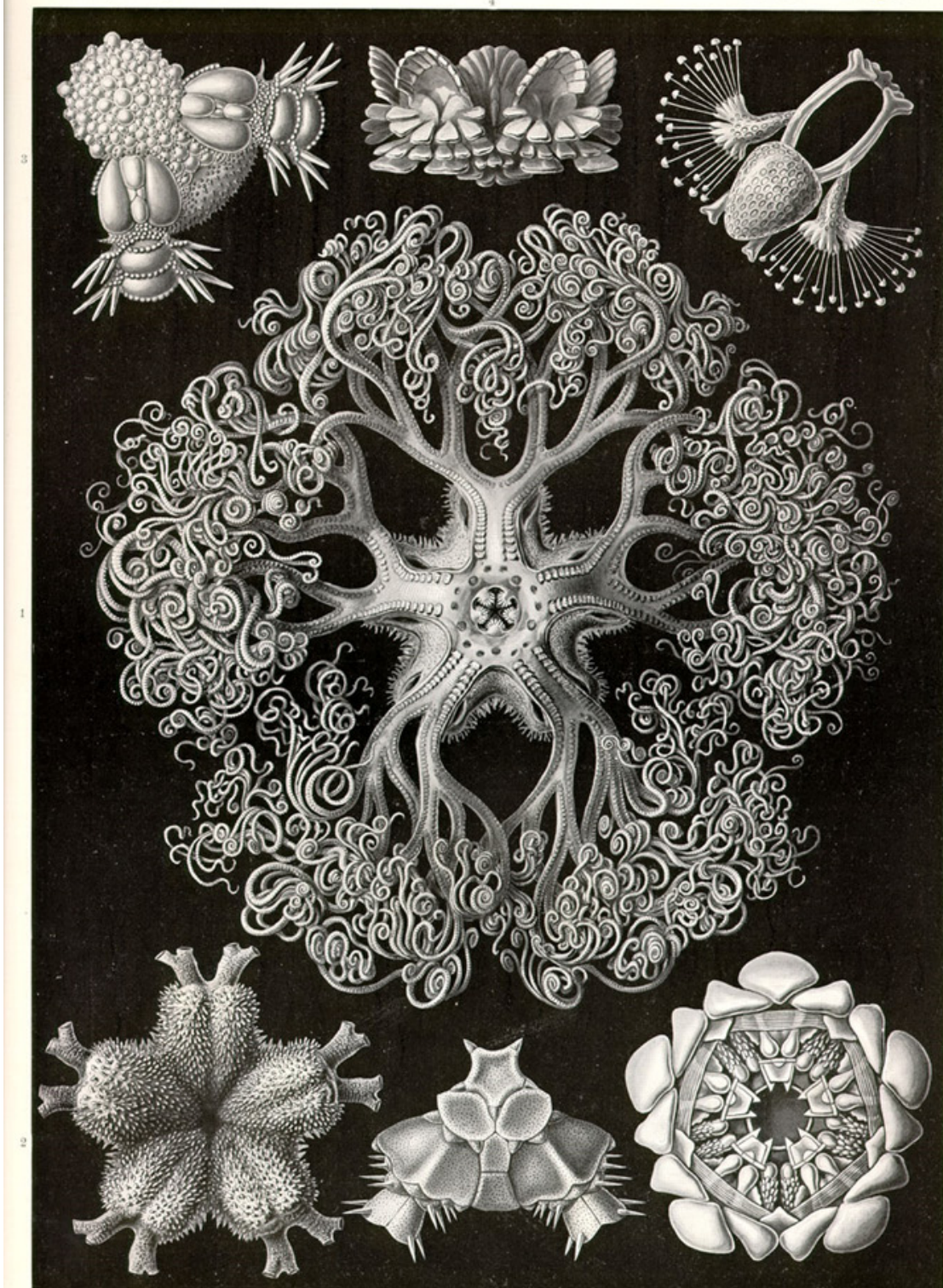
- 1 Ernst Haeckel, *The History of Creation* (trans. E. Ray Lankester, 1892).
- 2 Whose name is spelled three different ways on his English Wikipedia page. I am using a fourth, much better way. Mendeleyev shouldn't rhyme with "peeve."

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Caption: Ernst Haeckel, engraving of brittle stars (1904)

# CREDITS

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Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition VII* (1913), oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia.  
<https://tinyurl.com/KandCompVII>

## Page 7

Solzhenitsyn photo by Verhoeff, Bert / Anefo  
- [1] Dutch National Archives, The Hague,  
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## Page 8

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## Page 11

Attacking the Tsar's police during the first days of  
the March Revolution. Ross, Edward Alsworth:  
*The Russian Bolshevik revolution* (1921)  
<https://tinyurl.com/Tsarrevattack>

## Page 14

Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr Isayevich (Bryansk front  
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## Page 24

Bedford Master (15th century French manuscript  
illuminator), Building of the Tower of Babel, *The  
Bedford Hours*, (1410-1430), detail of a miniature  
from BL Add MS 18850, folio 17v, illumination on

parchment, held and digitised by the British Library,  
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## Page 25

C.S. Lewis, scan of photograph by Arthur Strong,  
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## Page 29

Great Falls of the Chuchinsky River in the Altai  
Nature Reserve, a Russian sanctuary (*zapovednik*) in  
the Altai Mountains of south Siberia, Russia. It is  
part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Golden  
Mountains of Altai," recognized as an area of high  
biodiversity and isolation from human intrusion. It  
is also included in the UNESCO World Network of  
Biosphere Reserves.

Photo by Serge By, 22 August 2013. Wikimedia  
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Photo of Vladimir Vernadsky, 1934, attributed to  
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<https://tinyurl.com/y86uqsrn>

## Page 35

Brittle stars/starfish, lithographic print from Ernst  
Haeckel, *Kunstformen der Natur* (1904) [Art Forms of  
Nature], plate 70, engravings by Adolf Giltisch from  
watercolors and sketches by Ernst Haeckel  
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<https://tinyurl.com/HaeckelStars>

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