

# Terry Pratchett in Russia

## **Marina Tsvetkova**

Department of Literature and Intercultural Communication, HSE University  
Bol. Pecherskaya Str. 25/12, Nizhny Novgorod, 603155, Russia.

Email: mtsvetkova@hse.ru

## **Aleksandr Kulkov**

Department of Applied Linguistics and Foreign Languages, HSE University  
Bol. Pecherskaya Str. 25/12, Nizhny Novgorod, 603155, Russia.

Email: akulkov@hse.ru

**Abstract** This paper provides an overview of the key aspects of Terry Pratchett's reception in Russia, the stages of his entry into Russian culture as well as an analysis of the responses to his work of the mass reader and professional reader. Although Russian researchers have examined different aspects of Terry Pratchett's work, to the best of knowledge, this is the first study to explore the writer's reception in the Russian-speaking cultural field. Pratchett's reception started later in comparison with other authors of fantasy but developed rapidly and went through three main stages in its development. The mid-90s of the last century – when Russian editions of Pratchett's novels commenced to be published. 2004 – 2017 when critical responses and reviews started to appear, Pratchett's fan communities and fanfiction based on his writings emerged, and first studies in academic journals. 2018 – until today when Pratchett's biographies were released, publication of his major novels in Russian was completed, reprints and new translations of previously published books began. The result of the research allows the authors of the article to say with confidence that Pratchett's popularity in Russia has not reached its peak yet.

**Key words** Discworld; fantasy; Pratchett; reception; Russia

**Authors** **Marina Tsvetkova**, PhD, is Professor of English Literature at the HSE University (Russia). She published a number of papers in Russian and international academic journals, books of essays, and authored a book “An Excentric Russian Genius. Reception of Marina Tsvetaeva's Poetry in Britain”. Her main research interests are comparative studies in literature and translation studies. **Aleksandr Kulkov**, a lecturer at the HSE University (Russia). He published several papers in

Russian academic journals. His field of studies is intertextuality in contemporary fantasy literature, Terry Pratchett.

## Introduction

Sir Terry Pratchett (1948-2015), an English comic fantasy writer, Britain's best-selling living author has become a cult figure all over the world nowadays. Although in recent years literary critics have increasingly turned to Pratchett's work, his reception in Russia has not been investigated before. However, this reception is perfectly large and intensive. That is why the history of the writer's entry into the Russian culture is of particular interest as it sheds light on the idiosyncrasies of fantasy reception in Russia as a whole.

The limitations imposed by the scope of this article allow us to overview only the key aspects of the reception of the writer's work. The study focuses on the reasons for Pratchett's late entry into Russian culture, the main stages of this entry and the specifics of the responses of the mass reader and the professional reader (literary scholars and critics).

Pratchett owes his wide popularity, which began to rapidly gain momentum in the 80s of the last century in Europe and the USA, to a fantasy book series *Discworld*, conceived as a parody of Tolkien and his epigones, but eventually developed into a satire on reality itself. While Europeans and Americans were enjoying Pratchett's novels, the writer remained unknown in Russia until the mid-90s of the last century. This was primarily due to the fact that the Soviet reader, who lived behind the "Iron Curtain", was not familiar with either the reality that the author ridiculed or the parodied novels.

Today, it is impossible to imagine literature without fantasy. More than 60,000 works of this genre are offered only on an online marketplace Amazon.com. This new genre trend developed in the middle of the twentieth century and nowadays has long gone beyond literature. It is widely represented in painting (Boris Vallejo, Alan Lee, Randy Vargas, Paul Kidby, etc.), music (Blind Guardian, Battlelore, Bal-Sagoth, etc.), cinema (adaptations of *Harry Potter*, *The Wheel of Time*, *The Fowl Adventures*, etc.) as well as video game industry (*The Elder Scrolls*, *Final Fantasy*, *Warcraft*, etc.).

It is generally assumed, that the founding father of fantasy in literature is John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, whose books later have become prototypical for this genre (though chronologically the novels of Edward Dunsany, Robert Howard and Clive Lewis preceded Tolkien's works). The birth of fantasy is usually associated with the

publication of *The Hobbit* in 1937. The book was a huge success, but was treated as a children's fairy tale. The publisher, pleased with the result of the publication of *The Hobbit*, asked to write a sequel, and the writer began to create a work that would later become a kind of "Bible" for fans of fantasy. *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy was published in 1954-1955, and readers in Britain and the United States fell in love with the universe of Middle-Earth. Later it found a broad response among readers of other countries.

The most significant milestones in the development of fantasy are such book series as: *The Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula Le Guin (first publication in 1968), *The Chronicles of Amber* by Roger Zelazny (first publication in 1970), *The Saga of Eric* by Michael Moorcock (first publication in 1972), *Discworld* by Terry Pratchett (first publication in 1983), *The Wheel of Time* by Robert Jordan (first publication in 1990), *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George Martin (first published in 1996), *Harry Potter* by Joanne Rowling (first publication in 1997).

In Russia, the rapid development of fantasy coincided with the beginning of "perestroika" (the late 80s - early 90s of the twentieth century). In the Soviet period, this genre did not correspond to the ideologized socialist world view, based on the dogmas of materialism and scientific atheism. Belief in science, scientific and technological progress contributed to the spread and development of science fiction (mainly domestic) in the USSR. The works, which were inherent in mysticism and irrationality, were censored. As Sergey Alekseev and Dmitry Volodikhin note: "fantasy remained an unwanted guest in the country of October, sputnik, hammer and sickle" ("Soviet pre-fantasy") (*here in after the authors' translation into English*).

However, it was impossible to ignore the genre that was gaining popularity in the world completely. Soviet publishers found a way to publish stories about "wizards and dragons" as not a serious literature meant for children. The first official translation of *The Hobbit* (translated by Natalia Rakhmanova with illustrations by Mikhail Belomlinsky) was published as a fairy tale by the publishing house Detskaya Literatura in 1976. The novel was printed with an impressive circulation of 100,000 copies, which was comparable to the circulation of other children's books.

Only with the advent of perestroika, the rejection of communist ideology and censorship, fantasy novels began to be widely published in Russia. During this period, a real boom in translations of fantasy started: both books, which in the West were already beginning to be classified as "classics", and one-day novels were published in the country. Since the 90s, translations of book series by Terry Brooks, Roger Zelazny, Robert Howard, Ursula Le Guin, Fritz Leiber, Clive Lewis, Anne McCaffrey, Michael Moorcock, Andrzej Sapkowski appeared in bookstores. In

2000, the publication of J.K. Rowling's novels about Harry Potter and a number of other works of the masters of fantasy commenced. Against the background of the formation of fashion for Western fantasy in Russia, the domestic fantasy began to develop (Nick Perumov, Maria Semenova, Mikhail Uspensky, Yuri Nikitin, Sergei Lukyanenko, Vadim Panov, etc.), which later would be named Slavic fantasy.

At present, fantasy is confidently holding a leading position among translated and domestic literature in Russia. The reasons for this popularity are multiple: interest in adventure literature; constant film adaptations of books (it is often a successful film adaptation that makes the viewer turn to the book); the development of video games based on fantasy universes (for example, after the release of the video game *The Witcher*, Andrzej Sapkowski's novels have received a new life, crossed the borders of Eastern Europe, and found new readers around the world).

### History of Terry Pratchett's Works Translation into Russian

The work of Terry Pratchett was able to enter Russian culture genuinely only after the Russian reader was ready to understand the object of the author's parody as well as the numerous allusions to literature, cinema and Western culture scattered throughout his texts. It happened no earlier than in 1997 – fifteen years after the first publication of the novel from the Discworld series in the United Kingdom.

Introduction of Terry Pratchett to Russian-speaking readers went through several stages. The first attempt to present the writer to the domestic book market was made by the publishing house Vagrius in 1994. It printed a humorous book *The Unadulterated Cat* (1989), which was translated by Victor Lanchikov under the title *Kot bez durakov* (literally “Cat, all kidding aside”).

Two years later, the publishing house Tsentrpoligraf printed a cycle for children *The Nome Trilogy* in a small circulation of 10000 copies. The translation of each book was accomplished by a separate translator, quite possible in order to publish all three books at a time.

Only in 1997, Azbuka, a large publishing house, initiated the translation of novels about the Discworld and released the first five books: *The Colour of Magic*, (*Tsvet volshebstva*<sup>1</sup>) (1997), *Equal Rites* (*Tvortsy zaklinaniy*<sup>2</sup>) (1997), *The*

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1 Direct equivalent of the original title

2 Literally the Russian title means “Spell makers”. The novel is about a young witch who decides to be a wizard. Pratchett makes a witty pun about that in the original title. It is difficult to find a congenial equivalent to it in translation, while «spell makers» in Russian is a gender-neutral word combination and can be attributed to both men and women (Zhikarentsev).

*Light Fantastic* (*Bezumnaya zvezda*<sup>1</sup>) (1997), *Mort* (*Mor, uchenik Smerti*<sup>2</sup>) (1998), *Sourcery* (*Posokh i shlyapa*<sup>3</sup>) (1999). The translations were done by Irina Kravtsova and Svetlana Zhuzhunava. Aleksandr Zhikarentsev, who also acted as a co-author of several translations, was responsible for editing the entire book series. A huge number of witty equivalents of Pratchett jokes, as well as Russian versions of proper and precedent names based on punning, were devised by him. For example, Nanny Ogg – Nyanyushka Yagg (Nanny Yagg – Yagg reminds Russian readers a folk tale old witch called Yaga); Garlick – Chesnogk (an equivalent to garlic, but like in the original supplemented with an additional consonant in the end); corporal Nobbs – kapral Shnobbs (Shnobbs may have associations with “poke around”, “trickster” that is close to traits of Nobbs), captain Carrot – kapitan Morkou (in the original the captain’s name is modeled on true English surnames like Castle, Church, Clark, Crane, and sounds simultaneously plausible and funny, while in Zhikarentsev’s translation the surname Morcou is foreign-sounding but the word morkov” (carrot in Russian) is easily recognizable. Due to Zhikarentsev also appeared some funny translations of the witty Pratchett’s titles: *Hogfather* – *Santa-Khryakus* (Khryak – means a male pig, the comic effect is based on combining a Russian stem with the Latin ending us as well as making a pun: Santa Claus – Santa Khryakus); *Soul Music* – *Rokovaya muzyka* (stressed on both syllables: “rókovaya”, meaning “rock music”, and “rokováya” meaning “fatal”) (Zhikarentsev).

In parallel with professional translations, the first amateur Russian versions of the Discworld novels appeared on the Internet: *V dospekah i s oruzhiem* (*Men at Arms*) (1997), *Strazha! Strazha! (Guards! Guards!)* (1998) translated by Sergei Ben-Lev. Despite the translator’s excessive literalism and liberty in the adaptation of the characters’ names (captain Vimes – Bodryak (a cheerful person), captain Carrot – Morkovka (carrot), corporal Nobbs – Valet (knave)), until 2001 these translations were the only way for connoisseurs of Pratchett’s work, who did not speak English, to get acquainted with the adventures of The Ankh-Morpork City Watch. However,

1 Literally “Mad star”. There was no way to save the original meaning, but “star” has a reference to the scene (like in the original title) and the plot of the novel. The word “mad” refers to the coming doomsday and the madness that accompanies its arrival (Zhikarentsev).

2 Literally “Pestilence, Death’s apprentice”. Name Mort has no associations with “death” for Russian people, so it was substituted by “Mor” which means “plague”. That is why the title was supplemented with the clarification “Death’s apprentice” to transfer the original title meaning in a more precise way (Zhikarentsev).

3 Literally “Staff and hat”. It was difficult to adapt the pun on “source” and “sorcery” of the original title, therefore, two items which usually associated with wizards, namely Gandalf, and witchery were used to coin the new one (Zhikarentsev).

sophisticated readers found these translations “monstrous”, and one of them wittily remarked that “early translations forever discouraged many readers from Pratchett, but also forged his true connoisseurs” (“Readers’ comments on Sergei Ben-Lev’s translations”).

At the end of 2000, the rights to translate Pratchett’s books transferred to Eksmo, the largest publishing house in Russia, which is still publishing his works. In 2000-2001, it printed twelve writer’s novels as part of the Discworld series, entitled “Ploskiy mir” (Flat World). Five of them were reprints of the novels published in *Azbuka*, and seven books were new ones. The covers they had were designed by Josh Kirby for British editions. Aleksandr Zhikarantsev continued to edit the book translations, but the board of the translators was not constant.

From 2002 to 2006, Eksmo continued to promote Pratchett actively on the domestic book market, releasing 2-3 new translations a year, most of which were made by Nikolay Berdennikov (5 novels) and Svetlana Uvbarkh (4 novels), as well as Irina Kravtsova, and Marat Gubaidullin who respectively translated one work each.

The period of 2006–2012 can be considered the next stage in the publication of Pratchett’s works in Russia. Eksmo closed the series “Ploskiy mir” and launched a new one instead: “Terri Pratchett”, which differed from the previous one in its design of the covers. Now the books were published in a black hardcover and illustrated by Anatoliy Dubovik. The restart of the series slowed down the release of new translations. During this period, only four novels were newly published (2007 – *Pyatyy elefant*<sup>1</sup> (*The Fifth Elephant*), 2008 – *Pravda* (*The Truth*), 2010 – *Vor vremeni* (*Thief of Time*), 2011 – *Nochnaya strazha* (*Night Watch*)<sup>2</sup>, all translated by N. Berdennikov). Mostly reprints of previously published books were released. This pause provoked the emergence of a whole series of amateur translations into Russian. The desire of Pratchett’s fans to read his new works was intense. Users shared their own translations, posting them both in full and in fragments on the Internet as well as on the specialised forum [pratchett.org](http://pratchett.org).

In June 2007, Eksmo organised with the British Council assistance a presentation of the novel *The Fifth Elephant* with the participation of the writer. This was the only Pratchett’s visit to Russia. He signed autographs, gave interviews and performed in public in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The writer’s popularity among Russian readers by that time can be illustrated by the facts that visitors could hardly fit in the room provided by the organisers for meetings and autograph sessions ended

1 The Russian equivalent of “elephant” is “slon”, but in this case “elephant” was transliterated to make an allusion to the film *Pyatyy element* (*the Fifth Element*).

2 *Pravda*, *Vor Vremeni* and *Nochnaya strazha* are literate translations.

later than the scheduled time. In a few days, Pratchett signed more than 2,000 copies of novels, promising not to leave anyone without an autograph. On the last day of his stay in Russia, he held meetings with a compress on his hand, continuing to sign books, and at the conference remarked jokingly: “Russia defeated Hitler, Russia broke Napoleon ... and Russia finished my wrist” (“Feedback of the visitors...”). As part of his visit, the writer gave an extended and witty interview to the magazine “Mir Fantastiki”, which undoubtedly increased the number of his fans in Russia.

In 2012, the board of editors and translators who worked on Pratchett’s books at Eksmo changed. It led to a change of the concept of his books publishing. If earlier the Russian versions were published in the chronology of the originals, now the policy was to bring previously started subseries to completion or to publish independent novels. In 2013–2014, the novels *Monstrous Regiment* (*Gusarskaya ballada*<sup>1</sup>), *Thud!* (*Shmyak*<sup>2</sup>), *Unseen Academicals* (*Nezrimyye akademiki*<sup>3</sup>) and *Snuff* (*Delo tabak*<sup>4</sup>) were published in the translation of Valentina Sergeeva. Having finished the subseries about City Watch and Rincewind, in 2014–2016, the publishing house turned to the book series *The Long Earth*, written by Pratchett in collaboration with Stephen Baxter. New Discworld subseries about Moist von Lipwig and Tiffany Aching were also started. The former was translated by Elizaveta Shulga, the latter – by Natalia Allunan and Svetlana Likhacheva. In that period, the publication of supplementary literature of the Discworld also commenced: *The Compleat Ankh-Morpork: City Guide* and four volumes of *The Science of Discworld*.

In 2018, *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents* - the last novel about the Discworld previously unreleased in Russia appeared. It was translated by Svetlana Likhacheva and entitled *Udivitel’nyy Morris i ego uchenyye gryzuny* (literal translation of the original title). Having completed the book series “Terri Pratchett”,

1 Literally “Infantry Ballad”, “The Hussar Ballad”. This change was done as for Russians *Monstrous Regiment* is not a precedent text, while “Infantry Ballad” is an allusion to the Soviet film “The Hussar Ballad” about a young girl dressed as a man who decided to join a hussar squadron. In Pratchett’s novel, the main character Polly Perks, dresses up as a male soldier in order to find her brother.

2 A literal translation of the original title.

3 Literally “Unseen academics”, in Russian version Pratchett’s allusion to “Hamilton Academical” and “Edinburgh Academicals” is lost as these sports teams and educational institutions are unfamiliar to a Russian reader.

4 The translator attempted to transfer Pratchett’s pun into Russian. “Delo tabak” is a Russian proverb which means “things go in a bad way”, at the same time this title refers to conducting a criminal investigation (“delo” itself means “case”, while “tabak” is “tobacco”). The meaning of the original title is also double: “snuff” means “powdered tobacco” and “to die” refers to captain Vimes’s investigation about tobacco plantations and some mysterious deaths connected with them.

Eksmo started to reprint hardcovers as paperback editions with the covers of the English originals, and published additional copies of the previous editions. In 2020, the publishing house launched another series, “Universum. Terri Pratchett. Vedmy, Strazha i Mrachnyy Zhnets” (Universe. Terry Pratchett. Witches, Guards, and Grim Reaper) with new covers. As the book market highly depends on consumer demand, these facts are the best evidence of the unquenchable interest of the Russian readers in Pratchett’s work.

Today, the interest in the writer’s novels is so strong that at the beginning of 2020 Eksmo decided to publish alternative translations of Pratchett’s books. The first attempt was the novel *Good Omens*, written in collaboration with Neil Gaiman. In the translation of Vadim Filippov, the book was titled *Dobryye predznamenovaniya* (the 2012 edition in Margarita Yurkan’s translation was entitled *Blagiye znameniya*<sup>1</sup>). The choice of this particular novel was probably due to the recent release of a BBC TV series based on the book. The idea was a success, and alternative translations of the Discworld novels started to appear on store shelves, albeit the publisher decided not to change the Russian titles of the initial publications: *Veshchiye sestrichki* (literally “Prophetic Sisters”) for *Wyrd Sisters*, translated by Elena Muzykantova (2020); *K oruzhiyu! K oruzhiyu!* (literally “To Arms! To Arms!”) for *Men at Arms*, translated by Maksim Sorochenko (2021).

The steady growth of Pratchett’s popularity in Russia is evidenced by the fact that in recent years his work has been appearing in Russian translations constantly. They include Pratchett’s own writings or books related to them: a collection of writer’s articles and essays *A Slip of the Keyboard: Collected Non-Fiction* (2019), a collection of short stories *A Blink of the Screen: Collected Shorter Fiction* (2021), atlas of the Discworld *The Compleat Discworld Atlas* (2020), a biography *Terry Pratchett. The Spirit of Fantasy* by K. Cabell (2018). In August 2021, the first full author’s biography *The Magic of Terry Pratchett* by M. Burrows was released.

Nevertheless, there are still “blank spots” in the Russian translations of Pratchett’s works. For instance, his first novel *The Carpet People* (1971), surprisingly, still does not have an official Russian translation, although the amateur version of Oleg Kolesnikov appeared in 1998 on the wave of the release of Pratchett’s first novels in Russia. Also, the encyclopedia *The Discworld Companion*, maps *The Discworld Mappe, A Tourist Guide to Lancre, Death’s Domain* and some individual stories written by Pratchett at the beginning of his career have not been published in Russian yet.

1 “Predznamenovaniya” as well as “znameniya” mean omens or signs in Russian, and “dobryye” as well as “blagiye” are two equivalents for the word “good”.

### **The Role of the Magazine “Mir Fantastiki” in Promoting Terry Pratchett**

A significant role in the popularization of Terry Pratchett in Russia has played the magazine “Mir Fantastiki” (“World of Fantasy”), founded in 2003. It positions itself as the first Russian magazine about “fantasy and science fiction in all their manifestations” (as its slogan states) and publishes reviews of books, comic books, films, games and articles about famous science fiction and fantasy writers, their fictional universes, the forerunners of the fantasy genre, as well as mythology, fairy tales and folklore. Through this magazine, those readers who did not have access to the Internet discovered the world of fantasy and its novelties, including Pratchett’s books.

The Discworld was introduced to the readers in issue 1 (5) 2004 by a regular columnist, Boris Nevsky, who briefly observed the world system of the Discworld, the book subseries and their main characters. The reviewer fairly accurately formulated the key features of the universe beloved by the readers of the whole world: “The true essence of Pratchett’s work is that it mirrors all other worlds. The Discworld universe, its characters and the events happening to them can be absolutely fantastic. But familiar lines are visible through them, and behind the author’s sly smile, real problems of our world arise in front of the reader” (Nevsky, “Samyy ploskiy iz mirov...” 52).

In the same year, Aleksey Rybakov interviewed Pratchett for the new issue of the magazine. Unlike most typical conversations with a writer that focus on what has already been written and creative plans, in this interview a big range of questions revealing the personality of the writer was discussed: whether he was fond of video games, what his attitude to sports was, what he liked least of all, and what he saw as the main difficulty of translating his novels. Such an interview brought readers even closer to their favourite author and strengthened their interest in him.

At the end of 2004, after the publication of the novel *Maskerade* (in Russian *Maskarad* which is a literate translation) by Eksmo, the first review of Pratchett’s book appeared in issue 12 (16) of the magazine. The reviewer, Vasiliy Puziy, pinpointed the specifics of the writer’s style: a mixture of sad and funny, an ability to talk about serious things in a humorous way. Subsequently, reviews of writer’s books printed in Russia started to appear on a regular basis. To date, about thirty of them have been published. The reviewers call Pratchett “modern Jonathan Swift” (Nevsky, “Demiurg Ploskogo mira...” 51), praise the writer for his ability to talk about eternal topics in an easy, fun and immersive way (Readers, authors and editors...), “deep penetration into the secrets of the human soul, the ability to empathize” (Nevsky, “Demiurg Ploskogo mira...” 51), subtle humour and irony,

In addition to novels reviews, the magazine publishes thematic articles that help to systematize knowledge about the author, his work and introduce his fictional world to the readers. In the article “Demiurge of the Discworld”, Boris Nevsky gives major episodes of Pratchett’s biography, lists his prizes and awards, provides a complete bibliography of his works at the time of publication and the recommended reading order of books. With the abundance of what the author wrote, it greatly facilitates the task of those who are just getting acquainted with Pratchett’s novels.

The magazine uses a 10-point scale for evaluating books. Russian editions of Pratchett’s novels have never received less than 7 points, which indicates the persistent popularity of the writer in Russia.

The death of Pratchett on March 12, 2015, served as an impetus for a new surge of interest in him and his work. “Mir Fantastiki” immediately responded with an obituary (Vladimirskiy). In the next issue the entire section “classics” was devoted to the works of Pratchett with the addition of a detailed “travel guide” to the Discworld, made with true Pratchett humour (Lugovskaya). The guide opened with a small quiz to help the reader determine the destination. This was followed by a story about different parts of the Discworld (Agatean Empire, Fourecks, Überwald, Ankh-Morpork, etc.), the history of countries, their way of life, sights, dangers when meeting with local residents (for example, vampires of Überwald).

In April 2020, “Mir Fantastiki” to celebrate the writer’s birthday organized a collection of detailed readers’ comments about their favourite works of the author, the most interesting of which were published on the website (“Readers, authors and editors...”).

### **The Role of Fan Websites, Social Media Forums and Film Adaptations in Promoting Pratchett’s Work**

The rapid process of Pratchett’s books publishing in Russia and the educational activities of the magazine “Mir Fantastiki” made the author renowned among Russian fantasy fans. As a result, the need for additional information about the Discworld and its author increased. This led to the emergence in 2002 of [diskworldinfo.narod.ru](http://diskworldinfo.narod.ru) - the first domestic website, dedicated to Pratchett. On this website, users collected all sort of information available to them: from the author’s biography and his novels translations (both amateur and official) to illustrations and fanfiction based on the Discworld.

However, readers wanted not only to receive information about their favourite author, but also to discuss his books. It resulted in 2005 in the creation of another

website [pratchett.org](http://pratchett.org). In addition to the functions of the first website, this one has had its own forum for communication between community members. On this website, users can find news about Pratchett's books printed, solve intertextual "riddles", discuss the intricacies of translation, share impressions of the book they have read and chat about the world of the Disc, characters and their evolution, etc.

This forum is still active, but not as much as before probably due to the transition of users to the communities of the popular Russian social network "Vkontakte", such as "Terry Pratchett - quotes, books, discussions" (32120 members), "Sir Terry Pratchett Book Lovers Club" (8800 members), "Terry Pratchett & Discworld. Quotes, aphorisms" (12540 members), as well as a few other communities with a much smaller number of members.

In addition to specialized websites, Pratchett's readers actively share their opinions on the largest information site "Laboratory of SciFi & Fantasy" ([www.fantlab.ru](http://www.fantlab.ru)), launched in 2005. Readers, acting as "reviewers", write their responses and rate books on a scale from 1 to 10 points (the assessments are not regulated by specific criteria and subjective, which is typical for the Internet ratings in general). Reviews of Pratchett's books with a score below 5 points found on the portal constitute only 2.48% of all responses. Negative reviews are usually short and united by rejection of the author's style based on parody and derisive play with the reader: "The author and I clearly have too different concepts of humour. I was promised a funny parody of fantasy clichés, an excellent plot, interesting characters and a lot of positive things. Alas, nothing similar is found in the book" (ADIA, February 12, 2008), "I could not understand where there are funny episodes, I was not interested in any of the characters presented" (Harlekin667, 4 January 2021), "There is no plot and sense. The number of "jokes" per unit of text is off the scale" (K\_Serg, February 5, 2008).

Most of the negative comments concerned early Discworld novels, in which parody is a key narrative technique, so the rejection of Pratchett's works by part of the audience could be caused by its ignorance of the parody objects. It is worth saying the writer himself did not value these novels highly. The lowest average score (7.83) got the first novel of the series *The Colour of Magic*, while the novel *Night Watch* gained the highest score (8.94).

The positive reviews for Pratchett's novels are the vast majority. Their analysis also allows identifying some common features. They are more detailed, and praise the author for his wit, the ability to deceive the expectations of readers, easily and naturally integrate philosophical reflections and political issues into the plot, etc.: "How can one talk with humour about such complex issues as nationalism, toler-

ance, weapon trades? It turns out, as much as possible, and *Men at Arms* is a vivid example” (primorec, May 19, 2012), “This is the kingdom of distorting mirrors that show everything in its true light. It’s hard to see the truth <...> Discworld is much closer than many people may imagine” (Miss Marple, January 3, 2008), “Pratchett is good English humour for everyone. Pratchett is not about the Dark Lord, elves and other secondary things. This is a brilliant satire on our world, professional and smart” (Verner, August 22, 2013), “With the help of a subtle, truly British sense of humour, he was able to transfer our world in all its diversity to the pages of his books. And then he gave us the opportunity to look in it, as in a distorting mirror, and see all the absurdity of the reality around us” (Vitpur, September 11, 2011). It should be noted that the reader’s feedback on FantLab.ru largely coincides with the reviews of the columnists of the magazine “Mir Fantastiki.”

The appearance of admirers of Pratchett’s work could not but cause the emergence of fanfiction – free continuation of the novels, written by the readers who develop the plots of the Discworld stories. Users have started to share their own works first on the site pratchett.org, forum, and later on ficbook.net, and other specialized websites. The authors try to imitate Pratchett’s style, filling their texts with comic episodes, puns and intertextual inclusions. The genres of fanfiction are diverse: poems, mini-plays, anecdotes, diaries, stories of different sizes. As a rule, the authors take their favourite characters of the Discworld and show episodes from their lives that fill the gaps between novels (Vimes and Vetinari meetings, romantic relationships between Carrot and Angua, etc.). However, there are many fanfiction pieces, the events of which contradict the storylines of the original novels (for example, the pairing of Vimes and Vetinari) or are crossovers (Rincewind gets into the Strugatsky’s NIICHAVO).

The emergence of fanfiction indicates that the author and his works not only have found their reader in Russia but have deeply entered their consciousness: the readers live by the stories written by Pratchett, they long for their endless continuation.

In the modern globalized world, one cannot discount such a powerful factor as the influence of film adaptations of the author’s works on his popularity. A number of Pratchett’s novels have been adapted for the screen. On-screen versions of the writer’s works came to Russia almost simultaneously with the opening of his books by the Russian reader. The animated series based on *Soul Music* and *Wyrd Sisters* and filmed in 1997 came to Russia in 2007–2008. In the same years, the voiceover of the miniseries *Hogfather* (based on the novel with the same title) was made. In April 2008, through the efforts of the Kravets studio, *The Colour of Magic* almost

simultaneously was voiced in Russian. In May 2010, a two-part film based on the novel *Going Postal* appeared, which Russian-speaking Internet users could watch in Russian a week later. All these actively fueled interest in the writer and his work.

The success of the BBC series *Good Omens*, released in 2019, has reignited interest in Pratchett and his co-writer Neil Gaiman. It was after the release of the series that Eksmo not only reissued the old translation of the novel with covers depicting the main characters of the series, but also began publishing an alternative version of the translation of this work. The fact that interest has grown not only in the novel *Good Omens*, but in the work of Pratchett in general, is evidenced by the campaign launched after that by the publishing house to reprint and publish alternative translations of the writer's other novels.

### **Pratchett as a Research Subject in the Russian Academic Science**

If the novels of Terry Pratchett were introduced to the Russian readers in the mid-90s, then in the academic community the writer's works became the material of research much later. This is likely due to the low interest of Russian researchers in fantasy before the early 2000s. At that period, the first articles and dissertations on certain aspects of fantasy and its classical representatives, such as C. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, were beginning to emerge (Gogoleva, Misnik, Plotnikova, Pomogalova, Tret'yakova, Prikhod'ko, Shteynman).

The studies of Terry Pratchett's work started to appear in 2009. In the English-speaking world, Pratchett's scholars usually raise issues related to gender, feminism, the influence of folklore and myth, a parody element of the Discworld novels (Held and South, Pyykkonen and Washington, Smith). In Russia researchers address mainly the matters concerning difficulties of translating Pratchett's works: intertextual inclusions (Ignatovich), methods of translating the comic (Stolyarova), wordplay (Kryukova), precedent names (Voskresenskaya). The increased interest of researchers in translations of Pratchett's novels is logical, since his artistic world is entirely based on parody, a game with the readers' expectations, built on the recognition and understanding of various forms of intertextual inclusions and a language game, characteristic of the British humour. All these become a real challenge for translators, who are required not only to recode a text from one language to another, but also to be able to preserve the original author's intention, the functions of certain elements of the text.

Another group of scholars addresses the issues of the text-forming potential of intertextual inclusions in the Discworld novels, which are complex, diverse, often plot-forming and constitute the very essence of Pratchett's artistic world (Tananykh-

ina and Afanas'yeva, D'yakonova, Chekletsova).

The third group of studies focuses on the identification of the British comic linguocultural code (Verzhinskaya) and the examination of the representation of the key concepts of the writer's novels (life, death, afterlife; construction of the image of evil) (Bakiyev, Yudina). These questions often, for their part, return researchers to the issues of translating Pratchett's writings, imbued with the spirit of "Englishness", with its increased concentration of humour and language game, into Russian.

## Conclusion

Thus, we can say with certainty that Pratchett's popularity in Russia is still growing and, apparently, has not reached its peak yet.

In comparison with other writers of fantasy, the reception of Terry Pratchett in Russia started later because the emergence of mass interest in the author's work based on parody was possible only after the Russian reader had become familiar with a certain number of fantasy pieces of writing parodied by him. However, after Pratchett's introduction to the Russian literary scene, his reception developed rapidly and went through three main stages in its development.

At the early stage of acquaintance with the author's books already well-known to the English-speaking world (started in the mid-90s of the last century), the reception consisted almost exclusively in the translation of his works into Russian (both by professional translators and amateur enthusiasts who posted their versions of his books on the Internet).

At the next stage (began in 2004), the publication of new translations was supplemented with critical responses and reviews by the columnists of the popular science magazine "Mir Fantastiki", which performed an introductory function as well as the function of forming readers' opinions. Along with professional critics, the mass readers spontaneously were forming their own attitude to Pratchett on the Internet. During this period, Pratchett gradually became a cult figure, as evidenced by the reader's excitement associated with his arrival in Russia, and the emergence of fan communities and fanfiction (indicating that the writer's works became well known to a wide range of readers). At this stage, the screen versions of his works voiced in Russian became a powerful fuel of interest in Pratchett and his work. In addition, it was during this period that the research field associated with the name of Pratchett began to form in the professional literary environment. Interest of scholars to the author means that he has started to turn into a classic.

The third stage (began in 2018) was marked by the fact that, after the death of the writer and the completion of Russian publications of his major books, a new

era has started. The era of Pratchett's biographies and previously unpublished minor works publishing, as well as reprints and editions of newly translated versions, aimed at satisfying the current readers' hunger for "communication" with the works of their favourite author.

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