

Each to Their Own: Visual Representations of Terry Pratchett's Discworld in Time and Space

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Article abstract

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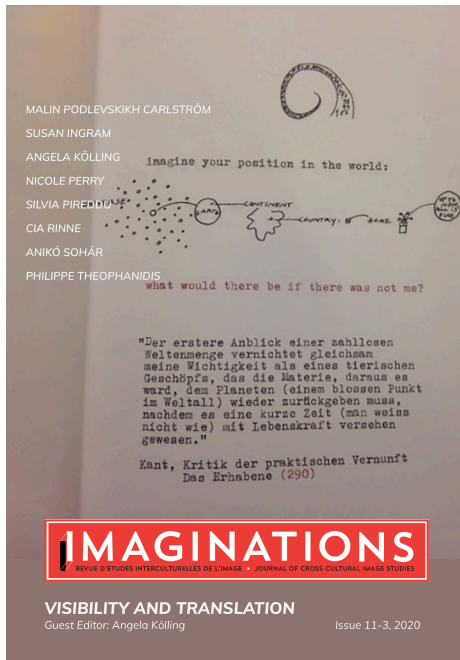
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Cia Rinne, *Das Erhabene* (2011)

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EACH TO THEIR OWN: VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF TERRY PRATCHETT'S DISCWORLD IN TIME AND SPACE

ANIKÓ SOHÁR

When a book is translated, publishers will often modify or completely change the cover design. This paper examines the similarities and differences that result in a sample of cover designs taken from Terry Pratchett's Discworld series. The essay analyzes these images as a form of intersemiotic translation, which prioritizes the marketing apparatus of a novel over its narrative content.

Lorsqu'un livre est traduit, les éditeurs modifient souvent, voire changent complètement l'image de couverture. Cet article examine les similarités et les différences qui résultent d'un échantillon de couvertures de livre tiré de la série Discworld de Terry Pratchett. L'essai analyse ces images comme une forme de traduction intersémiotique, qui favorise l'outillage de marketing d'un roman au détriment de son contenu narratif.

Now, there is a tendency at a point like this to look over one's shoulder at the cover artist and start going on at length about leather, tightboots and naked blades. Words like 'full,' 'round' and even 'pert' creep into the narrative, until the writer has to go and have a cold shower and a lie down. Which is all rather silly, because any woman setting out to make a living by the sword isn't about to go around looking like something off the cover of the more advanced kind of lingerie catalogue for the specialized buyer.

Terry Pratchett, The Light Fantastic

In this essay, I examine Terry Pratchett's book covers from the 1980s to the 2010s across different translated editions, comparing the images as a form of intersemiotic translation. In so doing, I analyse how publishers and artists have visualised the Discworld universe, how they have translated the texts into pictures and typography, and how much Pratchett's ideas are therefore transferable into other code systems.¹

Collecting and examining the material, I initially considered a lot of questions, but soon realized that answering all of them goes beyond the scope of this relatively short paper, so the focus of the project shifted, and now this case study only aims at clearing the way for further research by ascertaining if the Discworld book covers can be regarded at least to some extent as intersemiotic translations. To do this, I shall examine the attributes of a representative sample of a much larger set, selected from different cultures and decades.

THE AUTHOR: "THE GRIN REAPER"

Sir Terence David John Pratchett, better known as Terry Pratchett, or Pterry by his fans (1948-2015), wrote more than 70 books, among them 41 Discworld novels. Several of these were adapted to the stage, radio, television, and cinema (both animation and films), or turned into comics, videogames, card, and board games. He also collaborated in the production of a role-playing game supplement (GURPS Discworld²), picture books, maps, guides, calendars, and diaries. More than 85 million Pratchett books were sold in 37 languages. His most famous creation is the Discworld series. Fans of his works have created online fora, several newsgroups, and webpages exclusively dealing with the Pratchett oeuvre or a part of it, usually the Discworld (see, for example, *The L Space Web*).

Despite starting as a journalist and only becoming a professional writer in 1987, Pratchett went on to receive several awards after the unexpected success of his first Discworld novels: he was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1998, knighted for services to literature (2009 New Year Honours), got the World Fanta-

sy Award for Life Achievement in 2010, and the Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award from the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America posthumously, in 2016, to name but a few.

The first collection of essays about his writings was published only in 2000. This belatedness is perhaps due to the fact that it has long been frowned upon to take humour seriously, let alone fantasy, two things important to Pratchett's writing (Pratchett, *A Slip of the Keyboard*, Sohár, "Twofold Discrimination"). Academic work on Pratchett is increasingly interdisciplinary, analysing his works from the perspective of pedagogy, philosophy, political science, or psychology (see, for example, Boulding; Held and South; Karlsen; Michaud; Oziewicz).

THE DISCWORLD SERIES (1983-2015)

In 1983, Colin Smythe Limited published the first Discworld novel, *The Colour of Magic*, a pure parody of the fantasy genre. It was highly successful, and Pratchett became the UK's best-selling author in the 1990s (Beckett 146). The Discworld series consists of 41 novels, 8 short stories, and has inspired an abundance of spin-off material; practically a small industry is based on it (see, for example, *Discworld Emporium*). His novels have been translated into 37 languages, meaning that 37 languages boast at least one Discworld novel. The series ended in 2015 with the posthumously published *The Shepherd's Crown*, the closing volume of a young adult coming-of-age sub-series. Pratchett died from an early-onset form of Alzheimer's and his unfinished novels—the computer hard disk containing his notes, plans, and the stories he was working on—were publicly destroyed by a steamroller, as he wished ("Terry Pratchett's Unpublished Works").

The adventuresome and variegated narratives combine all sorts of humour and are interleaved with numerous allusions and references which require encyclopaedic learning and wide general knowledge to appreciate fully; how much a given reader will understand depends on the reader's preliminary knowledge, cultural background,

and abstraction skills. The same holds true for the translators, be they intralingual (the American versions), interlingual, or intersemiotic (book covers, illustrations, film and video game adaptations, etc.).

At the beginning these novels were linked to one another just loosely. While thematically they can be grouped into six distinct subseries, the publication dates do not match up to subseries directly (Pratchett interleaved them). If one reads the novels in their published order, it is easy to trace the process by which the original light-hearted pastiches have gradually developed into a consistent worldview, which protests against oppression and wilful stupidity. The cover images, however, do not always capture the spirit of this worldview.

The series heavily relies on intertextuality, challenging both the translator and the illustrator. This is reflected by some front covers of Discworld novels, for example, Paul Kidby paraphrases *The Scream* by Edvard Munch³ for one version of *The Last Hero*, and his *Night Watch* book cover is of course based on *Schutters van wijk II onder leiding van kapitein Frans Banninck Cocq*, commonly known as *The Night Watch* by Rembrandt de Rijn.

INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION

Is it translation we are discussing when we compare book covers for different editions of the same text? Currently, there is a tendency in translation studies to avoid defining translation precisely; where contradictory definitions coexist, most of them ignore non-linguistic systems, and therefore are not suitable for comparing different semiotic codes (see, for example, Halverson; Hermans). I find it telling that Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha's *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* does not have an entry on translation (Baker and Saldanha). In this essay, translation will be understood as a "reformulation of a source utterance by means of a target utterance" and thus as "a species of the genus *interpretation*" (Even-Zohar 74–75; Eco 80). Roman Jakobson in his famous essay on translation distinguishes three ways of interpreting a verbal sign: it may be

translated into other signs of the same language (intra-lingual translation or rewording), into another language (inter-lingual translation or translation proper), or into another, nonverbal system of symbols (inter-semiotic translation or transmutation) (145). In the case of the Discworld series, all three Jakobsonian translations are present (since there are also British-to-American translations).⁴ This paper, however, focuses only on Jakobson's third category: the translation that occurs in the book-cover design.

The transition from text to book cover, that is, from the purely verbal to the verbal *and* pictorial, produces a new and different material complexity. The elimination of nonessential elements of the text is a fundamental aspect of this process; content selection makes such losses unavoidable, as book covers cannot express even a summary of the narrative except at the most abstract level (see Sonzogni). Thus, Brian Mossop asks two related questions: can we see "the covers of some books as 'inter-semiotic translations' of the texts they introduce," and, if so, will the covers of translated editions offer the same "inter-semiotic translation" as the original or will they vary or even clash with it (Mossop 1)? This will be something to keep in mind when analyzing the different cover designs of the Discworld novels.

THE BOOK COVERS: "DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER!"

The interaction of pictures and texts is constitutive of representation as such: all media are mixed media, and all representations are heterogeneous; there are no "purely" visual or verbal arts.

W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*

For a long time, literary translation studies only examined texts. The field's scope has just lately begun to enlarge and cover additional topics like the translators themselves or interfaces with other disciplines, such as film adaptations. Thanks to this progress, paratexts, including illustrations, are now thoroughly researched, yet book covers were ignored until only recently and are

still often regarded as derivative or complementary translations, rather than intersemiotic (see Mossop; Pereira; Torop).

In the only monograph on book cover design as intersemiotic translation, Marco Sonzogni discusses in detail how book covers are viewed in book marketing and how the research on them focuses on the interactions between culture and commerce. Sonzogni's primary focus is the cover's impact on sales, audience, distribution, and reception, and the "film-novel alliance" (i.e., the economic importance of adapting a novel into a movie, Sonzogni 18-35). Here, he sums up the function and nature of book covers as follows:

Essentially, a book cover works as an advertisement that uses primarily visual means to attract attention to the text and to convey the minimum of essential information (title and author) and possibly other information (publisher's name, advertising copy, blurbs, etc.). If it is effective, the potential reader will pick up the book and turn it over to read the information provided on the back cover or start reading the first pages and ultimately buy the book. ... The functions of the cover then are to (1) provide visual information that will enable the potential reader to choose to read the book or discard it (typically, the time involved will be a few seconds); (2) inform the reader of the text by (a) displaying the title and the author; (b) summarising in images and words the text; (3) remind the reader of what he already knows of the text. (15-16)

Anne Hiebert Alton attributes two similar functions to the book's cover: on the one hand, it stimulates the readers' interest in the book; on the other hand, "cover art can also function as a kind of shorthand to enhance the sense of character, place, and overall impression of the world they are reading" (2014:31).

If we accept that the main function of the front cover is to attract potential readers, and to assert their pre-existent knowledge, then it is logical that even such a famous, best-selling series as the Discworld will use local art on its front covers, for local cover art is surely more agreeable to the local audience and it can take the local customs and traditions into consideration, thus boosting local sales.⁵ Consequent-

ly, it will be important to look for localised versions of book covers to find out how differently Discworld is imagined, for example, which of its features get centre stage on the cover images, what colours are used, how many of them, whether the fonts remain the same, or to what extent the layout and the typesetting differ (if they differ).

As mentioned above, one function of the front cover is to arouse the prospective reader's interest in reading this particular text by providing them with information about the content or plot and an indication of the genre. This is done by a combination of verbal and visual elements whose proportion may differ markedly, but never reaches zero: a front cover must display at least the title. However, most artists do not read the novel whose front cover they are commissioned to create, but rather usually the blurb or a brief of the publisher supply them with ideas (see Alderon). Just think of the notorious front cover of the first authorized Ballantine edition of *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien, which the Tolkien Library describes in the following terms: "Paperback with fanciful illustration of Hobbiton in an oval frame with emus and a lion in the foreground. Cover art by Barbara Remington" ("Books by J.R.R. Tolkien"). Needless to say, there are no lions or emus in that tale. It is not unusual in popular genres such as fantasy that the cover illustration fails to connect with the content, as will be shown later. Some publishers employ already-purchased and (un)used paintings for the cover of another book. In such cases, how could the evoked mental image build a bridge between the verbal and visual representations?

Still, it raises the question: whose translation is the book cover? Of course, it is the artist who creates a picture (or several), designs the cover, but it must conform to how the publisher envisages the book, or the genre, or the author's potential saleability on the market, and it must be approved by the client (see Alton 37-40). Also, for commercial reasons, editions, sometimes of very different formats, are supposed to be distinguishable, therefore cover designs may vary the verbal elements (e.g., the quotations and advertisements) and the pictorial information (the font size, style, background, and/or images). If we consider the original book covers as intersemiotic translations,

should these further variations be regarded as another level of translation or even as “re-translations”?⁶

These are the questions I will now bring to bear on a discussion of the Discworld book covers. Since Pratchett enjoyed painting and drawing and was capable of illustrating his own books (Smythe; Cabell 17), it is no wonder that he was keen on engaging artists who could capture the essence of his imagination in their diverse ways: Josh Kirby, Stephen Briggs, Paul Kidby, Stephen Player, and others gave life to the Discworld and all the characters with their pictures during these thirty years. Acknowledging the importance of iconology, he claimed that Kirby made real his ideas: “I only invented the Discworld. Josh created it” (qtd. in Alton 36).

For this case study, I have selected a few samples of the covers of three novels, the first two, *The Colour of Magic* (1983) and *The Light Fantastic* (1986), and the fortieth, the last Discworld novel for adults, *Raising Steam* (2013). *The Colour of Magic* and *The Light Fantastic* have a television and film adaptation (entitled *The Colour of Magic*), which certainly influenced their reception and how their cover art was made. In other cases, the changes in book-cover design can be harder to explain because the reasons are more arbitrary. Colin Smythe, Pratchett’s first publisher, later his literary agent and friend, told me that they only started to pay thorough attention to the front covers after the “Heyne Horrors” when the German publisher repeatedly issued Pratchett’s novels with the front covers of other books (Smythe; see also “Heyne Horrors”). As I will discuss later, something similar happened with the first Hebrew and Hungarian editions.

In what follows I will use Michael O’Toole’s tripartite model to examine the representational, modal, and compositional functions of a picture. As O’Toole observes, an artist has at his or her disposal various devices for engaging our attention, drawing us into the world of the painting, and colouring our view of that world. And he or she does it for all viewers. In the grammar of painting—that is, all those aspects of structure that we all share—these devices fulfil a *modal* function—and however much our ultimate interpretations may differ, I want to claim that the responses evoked in us by the systems of

this function are virtually universal (O’Toole 5-7). The representational function, for O’Toole, “conveys to the viewer basic information about the character, social status, actions and position of each individual. It would also include details of species, size, and material qualities of inanimate objects” (15). In contrast, the compositional function pertains to “certain decisions about the arrangement of forms within the pictorial space, about line and rhythm and colour relationships, have been made by the artist to convey more effectively and more memorable the represented subject and to make for a more dynamic modal relation with the viewer.” (22). In addition to these functions, I shall also be looking at three factors: accuracy, significance, and contextualisation, that is, I shall try to establish: (1) whether whatever the book cover displays coincides with the content, transferring (some of) the meaning; (2) whether it represents an important, or emblematic element in the storyline, and (3) whether it makes sense before—and after—reading the novel, i.e., how much prior knowledge is required to fully appreciate it. Any reference to fantasy or Pratchett’s characteristic humour will be duly noted. Aesthetic or marketing aspects may be referred to in passing.

THE COLOUR OF MAGIC (COM): THE FIRST DISCWORLD NOVEL

On a world supported on the back of a giant turtle (sex unknown), a gleeful, explosive, wickedly eccentric expedition sets out. There’s an avaricious but inept wizard, a naive tourist whose luggage moves on hundreds of dear little legs, dragons who only exist if you believe in them, and of course The Edge of the planet...

(Promotional piece on the back cover of the Corgi paperback)

This summary rather simplifies things, and serves like a teaser: the prospective reader—and the artists whose job will be to communicate their interpretation—does not learn that the first “novel” actually consists of four loosely connected short stories, or that the Agatean Empire later turns out to be a mixture of several

Asian cultures, mostly Chinese and Japanese. The catchwords are all there—*Discworld*, *turtle*, *tourist*, *wizard*, *luggage*, and *dragons*—and not surprisingly, these elements, and hardly anything else, will turn up on the book covers.



Fig. 1

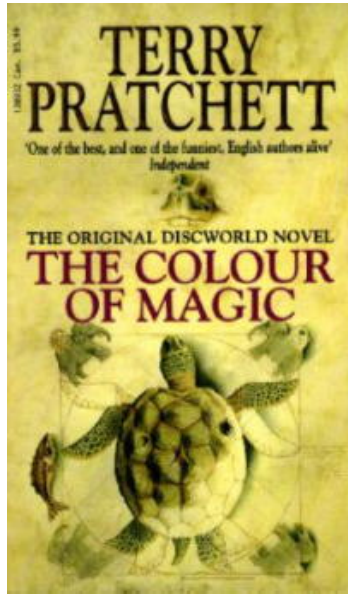


Fig. 2

The first cover was painted by Alan Smith (1983), and depicted the Discworld travelling in space on the backs of four elephants who stand on the shell of the world turtle. Both the British and the American editions used the same colourful image. Ten years later, Stephen Player re-imagined the world turtle from above, while the elephants are drawn in profile, and bearing a platform on their backs to support the weight of the Discworld, in a style reminiscent of Leonardo da Vinci. There is more verbal information on the later cover: by this time, the potential reader had to be reminded that *COM* was the first Discworld novel, so the author's name became more important as shown by the bigger font and its placement, although the different colour still emphasises the title. Player's image has a central axis and

seems stable, although the fish on the left is imperfectly equalised by the very faint text on the right, while Smith's is more dynamic and more unbalanced due to the green spots and the foot thrust outward. The second front cover does not allude markedly to the genre, and Pratchett's humour is only gleaned from the advertising blurb (not the image itself). However, both depict an essential element accurately.

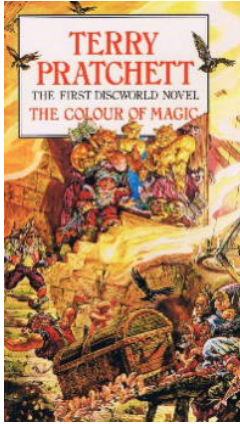


Fig. 3

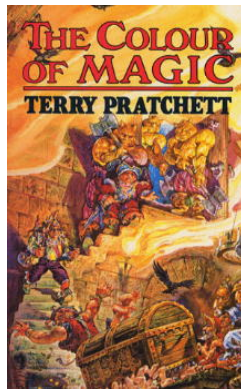


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

The Corgi paperback edition of *COM* (1985) with Kirby's watercolour, its revised version (2012), and Marc Simonetti's front cover (2011).

Kirby was *the* Discworld illustrator for a long time although his oil paintings caused dissent, and many potential readers turned away from his hectic and flamboyant front covers (Alton 31). Pratchett himself liked Kirby's art even when he got something wrong; for instance, the scantily clad female on this cover (Alton 36) or Rincewind's age on the one below (the first edition of *The Light Fantastic*). As Alton has already written about Kirby's Discworld paintings at length, I only want to point out how the insertion of verbal information and the cropping change the viewer's impression of the whole tumultuous scene. It matters if essential components are set in

the background or foreground, and here the visible segment is poorly cropped out of the whole picture (on the right side, the Luggage is no longer in the focus and, as a result, has lost quite a few of its legs; meanwhile, the trolls have moved closer to the middle). The scene is a little exaggerated and indicates a fast-paced, dazzling narrative, inviting speculation and involvement. The painting employs a preference for the bottom left corner, which creates a sense of unbalance. Marc Simonetti's picture, on the other hand, is more direct, announcing the genre with the dragon at the centre of the illustration. Simonetti also conveys some of Pratchett's characteristic humour through his characterization of the figures. Of the contemporary artists, his attitude seems closest to Kirby's in catching attention and piquing curiosity.



Fig. 6

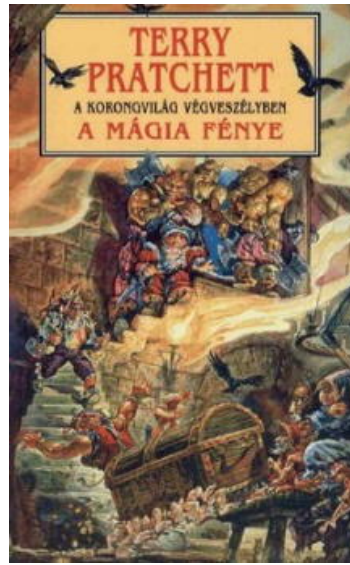


Fig. 7

The first (1992) and second (2001) Hungarian editions of *COM* got the front cover of *The Light Fantastic* by Kirby, so, of course, the second volume had to fall back upon employing the front cover of the first

book, and to make matters even more confusing, the two titles are very similar in Hungarian: *The Colour of Magic* and *The Light of Magic*, as the publisher did not deem the official Hungarian translation of “light fantastic” in John Milton’s *L’Allegro*—translated by Árpád Tóth (1886-1928), a great poet and literary translator—sufficiently appealing, and thought that the six-year-long hiatus in the publication of Discworld books also justified such a change.⁷ Instead of mentioning that this volume is a sequel to *COM*, the Hungarian version says: “Discworld in distress.” Apart from this case, the Hungarian editions always used the official Kirby, and later, Kidby front covers, although their colours seem a little washed-out compared to the British originals.



Fig. 8

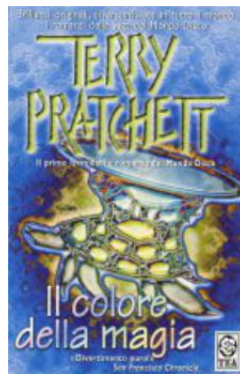


Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Here are two Italian editions (1989 and 1998), noteworthy for the change in colours, from reddish to blue, for the move from the realistic towards the more symbolic representation of Discworld, and for giving a more prominent place to the author’s name. The 1989 Italian front cover is rather hackneyed, of the type Pratchett caricatured in *The Light Fantastic*, when it depicts the arson in Ankh-Morpork caused by the introduction of fire insurance, and unmistakably affirms the genre, which seems to be the most significant information to impart.⁸ It is therefore neither accurate, nor significant, but excels

at contextualisation. The 1998 one, returning to the image of a world turtle, which by that time was enough to put it into context, looks more abstract, and puts the stress on the writer's name.

The Japanese translation of 1991 also displays the two protagonists, the first tourist, Twoflower, and the inept "wizzard," Rincewind, who here looks like an orangutan, along with the world turtle as a magic mirror, the iconograph with the imp, two elephants, an octopus, the Cori Celesti, possibly Krull, and a female (who could be any of the supporting characters except a naked dryad). It is remarkable that all the verbal information (apart from the publisher) is set askew from the head of the girl towards the upper right corner. It is the only front cover besides the Kirby paintings which appears to have many colours, most of them tending toward the warm shades, and to be a little overdone, particularly if its smaller size (15 x 10.6 x 1.6 cm) is also taken into consideration. It gives the impression that the artist tried to squeeze all the bits he found important in one picture.

Note the looks and hair colour of the human figures, especially that of Twoflower, and remember that his country parodies the Far East (and European stereotypes about it). Apparently, the artist or, more probably, the publisher considered the white tourist stereotype more appealing to the audience. Whether it ought to be regarded as an intersemiotic mistranslation or a deliberate cultural adaptation needs further investigation.

THE LUGGAGE COVERS

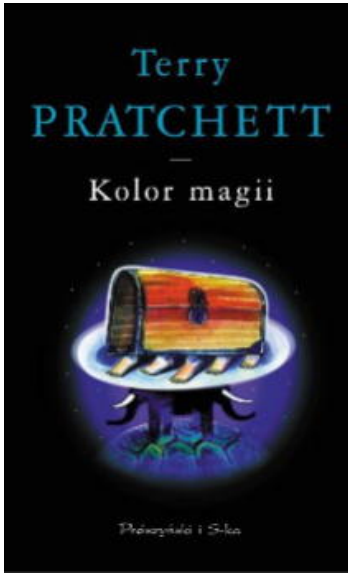


Fig. 11



Fig. 12

The most popular image for the first two books in the series is that of the Luggage, Twoflower's bloodthirsty chest made of sapient pearwood which follows its owner everywhere, even beyond the veil. Nevertheless, people of today do not associate large wooden trunks with travel, so in order to evoke the idea of tourism, the artists had to decide whether to paint what is written or avail themselves of poetic licence and go for a valise or suitcase.

The 2005 Polish edition of *COM* uses a picture by Kidby which retrieves three significant elements of the story: the Discworld, ocarine (the colour of magic said to be greenish purple), and the Luggage, all represented very simply, like a child's drawing, and with only the most essential verbal information included: author, title, publisher. But all later Polish editions display the traditional Kirby picture. It is said that the Discworld novels attract people of all ages;

however, if the front cover of a book clearly targets children, adults will not buy and read it themselves as the Harry Potter series proved not so long ago (Gupta 9; Nørgaard).

The other is the 2005 American edition with the inscription, “Discover where all the fun begins,” which will soon be transformed into, “Discover where all the madness begins,” while the blurb from the Washington Post will be substituted by a British writer’s plaudit. But the sneak peek at the then-newly-released *Thud!* is the same, only placed on the left and with its background colour different.

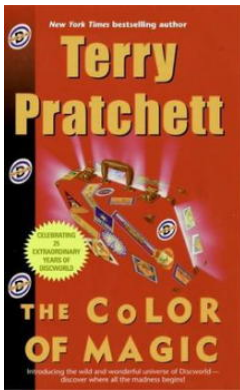


Fig. 13

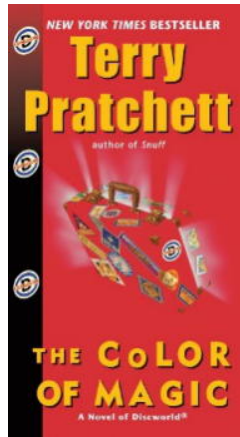


Fig. 14



Fig. 15

The transformation of the Luggage on the front cover of the American 25th-anniversary edition published by Harpertorch is of particular interest. It is still a portable rectangular container for carrying one’s stuff, but it appears to be an old-fashioned suitcase instead of a trunk or strongbox. Having so many stickers on it implies many journeys or a long one with many stops, but either way the visual focus is on tourism, not magic. Note the American spelling and the added texts with catchwords: one of them emphasises the “extraordinary” longevity of the series, the other calls attention to the fact that many people already bought it, implying we should also, while

the third only addresses the adventuresome who do not mind exploring a “wild,” “wonderful,” and “mad” universe. “Madness” probably means excitement and enthusiasm, not mental derangement. The composition, with its diagonal label slanting upwards to the left or downwards to right, draws the eye to the author’s name and then back to the title, a clever visual contrivance to accentuate the most important verbal information on the cover. Compare it with the image on the right side, another 25th-anniversary edition, a British one, based on Johnny Ring’s photo, and designed by Nik Keevil. Obviously, the colour schemes as well as the representation of the Luggage contrast strongly, both the font and the colour puts the emphasis on the author’s name, but the glittering gold coins cannot counterbalance those visual elements, the details of the chest which direct the viewer’s gaze out of the picture, instead of focusing it on the important verbal signs. Both cover designs were used for all adult Discworld books: the American employed a range of colours, while the British applied black, white, and metal colours throughout the series.

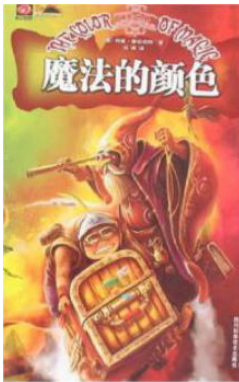


Fig. 16



Fig. 17

The first three volumes of the Discworld were issued by a Chinese publisher of children’s literature in 2007, but the series was discontinued. The front cover of *COM* displays a vaguely Asian-looking Twoflower and a ridiculously long-nosed Rincewind, the dropout of

Unseen University—the picture reminds me of master-and-servant representations (for example, of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, or Robinson Crusoe and Friday), though nothing could be further from the truth. The Chinese cover of *TLF* shows the world turtle. The cover design is the same; the colours are complementary, clearly indicating a series, and the verbal information appears to be secondary, compared to later Pratchett editions in Chinese (see Sun).

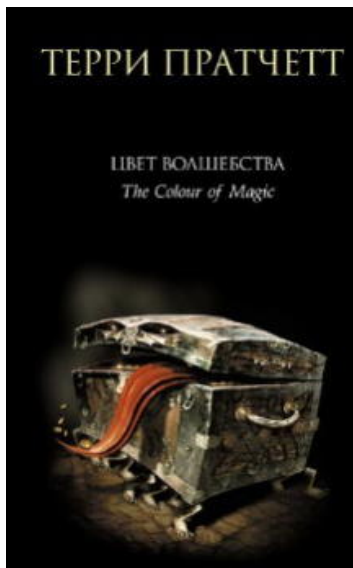


Fig. 18

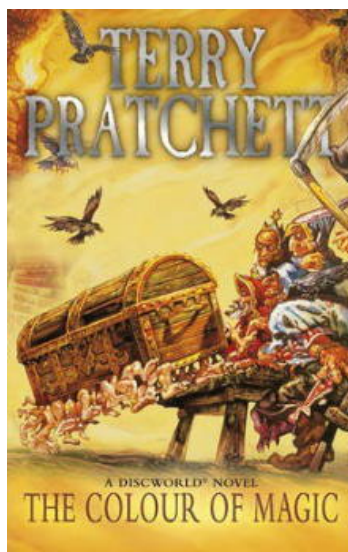


Fig. 19

The 2008 Russian edition by Eksmo and the 2012 edition with revised Kirby front covers feature the Luggage as an ancient chest, but the emphasis significantly differs. The Russian version has a very eye-catching protruding red tongue, abstract enough to avoid being too frightening, but still ominous, especially with the eyes, while Kirby's picture shows plenty of feet and the figures' reaction to the unusual trunk. Both front covers are divided. The Russian front cover clearly separates the verbal and the visual, giving them more or less the same amount of space. Although the font of the title is relatively

small (but bigger than that of the English title), its placement indicates its importance. Kirby's picture, on the other hand, is tripartite and gives picture pride of place. Pratchett's name also seems to be honoured, the title and the series being much smaller.



Fig. 20



Fig. 21

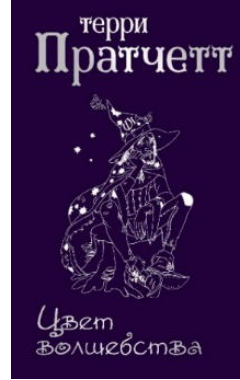


Fig. 22

1. Omnibus with the TV front cover, a 'synergy,'
2. the Unseen University Collection, Discworld Hardback Library. Gollancz 2014,
3. the new Russian edition of 2017.

From the moment the Discworld became a great success, it was predictable that it would be adapted for stage, radio, television, and film. Luckily, the two-part television adaptation based on the first two novels did not intend to be a mere illustration, slavishly following the plot of the books as so often happens. Vadim Jean's adaptation is imaginative, and, as the second picture shows, it has influenced how these protagonists and the Luggage are visualised. The colour scale of this decade tends towards blue and violet (as opposed to the yellows and reds in the 1980s), and the images become minimalistic. Kirby's famous drawing of Rincewind is just outlined in white on the newest Russian book cover. Also—possibly in connection with the in-

creasing role of visual signs—the verbal information has been downsized.

THE LIGHT FANTASTIC (TLF): A SEQUEL TO THE COLOUR OF MAGIC

As it moves towards a seemingly inevitable collision with a malevolent red star, the Discworld has only one possible saviour. Unfortunately, this happens to be the singularly inept and cowardly wizard called Rincewind, who was last seen falling off the edge of the world... The funniest and most unorthodox fantasy in this or any other galaxy.

(Promotional piece on the back cover of the Corgi paperback)

This time the blurb has fewer catchwords and leaves out essential information, some of which will later be expressed on the book covers: the deadly rivalry among the wizards, the librarian turned orangutan, the druids, Cohen the Barbarian, a brief visit to Death's home, the magic shop, and the Octavo.

If you want a couple of hours of unadulterated fun, this is the book for you.... The plot, however, is immaterial to this witty, frequently hilarious romp that makes fun of everything in sight, including the genre of which it is part. *The hardcover edition has a superb Josh Kirby cover. Watch for this one and don't wait for the paperback.* (Science Fiction Chronicle quoted on Colin Smythe's homepage, my emphasis)

Since cover art and its creator usually have a sort of second-rate status (Alton 2014: 70), not unlike literary translators, it is indeed remarkable that such a brief blurb mentions Kirby and praises his work.



Fig. 23

Fig. 24

Fig. 25

Fig. 26

Fig. 27

The front cover for *The Light Fantastic* (1986) by Kirby depicts a scene which does not take place (only Cohen and Lackjaw travel on the Luggage) with an old Rincewind, misleading the prospective reader since he could be taken for a mere apprentice (Pratchett, *The Colour of Magic* 22), Twoflower with four eyes, a relatively young Cohen the Barbarian without beard and hanging from the Luggage, and the rescued sacrificial virgin, Bethan, scantily clad in the manner so condemned and parodied by Pratchett above, whose garter holds a dagger. This image has been used widely in various forms. Thus, Alton rightly observes about Kirby’s approach that, “His covers always show plenty of action and colour, and embody a kind of exuberant style which takes a central image and then surrounds it with anything (and everything) else from the story that takes his fancy” (32).

Note the teaser on the American edition: “Pratchett is the Douglas Adams of fantasy.’ – *Knave*.” *Knave* was a British pornographic magazine, which also published popular literature, including science fiction and fantasy, in the 1980s, but such a magazine’s recommendation on American book covers (the Roc publication also used it) seems a little bizarre. In all probability, most of the readers would not know what *Knave* was, but the target audience likely recognised Douglas Adams’s name and, as a result, the genre and the mode.

THE OCTAVO COVERS

There are of course many famous books of magic. Some may talk of the Necrotelicomnicon, with its pages made of ancient lizard skin; some may point to the Book of Going Forth Around Elevenish, written by a mysterious and rather lazy Llamaic sect; some may recall that the Bumper Fun Grimoire reputedly contains the one original joke left in the universe. But they are all mere pamphlets when compared with the Octavo, which the Creator of the Universe reputedly left behind – with characteristic absent-mindedness – shortly after completing his major work. (Pratchett, *The Light Fantastic* 9)

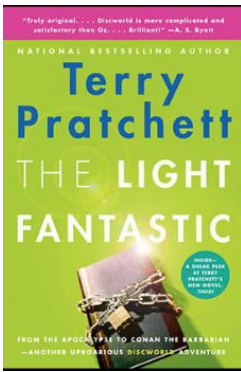


Fig. 28

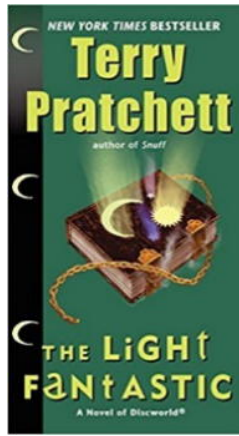


Fig. 29

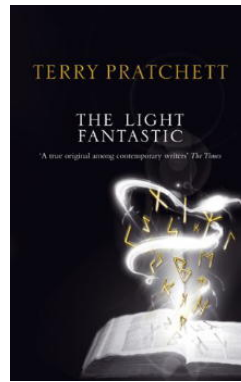


Fig. 30

These American editions (left and middle, by HarperCollins Publishers, trade paperback 2005 and mass market paperback 2013) focus on the above-mentioned Octavo; however, the visual representations differ significantly: horizontal versus vertical; a photo of a plain, modern-looking (faux) leather-bound diary suggesting well-kept secrets versus the painting of an ancient tome decorated with a shining sun, crescent moon, and star, two clasps, and a torn jewel-like chain, which may imply that the book is in the process of breaking from

its bonds; the same number of colours, but two unlike (pink and turquoise versus yellow and black); the placement of the book partly outside the front cover and in the middle connecting the author's name and the title; and one source of light versus three. The earlier edition has more texts, including A.S. Byatt's rather undiplomatic praise, a sneak peek at the then newly released *Thud!*, and a peculiar recommendation, "From the Apocalypse to Conan the Barbarian—another uproarious adventure," misspelling Cohen the Barbarian's name (probably due to confusion with the similarly-named hero created by Robert E. Howard) and falsely advertising the end of the world, which does not take place. The mass market paperback refers to *Snuff* (which was published on 11 October 2011), the Discworld series, and its best-selling status. Like the verbal label, "A novel of Discworld," its blackish stripe on the left with the stylised Discworld stickers ensures visually that the potential buyer will connect it with the previous volume. The third picture of the Octavo is Keevil's asymmetric design, which uses even fewer colours and adds a blurb from *The Times*, clearly indicating that by this decade Pratchett and the Discworld have—divested of the conspicuous attributes of the genre—become recognised, even by the pillars of society, the conservatives.

COHEN THE BARBARIAN COVERS

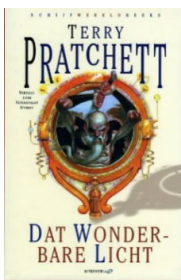


Fig. 31

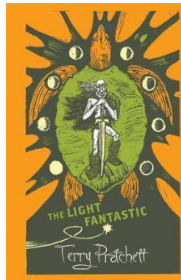


Fig. 32



Fig. 33



Fig. 34

The already mentioned hero, Cohen the Barbarian appears on the cover of more than one edition: the Dutch (2002, by Kidby), the British (2014, by Joe McLaren), German (2009, by Player), and French (2010, by Simonetti). Only the British one depicts him as stationary, in a heroic pose with the world turtle in the background. The other three show him in action, lifting his sword to strike (and possibly breaking out of a magic mirror, an event which did not take place in the narrative), attacking the Luggage with his bare hands, and attacking the Luggage again with his sword. The length of his beard and hair seems also noteworthy since Cohen is described as a “very old man, the skinny variety that generally gets called ‘spry,’ with a totally bald head, a beard almost down to his knees, and a pair of matchstick legs on which varicose veins had traced the street map of quite a large city” (*The Light Fantastic*, 75). The mode of portrayal, stylized versus realistic, also contrasts the British version with the other three. Interestingly, the first three designs draw attention to their middle, though the oval forms are integral parts of the image while the double rectangular frame cuts out a still picture, and renders the names, the series, and possibly even the title less significant despite a partly visible third frame, while the French version’s focus is on the foreground. The colours are remarkable, as well as Cohen’s eye-patch. His left eye is covered on the German and the French, while his right on the Dutch and the British pictures. Apparently, the 21st-century cover artists tend to select just one central image and a few colours, and then aim at a dramatic visual effect and leave any representation of Pratchett’s humour to the verbal code.

RAISING STEAM

Raising Steam represents another step in the industrial revolution on the Discworld. It heralds the arrival of the steam locomotive, which causes all sorts of troubles, especially for the protagonist Moist von Lipwig, once a con man, and now the Patrician’s trouble-shooter. However, the narrative does not offer many symbolic images, so all front covers I have found display a steam engine or a carriage. This novel, published in 2013, has only nine translations, although in the

United Kingdom five different hardcover and two paperback editions have been issued so far.



Fig. 35

Fig. 35

Fig. 35

Fig. 35

Here are four versions of the same front cover with Kidby's "Raising Steam" painting for the British paperback edition. The French cover follows the standard 20th-century format with the focus on the picture. The Finnish one cleverly moves the whole central image a little closer to the viewer and thus inserts the shovel into the letter C (while the British and the Spanish seem to thrust it between the letters C and H). On the Finnish cover, the shovel now points to the publisher and red font emphasises the author's name. But both the French and Finnish covers lose the "rocks" part of the painting, which the Spanish retains. The latter, however, loses the dynamism of the original British cover with its smaller, less bold printing of Pratchett's name. All these differences are aesthetic and culturally specific. The less emphasised form of the author's name on the French cover, for example, may signify a sort of acknowledgement of the author's already established position within the literary polysystem.

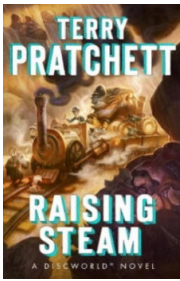


Fig. 39

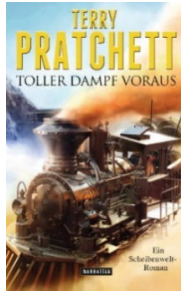


Fig. 40

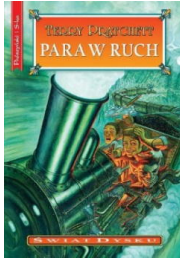


Fig. 41



Fig. 42

Justin Gerard (2014), Sebastian Wunnicke (2014), Paul Kidby (2013, 1st edition), Russian translation, Anatoli Dubovik (2017)

The above four front covers depict a steam locomotive from the right, not frontally; all emphasize the smoke, and yet they could not be more different. The lack of background is most striking on the Russian version, where the engine moves forward in a sort of smoke bubble, and the author's name and both titles—in diminishing sizes—almost jump out of the black background. Kidby expresses speed and urgency with a train tilting sharply to the right. The front covers of this book use fewer colours, and seem more restricted, less hectic, compared to the book covers in the 1980s, especially Kirby's exuberant paintings.

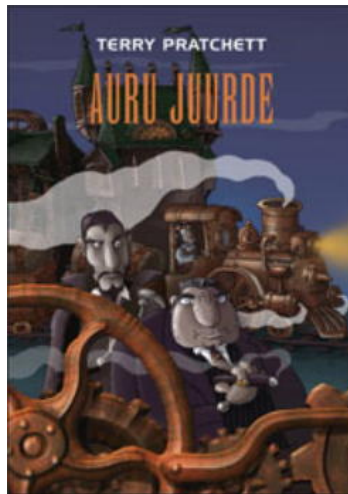


Fig. 43

Finally, here is a very different book cover for the Estonian translation of 2014: the engine, with the obligatory smoke, is seen from the left in the background, together with a city, possibly in *Überwald* because of the steep roofs; the foreground is occupied by wheels (of progress?) and two men, possibly the political and the financial powers behind the venture, while the engine driver is likely the inventor. The whole image resembles illustrations for children's literature, or perhaps a caricature. Even without knowing the general trends in Estonian science fiction and fantasy book covers, it can be concluded that this publisher (*Rahva Ramaat*) wants to distinguish the *Discworld* novels both from other Pratchett books and other authors.

ARE THESE BOOK COVERS INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATIONS THEN?

I think that from the very beginning, the British front covers determined how the *Discworld* would be visualised. Kirby made fun of traditional fantasy book covers; his paintings are as much

parodies of that “fantasy convention hallowed by time” (qtd. in Alton 36), which depicted scantily clad heroes and heroines, as Pratchett’s first books were parodies of fantasy clichés. This helps explain the flashy and overwhelmingly hectic scenes he painted. Kidby’s covers are far less frenzied than Kirby’s, although he still packs in plenty of information and detail. He tends to work “in a muted earth colour palette and tr[ies] to capture a historical feel whilst Josh used a bright palette and filled his page with a myriad of fantastical figures in his own unique and distinctive fantasy genre” (Lee qtd. in Alton 38). These days Simonetti’s designs most resemble Kirby’s hilarious and flamboyant ones. However, most of the visual representations examined here remain conventional, fitting the decades in which they were created, not really novel or experimental, which is of particular interest as the genre fantasy should spring from flights of imagination. This fact in itself proves that the commercial considerations outweigh the artistic and potential intersemiotic concerns.

Many front covers of foreign translations (Finnish, Hungarian, Polish, and Spanish) use the original British covers with or without slight modifications; other countries have a mixed practice (e.g., Russia), and it seems that the 21st century brought along a new wave of locally designed front covers, for example in France, Germany, and Italy. At first sight, this appears to be dependent on the position of the local literature in the literary polysystem: the stronger and more central its position in the polysystem, the more likely that local front covers will be produced for translations.

Having looked at a few hundred pictures of Discworld covers, I conclude that the themes displayed on the front covers seem rather limited. In the case of the first two volumes these include the world turtle, the two protagonists, and the Luggage accompanied or solo, while the editions of *Raising Steam* usually picture a steam engine with or without a few characters; that is, they use mostly iconic, denotative images which gain symbolic, secondary meaning only after reading the text (Moriarty). It seems that the artists—or the publishers—usually attempt to condense the perceived gist of the content in one emphatic and, at the same time, simple likeness, easily comprehensible and usually evocative; therefore the front covers are

rather the intersemiotic translation of the publicity material than of the whole text.

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IMAGE NOTES

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1 The first hardcover, cover art by Alan Smith 1983

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2 cover art by Stephen Player, 1993

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3 cover art by Josh Kirby, 1985

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4 revised cover art by Josh Kirby, 2012

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8 first Italian book cover 1991

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10 The Japanese edition, 1991

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14 25th anniversary American version B

<https://www.books-by-isbn.com/0-06/0062225677-The-Color-of-Magic-A-Novel-of-Discworld-0-06-222567-7.html>

15 25th anniversary British, cover art by Nick Keevil

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17 Chinese TLF

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18 Russian edition 2008

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20 Omnibus TV front cover

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21 front cover of the UU Collection hardback 2014

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22 Russian edition 2017, cover art by Paul Kidby

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23 original British ,cover art by Josh Kirby 1986

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24 American edition with Josh Kirby front cover, Signet

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25 Revised cover art by Josh Kirby

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26 Spanish edition A with cover art by Josh Kirby

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27 Spanish edition B with cover art by Josh Kirby

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28 American edition 2005

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30 cover art by Nick Keevil

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31 Dutch edition, cover art by Paul Kidby

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33 German edition, cover art by Stephen Player

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34 French edition, cover art by Marc Simonetti

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Raising Steam

35 French edition, cover art by Paul Kidby

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36 Finnish edition, cover art by Paul Kidby

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37 British original edition, cover art by Paul Kidby

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38 Spanish edition, cover art by Paul Kidby

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39 American edition, cover art by Justin Gerrard 2014

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40 German edition, cover art by Sebastian Wunnicke 2014

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41 Polish 2013 edition, cover art by Paul Kidby

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42 Russian edition, Anatoli Dubovik, 2017

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43 Estonian edition

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NOTES

1. Currently, there is only one paper that deals with illustrated representations of Discworld (Alton).¹
2. The Generic Universal RolePlaying System was created in 1985. “With GURPS you can be anyone you want...”.²
3. Following this train of thought, more questions come to mind: when a cover design is taken over, is it non-translation, as it keeps the same picture(s), and only changes the verbal information, or should we regard it as indirect translation, the translation of an intersemiotic translation? If the design is the same, but the colour(s) or size or type of the font(s) differ, should we talk about adaptation or localisation of an intersemiotic translation? Is it possible to talk about any sort of translation when the book covers are parts of the package, that is, the author only gives permission to translate his works into a foreign language if it is published with the original British front cover as was the case for a certain period in case of the Discworld? Further research is needed to answer these questions.³

4. Some readers complain that these American translations are incomprehensible (see “Translating Names”; “UK vs US Editions”; Reardon; “British to American”).⁴
5. “Localization is the linguistic and cultural adaptation of digital content to the requirements and the locale of a foreign market; it includes the provision of services and technologies for the management of multilingualism across the digital global information flow. Thus, localization activities include translation (of digital material as diverse as user assistance, websites and videogames) and a wide range of additional activities.” (Schäler)⁵
6. “Retranslation (as a product) denotes a second or later translation of a single source text into the same target language. Retranslation (as a process) is thus prototypically a phenomenon that occurs over a period of time, but in practice, simultaneous or near-simultaneous translations also exist, making it sometimes hard or impossible to classify one as a first translation and the other as a second translation.” (Koskinen).⁶
7. Funnily enough, the Italians did something similar, when the third book, *Equal Rites* became *L’Arte della Magia* resembling the first volume’s Italian title, *Il Colore della Magia*.⁷
8. I asked the publisher whether the painting was specifically purchased for this novel, but no answer has arrived yet.⁸