

# A TRANSLATION WITH FOOTNOTES

## The Czech version of Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series and the translator's voice in the paratext

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**Abstract** – One of the many reasons for the lasting popularity of Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series is the strong presence of an authorial voice in his laconic, ingenious footnotes; it is no coincidence that Pratchett's posthumous biography is subtitled *A Life with Footnotes* (Wilkins, 2023). Pratchett's work, full of wordplay and culture-specific references, also places substantial demands on its translators, many of whom are highly acclaimed for their craft – including the Czech translator of *Discworld*, Jan Kantůrek. In addition to his skilful and engaging approach to Pratchett's challenging prose, Kantůrek also added his own footnotes alongside the author's. These range from explanations of references tied to the original anglophone context, to the translator's own anecdotes and jokes, going well beyond the traditional device for solving intercultural conundrums. While footnotes as 'the translator's shame' (Mounin 1963, xi) have traditionally been viewed as a necessary evil, recent years have brought research exploring footnotes as a valuable component in a translator's toolkit (Haroon 2019; Miao and Salem, 2008; Paloposki 2010), as well as a method for showcasing the translator's agency (Paloposki 2010). This paper reimagines footnotes as an opportunity for exploring the translator's creativity, and provides an insight into the role of the translator's voice in speculative fiction.

**Keywords:** paratext; footnotes; translating fantasy; Terry Pratchett

## 1. Introduction

Sir Terry Pratchett's *Discworld*, a series of fantasy books published between the years 1983 and 2015, have found readership well beyond the traditional fantasy community and its cult status has not waned even a decade after the author's untimely death. Nominally written as a humorous subversion of classic fantasy tropes and genre conventions, the series of 41 books is at its core a brilliant social satire that addresses topics from xenophobia and warmongering to capitalism and patriarchy. Uniting these seemingly disparate elements and making them into laughing-out-loud funny narratives is the author's masterful use of the English language, and his strong and unforgettable authorial presence. This presence is particularly noticeable in the frequent footnotes that became one of the hallmarks of Pratchett's work.

Full of additional witty remarks that frequently extend his fictional universes or connect individual volumes into a larger metaverse, the footnotes also function as a space for the author to communicate directly with the reader; while most of his stories are told from the perspective of his fictional heroes, the footnotes clearly speak in Pratchett's words in a nearly Dickensian omniscience. While he is not the only contemporary author of speculative fiction using footnotes to great creative effect, his authorial voice is unmistakable, and his footnotes rightly acquired an almost iconic status. It is no coincidence that Pratchett's posthumous biography is subtitled *A Life with Footnotes* (Wilkins 2023).

Pratchett's work, full of wordplay and culture-specific references, places substantial demands on its translators, many of whom are highly acclaimed for their craft – including the Czech translator of the series, Jan Kantůrek. In addition to his skilful and engaging approach to Pratchett's challenging prose for which he was repeatedly awarded by the Czech Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror (ASSFH 2017), Kantůrek also adds his own footnotes alongside the author's. These range from explanations of terms and references tied to the original anglophone context, to the translator's own anecdotes and jokes, going well beyond the traditional tool for solving intercultural conundrums. Kantůrek's footnotes are also printed in the same format as Pratchett's, with only the "author's note" or "translator's note" heading differentiating one voice from the other. Unlike the English reader, who feels the presence of the author throughout the pages of the books, the Czech reader has both the authorial and the translatorial voice accompanying the text. This tripartite conversation reminds the reader constantly of the fact that the text they are reading – skilfully rendered as it is – is also a work of translation.

This paper uses a close textual analysis of Jan Kantůrek's footnotes in the 41 *Discworld* novels in order to explore how these comments develop the complex metaphors and wordplay across English and Czech, extend the text along the spatial axis, and position the translations into a linguistic metaspace. A detailed overview reveals how these paratextual features not only remind the reader of the translator's presence, but how they also pull the curtain on the hidden art of translation as a challenging, playful and above all creative endeavour. Ultimately, the paper explores footnotes as a tool for bridging linguistic differences, and as a rarely appreciated method for resisting the translator's invisibility that nonetheless remains true to the original authorial intentions.

## 2. Footnotes and Fantasy

Although footnotes are usually seen as some of the more utilitarian paratextual features, they nonetheless elicit controversial opinions within the discourses on written text. A line frequently attributed to Noel Coward but likely stemming from John Barrymore likens the encounter with a footnote to “going downstairs to answer the doorbell while making love” (Magat 2010, p. 83); others consider it to be “one of the earliest and most ingenious inventions of humankind” (Zerby 2002, p. 1). In their most common non-fictional iteration in legal, academic and technical texts, footnotes are used for citations supporting the author's arguments, or as a space to include additional information that would interrupt the flow of the text, but that the author is loath to leave out completely. However, even within this relatively impersonal genre, footnotes can act as an element of added humanity. They let us “peer into the inner workshops of scholars” but also see their “missteps and biases, and hear pathos, subtle decisions, scandal and anger” (Zerby 2002, p. 5), elements that would seem too subjective or too unprofessional if included in the main body of the text. A classic example from the golden age of the historical footnote is Edward Gibbon's six-volume *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Gibbon 1776), with the author's sharp wit as well as his sense of humour frequently resurfacing in the bulk of his footnotes that occupy a full one quarter of the text.

While not typically associated with footnotes, this possibility to supplement the main text with authorial asides as an added narrative dimension has been successfully exploited by fiction writers as a form of artificial paratext (Maloney 2005). Literary classics such as *Tom Jones* (Fielding 1749), *Tristram Shandy* (Sterne 1759) or *Moby Dick* (Melville 1851) use the occasional footnote to supplement the information provided in these novels, but it was the birth of modernist and postmodernist metafiction in the works of Vladimir Nabokov, James Joyce and Jorge Luis Borges that truly started to utilise the full potential of paratextual materials. While these footnotes fill a number of different roles, from anchoring the text in a fictional metaverse to questioning the very narrative they are glossing on, their function remains the same: to reinsert the author of the text back into the narrative. Although various types of storytelling methods, such as the use of the omniscient narrator, may highlight the presence of the author behind the text itself during the reading process, the footnote is a forcible interruption of the reading process “giving us occasion to speculate on self-reflective narration as an aspect of textual authority” (Benstock 1983, p. 205).

The malleability of the footnote as a means to reiterate authorial presence in the text has not remained the sole domain of literary fiction or poetry. Genre fiction writers have likewise utilised these methods to great

creative effect, including mystery writing in the Golden Age of detective fiction (Effron 2010), and many others. Fantasy in particular has since its conception and consolidation as a genre enjoyed a fruitful and stimulating relationship with paratextual elements; one of its foundational texts, JRR Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien 1991), is framed as a story "translated" from a fictional ancient document, and the trilogy itself is furnished with six appendices. Since then, footnotes have become a frequent feature of fantasy, be they used in the tradition of academic texts (such as fictional citations and other sources in Susanna Clarke's alternate history of the Napoleonic wars, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*), to act as humorous asides from the fictional narrator that simultaneously broaden the worldbuilding (see e.g., Jonathan Stroud's *Bartimaeus Sequence* for younger readers), as fictional retrospective glosses on the novel's text from another character whose identity the story slowly reveals (such as in Alexandra Rowland's *A Choir of Lies*), and many others. None of them, however, attained such an iconic status as the footnotes in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld*.

This name most commonly applies to 41 books published between 1983 and 2015, with the last, *The Shepherd's Crown* (Pratchett 2015b), coming out posthumously after Pratchett's untimely death of early-onset Alzheimer's disease.<sup>1</sup> The series is best viewed as a collection of several shorter subseries and standalones with a set of reoccurring protagonists and side characters, connected through their setting on a fictional flat planet named *Discworld*.<sup>2</sup> The stories use the traditional roster of fantasy beings, from witches and wizards to dwarves, trolls and golems, and positions them into a subverted version of common fantasy narratives that frequently echo our own world and recognisable literary models; a hardboiled detective investigates murder in a city under threat from dragon attack, Macbeth's witches fight against the elves from *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Death takes a break to work at a farm while wizards from a magical university face an invasion of shopping trollies. Although the stories are rooted in the absurd and are rightfully considered some of the best humorous fantasy novels ever written, they have a deeply serious undercurrent with cleverly concealed criticism of bigotry, small-mindedness, greed and other evils Pratchett saw in the world around him. Several other components elevate this series from the mere comedic to the cult-worthy; Pratchett's broad knowledge fuelled by lifelong curiosity about anything from history to quantum mechanics, which are cleverly incorporated into his stories; his masterful command of the English language and love of wordplay honed by his career as a journalist; and the author's strong and unmistakable narrative presence throughout his

<sup>1</sup> The corpus for this study excludes the various spinoffs, graphic novels, children's books, cookbooks, travelogues and short stories that are set on the *Discworld*, but that do not comprise the core collection as defined by one of the series' current publishing houses.

<sup>2</sup> Famously sailing through space carried on the backs of four elephants resting on a turtle.

works. This last element is largely achieved through Pratchett's inclusion of authorial footnotes.

The 41 *Discworld* novels contain a total of 829 footnotes, ranging from the modest one in the very first novel *The Colour of Magic* (Pratchett 2014c) to 81 in his penultimate *Raising Steam* (Pratchett 2019) and averaging at 20 per novel. The footnotes speak to the reader from the position of an omnipresent and omniscient narrator, aware of the lore and history of the entirety of the *Discworld*, and they broaden the worldbuilding as they comment on the actions and decisions of the characters. Many of them also offer additional jokes and puns with a well-calculated comedic timing, such as this footnote-within-footnote in *Jingo* explaining the name of a fictional wizard named Denephew Boot: "His parents, who were uncomplicated country people, had wanted a girl. They were expecting to call her Denise" (Pratchett 2014a, p. 67).<sup>3</sup> Others provide a not-always comfortable mirror to our own world's failings, such as a tongue-in-cheek commentary in *Witches Abroad*, attached to the information that the second-highest waterfall on the Disc was discovered by a noted explorer. The footnote adds: "Of course, lots of dwarfs, trolls, native people, trappers, hunters and the merely badly lost had discovered it on an almost daily basis for thousands of years. But they weren't explorers and didn't count" (Pratchett 1991, p. 71). At other times, Pratchett consciously breaks the fourth wall between his fictional *Discworld* and our own, such as in this aside in *Moving Pictures*, commenting on the ambitions of the university's librarian – who happens to be an orangutan – to write a script for a movie: "It was about a young ape who is abandoned in the big city and grows up being able to speak the language of humans" (Pratchett 2014b, p. 168). Unlike many fellow fantasy writers however, Pratchett's footnotes do not pretend to come from a character from the story, nor are they part of the fictional universe. The omniscient narrator commenting on the plot and the actions of the characters straddles the thin line between Booth's implied and real author (1983, p. 71), particularly as Terry Pratchett, with his beard and iconic hats, was a publicly well-known and easily recognisable figure. The identity of this writer however becomes more convoluted once the actual words are written not by the author, but by the translator.

<sup>3</sup> The data for this paper have been largely based on ebook versions of Pratchett's books and their Czech translations, which might lead to some differences in page numbers across reading platforms.

### 3. Footnotes, Translated

Jan Kantůrek, the Czech translator of *Discworld*, was born on 4 May 1948, less than a week after Pratchett's own birthday on 28 April of the same year. Similarly to Pratchett's career in journalism prior to becoming a full-time writer, Kantůrek worked as an editor and later sales manager for various Czech publishing houses before becoming a freelance translator. His first translations were of the *Conan* series by Robert E. Howard, made at the request of a friend for a small group of sci-fi enthusiasts in the 1980s, and the hobby quickly grew into a full-time occupation as the demand for publishing fantasy expanded with the opening of the then Czechoslovakia's borders after the Velvet Revolution in 1989 (Reflex 2000). Kantůrek's language and translation skills were entirely self-taught, and the fact that his English – especially in its spoken form – was sometimes lacking became something of a running joke of his career. As he himself mentions in an interview: “I have no active English language skills. [...] Give me a written text and I understand the meaning of any word I see. But it doesn't work the other way round. I can't write a letter without feeling ashamed of myself. [...]. And pronunciation? A big problem!”<sup>4</sup> (Reflex 2000). Despite these drawbacks, Kantůrek is rightly celebrated as one of the most talented and widely-acclaimed translators from English, winning the Best translator award from the Czech Academy of Science-Fiction, Fantasy and Horror in years 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998, as well as a special award for his lifelong service to speculative fiction translation in 2003 (ASSFH 2017). During his long career, which ended with his death three years after Pratchett's, Kantůrek translated other speculative fiction titles including works from Edgar Rice Burroughs, Poul Anderson and Roger Zelazny, as well as several comics. He became a prime example of a translator whose target language skills, creativity and immense enthusiasm for the source text surpass any possible failings stemming from his lack of practical experiences in the source language, and his name is one of the very few translators instantly recognisable in Czech fantasy circles to this day.

The invitation to translate the *Discworld* books came from Vlastimír Talaš, editor in chief of the publishing house Talpress which bought the Czech rights to Pratchett's books and subsequently published the whole series (Aktuálně.cz 2013). Oblivious to the fact that other translators have already refused the offer as the series seemed impossible to translate, Kantůrek accepted, starting an exceptionally fruitful author-translator collaboration that lasted throughout the rest of their lives. Author and translator met several

<sup>4</sup> “Anglicky neumím aktivně. [...] Když mám v ruce tištěný text a padnou mi oči na jakékoliv slovo, jeho význam znám. Obráceně to nefunguje. Nenapišu ani dopis, abych se za něj nemusel stydět. [...] A výslovnost? Velký problém!”. All Czech quotes were translated by the author of this article, unless stated otherwise.

times in person, including a by now famous anecdote about their first meeting when Kantůrek requested the help of an English interpreter and Pratchett was justifiably horrified that someone with such limited language skills was tasked with his translations. This first impression was later remedied during a simultaneous reading of a *Discworld* novel where Pratchett witnessed how the Czech-speaking crowd laughed at exactly the same instances as the English one (Aktuálně.cz 2013). The friendship between author and translator – Kantůrek was apparently much more willing to talk in English with a dose of Dutch courage – likely contributed to the overall quality of the translations, and Kantůrek received from Pratchett an explicit permission to add new jokes to *Discworld* whenever he found suitable (Reflex 2000).

This creative freedom became the hallmark of Kantůrek's translations, and the reason for their lasting popularity. Although a close reading of the text shows occasional linguistic shortcomings where it is clear that the translator did not understand the source text completely,<sup>5</sup> this is fully outweighed by the humour and lightness that he retains in these exceptionally challenging translations. Kantůrek effortlessly transposes Pratchett's famously elaborate character names,<sup>6</sup> many of which are puns in their own right, but also manages to retain the character's personalities captured in their idiosyncratic speech patterns.<sup>7</sup> A frequent fan criticism of Kantůrek's translations is that he is sometimes deviating from the source text, however these are usually the result of substitution, where seemingly untranslatable jokes are replaced by new ones elsewhere. This includes Pratchett's famous footnotes, which are not only masterfully translated into Czech, but frequently complemented by a second set, written by the translator.

If footnotes occupy a controversial position in literary discourse, translator's footnotes are almost universally reviled. Famously titled "the translator's shame" by Dominique Aury in her preface to George Mounin's *Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction* (1963, p. xi), they have traditionally been perceived as a necessary evil, deployed only when strictly necessary and their very existence questioned. This is particularly the case in translated fiction and poetry; Honcoopová (1997, p. 30) considers a poem with explanatory notes "a cripple who cannot stand without a crutch". It is

<sup>5</sup> As an example, the line "His corset probably wants lacing..." in *Monstrous Regiment* (Pratchett 2017, p. 301) was translated as "Asi potřebuje olemovat korzet kraječkama" [His corset probably needs to be hemmed with lace] (Pratchett 2004a, p. 315), where Kantůrek clearly mistook the verb "to lace" for the noun.

<sup>6</sup> And sometimes improves on them. Although "Lord Downey" is doubtlessly a fitting name for the head of the Assassins' Guild in Pratchett's original version, Kantůrek's 'Lord Odkraglli', based on 'odkráglivat' as an informal Czech variation of the verb "to kill", is in the subjective opinion of the author even funnier.

<sup>7</sup> Such as using a combination of Czech dialects to replicate the Nac Mac Feegle's combination of Scots and made up words.

only in recent years that translatorial footnotes started to be viewed as a valid tool for solving frictions between source and target cultures, such as an exploration of their informative function (Haroon 2019), their useability as a tool for bridging cultural differences (Miao and Salem 2008) and as a space for showcasing the translator's agency (Paloposki 2010). As the following analysis shows, Kantůrek's use of translator's footnotes not only combines all of these elements but surpasses their traditional function, blurring the lines between their authorial and allographic form (Genette and Maclean 1999, p. 266) and providing a direct contribution to the stories told in these novels.

#### 4. The (Disc)world of Czech Footnotes

The 41 novels comprising the Czech version of *Discworld* contain altogether 379 translator's notes, sitting alongside the original authorial notes from Pratchett<sup>8</sup> and averaging around 9 additional footnotes per volume. As is the case in the English version, they are not spaced evenly, with the smallest number (1) in *Čaroprávnost* (*Equal Rites*, Pratchett 2009a), and the highest at 24 in *Šňupec* (*Snuff*, Pratchett 2012).

Viewing the footnotes in chronological order by their date of publication reveals the gradual genesis of the nature of these footnotes, and Kantůrek's increasing effort to contribute to the text and highlight his translatorial presence in these notes. The footnotes in the first ten volumes<sup>9</sup> (from *The Colour of Magic* to *Moving Pictures*) are mostly keeping to the spirit of the traditional translator's footnote and can be generally divided into three main categories: references to other *Discworld* books, translating lines from third languages, and explaining facts or terms presumably unfamiliar to a Czech audience. The *Discworld* references connect these early books with others from the same series, such as the footnote at the beginning of *Lehké Fantastično* explaining to the reader that "These adventures of Rincewind, Twoflower and Luggage are described in Terry Pratchett's book *The Colour of Magic*, published by Talpress in 1993" (*The Light Fantastic*, Pratchett 2008, p. 244). Given that the covers of *Discworld* books traditionally have little to no indication that they are part of a larger interconnected series,<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The numbers do not completely align as Kantůrek appropriates some of Pratchett's footnotes for his own, such as in the following example from *Nohy z jilu*. Pratchett uses his footnote to offer a fictional translation for a line one of his characters says in *Dwarfish*; Kantůrek changes this to a translator's footnote and frames this fictional translation with: "It is true that one should always translate from the original, as the translation from a translation tends to be distorted, but here I had no other choice but to use the English translation of Mr Pratchett. He translates from *Dwarfish* into English, and I into Czech as follows [...]" (*Feet of Clay*, Pratchett 1999a, p. 45).

<sup>9</sup> The 41 *Discworld* novels are for the purposes of this study chronologically ordered by their original English publication date.

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, there are many recommended reading orders of the *Discworld* for those who want to



such a step, likely endorsed or proposed by the publisher, is understandable, especially given the newness of the fantasy genre in the early 1990s in Czechoslovakia and later Czech Republic.<sup>11</sup> The translations from third languages refer in the great majority of cases to French and Latin, both of which are much more familiar to an anglophone audience of Pratchett's generation and education than they are to a Czech person of similar standing. This includes the somewhat dry definition of the acronym QED in *Pyramidy* (*The Pyramids*, Pratchett 2010, p. 302), or a more humorous explanation of Pratchett's "An(n)us Mirabilis" pun in *Magický prazdroj* (*Sourcery*, Pratchett 2009b, p. 67).

The by far largest category can be loosely summed up as general knowledge, where a combination of different historical, political and cultural contexts of the *Discworld* novels, together with Pratchett's omnivorous research habits, caused that many of the original jokes, double meanings or references would be lost on the presumed Czech reader. These range from an explanation of British measuring units (explaining that there are approximately 0.75 litres in a pint, Pratchett 2009a, p. 365), obscure terms (such as "gnomon", the pin throwing shade on a sundial, Pratchett 2008, p. 340) or short profiles of famous persons (such as Gaspard-Gustave de Coriolis or M. C. Escher, both of whose work is obliquely referenced in Pratchett 2008, p. 317 and Pratchett 2009b, p. 133). However, despite the relative conventionality of these early footnotes, some of them already show signs of Kantůrek's creative input. The translator's voice is added in several of them, such as in a footnote from *Stráže! Stráže!* commenting on a moment when a character had been "persuaded to try a shandy and hadn't liked it much" with "I'm not surprised. Shandy is a mixture of beer and ginger ale" added by Kantůrek (*Guards! Guards!*, Pratchett 2010, p. 508). Many of the factual explanations that could be presented in a matter-of-fact way reveal Kantůrek's sense of humour, such as a comment on the following description of a fictional town: "...You can talk about garlic. You can talk about France. [...] But if you haven't smelled Ankh-Morpork on a hot day you haven't smelled anything" with a translator's footnote: "Do not forget that the author is an Englishman" (Pratchett 2008, p. 430) – the association of smelly places with France might be absent in Czech lands, but the animosity between the two countries is a well-known fact. There are also some footnotes commenting on the translator's work, such as one glossing Kantůrek's decision to transcribe the English nautical expression "aye aye, sir"

begin with the series; as the first two books are generally seen as some of Pratchett's least successful ones, very few seasoned readers recommend the chronological order.

<sup>11</sup> The editor in chief of Talpress, *Discworld's* Czech publisher, mentions that the sales numbers of *Discworld* were disappointingly low right up to the publication of the fourth novel *Mort* (Pratchett 2009a), which went up to around 10,000 (Aktuálně.cz 2013).

phonetically as “aj aj” in *Erik* (Pratchett 1996, p. 39). The translator explains that it is the historically first attempt to translate this untranslatable phrase into Czech, together with a note on how this expression would have likely sounded to anglophone readers within the story’s context.<sup>12</sup> The research that goes into the translation process is likewise at times highlighted, such as in *Soudné sestry*, which is prefaced by a note informing the reader that the Czech quotes from *Macbeth* are taken from a 1951 translation by E.A. Saudek, with the proviso that these were at times modified in order to retain wordplay and other textual references within the text (*Wyrd Sisters*, Pratchett 2009b, p. 305). All of these let the reader peek through the metaphorical stage curtain of a translation, bringing the person – and the work – of the translator closer to the reader. This creative breaking of the fourth wall however becomes even more interesting in the later *Discworld* volumes.

The three aforementioned types of footnotes still occupy the largest proportion, however they become much more inventive, humorous and personal. The dry conversion of a pint in *Mort* turns into the following statement in *Poslední kontinent*, commenting on the amount of beer drunk by a character: “That looks pretty terrible, but keep in mind that a pint is not quite one half of a litre .... Simply said, it amounts to around nineteen beers” (*The Last Continent*, Pratchett 1999b, p. 194). This playful, almost chatty attitude to footnotes helps Kantůrek regain his agency as a writer and leave the traditional position of an omniscient voice free of personality in favour of a much more human form of address. The footnotes naturally expand with this new approach, partly because Kantůrek allows the reader to see the details of the arduous research process that is such a pivotal part of any translation, and partly because Kantůrek is increasingly becoming part of the stories, as he frequently addresses the characters themselves. The following footnote from *Svobodnej národ* showcases both of these, commenting on a character’s pronouncement that whales do not have teeth:

Tonička<sup>13</sup> was of course right. Sadly, her teacher likely forgot to tell her, that Moby Dick in H. Melville’s novel is not a [generic] whale, but a sperm whale. According to the encyclopaedia, sperm whales can grow to the length of 25 metres and weigh up to fifty tons. It really is a sea mammal from the order of cetaceans, but, and I quote, the largest of *toothed* cetaceans. (*The Wee Free Men*, Pratchett 2004b, pp. 176, emphasis in original)

Another interesting feature of these footnotes is Kantůrek’s refusal to act as an all-knowing and wholly transparent solver of intercultural problems who presents these to his reader in easily digestible portions, and instead forces

<sup>12</sup>The Czech Republic as a landlocked country is understandably somewhat lacking in nautical slang.

<sup>13</sup>As with the majority of Pratchett’s names, Tiffany was given a much more suitably Czech name Tonička, a diminutive form of Antonie.

the reader to do their own research. The translations from third languages that were previously presented similarly to dictionary entries require far more thinking done by the reader than previously. An example is the title of the 23<sup>rd</sup> *Discworld* novel *Carpe Jugulum*, which remains unchanged in Czech translation. The footnote asks the reader: “Do you know the meaning of ‘Carpe diem!’? It’s Latin and means ‘Seize the day’. And ‘iugulum’ is a throat or a larynx. And who lives in Überwald?<sup>14</sup> Get it, my dears? Get it?” (Pratchett 2000, p. 7). This playful approach sometimes results in seemingly cryptic, but ultimately informative comments, such as the following gloss accompanying the line ‘Curiouser and curiouser’ in *Zajímavé časy* (*Interesting Times*, Pratchett 1998, p. 28), which is instantly recognisable to an anglophone audience but sounds unremarkable to a Czech one. The footnote says simply: “Have you read *Alice in Wonderland*? If not, now’s the right time. My version was translated by Anna and Aloys Skoumal” (Pratchett 1998, p. 28).

This tendency towards relatively less helpful but more amusing forms of footnote is markedly prominent especially when reading the novels in chronological order, as Kantůrek’s patience towards repeated explanations of reoccurring facts diminishes over time. A good example of this is the term coprolite, glossed for the first time in *Muži ve zbrani* (number 15) as: “A fossil that allows us to study the final products of the digestive tracts of ancient animals” (*Men at Arms*, Pratchett 1997b, p. 165); by *Nohy z jilu* (number 20), the reader receives only: “The term coprolite can be found in any dictionary” (*Feet of Clay*, Pratchett 1999a, p. 157). Likewise, notes pointing to other *Discworld* books are written with a wry acknowledgement that most readers will not require them; by the time of *Zaslaná pošta*, the 33<sup>rd</sup> *Discworld* novel, the reference to the vampire’s League of Temperance is explained thusly: “There might still be people who returned after ten years abroad, or from prison, or have only recently learnt to read, and this is thus their first *Discworld* novel. Those are now likely wondering [...]” (*Going Postal*, Pratchett 2005, p. 314). This constant awareness of Kantůrek’s readership – many of whom he would have met in person as a frequent visitor to fantasy conventions and signing events – is one of the most prominent features of these later footnotes, bringing an element of humanity and a certain level of intimacy into these books. This awareness is likewise seen in Kantůrek’s recognition of various forms of feedback, including the criticism his translation sometimes receives. His responses to these, sarcastic as they sometimes are, still retain some element of fun, such as in a footnote found in *Poslední hrdina*, where he explains the use of the term “furlong” as ‘měř’ with: “This time I did not change these into metric, so that some purist or

<sup>14</sup> *Discworld*’s Überwald is inhabited by vampires and werewolves.

other know-it-all won't be checking my millimetres" (*The Last Hero*, Pratchett 2003, p. 18) As the time progresses, the footnotes get ever longer and the information included in them goes far beyond a simple statements of fact. Many of them include recommendations for further reading, such as in a footnote to *Čarodějky na cestách*, where Kantůrek describes a mongoose with its Latin name and a suggestion to read Rudyard Kipling's short story *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi* (*Witches Abroad*, Pratchett 2011b, p. 628), and even recipes, curiously most often for cocktails.<sup>15</sup>

Kantůrek's familiarity and trust in his readership is further mirrored in footnotes that speak to them as to an audience aware of the fact they are reading a translation. This peek behind the curtain of the translation process is always incorporated so as to complement the humorous tone of the book, such as the following footnote explaining the meaning of *asafetida* in *Sekáč*: "It is true that asafetida has the beautiful Czech name of 'devil's dung', but as this is a recipe for a meal and not for an ointment against dry skin, I kept the name in Latin. This tends to be the better option in the case of many a foreign recipe" (*Reaper Man*, Pratchett 2011b, p. 75). At other times, Kantůrek admits to the fallibility of his own work, such as in the following footnote attached to Pratchett's joke: "Bishops move diagonally. That's why they often turn up where the kings don't expect them to be" in *Malí bohové*. The footnote glossing this untranslatable wordplay says: "I get the English joke, but I didn't manage to 'get' it into Czech. In English, a Bishop is not only a religious title, but also the name of a chess piece known here as the Archer" (*Small Gods*, Pratchett 1997a, p. 286). Interestingly, it is not only the translator who reveals the joys and troubles of translating Pratchett's oeuvre from English into Czech. The preface to *Buch!* contains a lengthy list of possible translations of the English title of the book, taken from a fan survey prior to its publication, and presented as a "publisher's footnote"<sup>16</sup> (*Thud!*, Pratchett 2006, n.p.). This constant awareness of the reader's presence, and especially of the fact that the reader will most likely be Czech,<sup>17</sup> is present especially in footnotes that Kantůrek uses in order to bridge the cultural

<sup>15</sup> For Banana Daiquiri in *Čarodějky na cestách* (*Witches Abroad*, Pratchett 2011b, p. 503), for an unknown cocktail similar to Between the sheets in *Muži ve zbrani* (*Men at Arms*, Pratchett 1997b, p. 76), and possibly Kantůrek's own recipe for a variation on a Bloody Mary where the vodka is replaced with a Czech herbal bitter Becherovka in *Obléknu si půlnoc*, replacing the original joke about crème-de-menthe (*I Shall Wear Midnight* Pratchett 2011a, p. 186).

<sup>16</sup> The publisher – presumably the editor-in-chief Talaš – has also left one other publisher's footnote in *Podivný regiment* (*Monstrous Regiment*, Pratchett 2004a, p. 237), where a character writes into a notebook, or *zápisník* in Czech. The publisher adds: "I so wanted to put a capital Z here, but younger readers have no way of knowing this brilliant publication". *Zápisník* with a capital Z was the title of a Czech exile literary journal published in New York between 1958 and 1962 (Scriptum 1999).

<sup>17</sup> A somewhat ironic statement, given that this article is written by a Slovak scholar who understands Czech due to its linguistic closeness, and prefers the Czech translations due to their literary qualities and long familiarity.

differences between his own culture and *Discworld*, which remains for all its fantasy qualities firmly rooted in the British cultural context. This is done through carefully and usually highly entertaining analogies, such as the following footnote in *Poslední hrdina* which explains: “If you struggle to imagine a heroic pose, remember the Worker and the Kolkhoz Woman who were the symbol of one of the biggest film studios of a certain Eastern power” (*The Last Hero*, Pratchett 2003, p. 134). This reference to the logo of the Soviet studios Mosfilm, where the two hammer-and-sickle-wielding symbols indeed occupy a thoroughly heroic pose, would be immediately recognisable to the generation that grew up under Soviet influence, and prior to the arrival of the Marvel franchise.

All of the above listed examples, creative and funny in their own right as they are, do not go beyond the traditional scope of a translator's footnote aiming to subsidise what is missing in the target culture or to supplement the general understanding of an expected audience. However, Kantůrek's input grows beyond these confines, especially in the later *Discworld* books, where he stops acting as a translator and becomes a co-writer directly contributing to the text. A good example of these additions can be found in *The Thief of Time/Zloděj času*, which uses for its plot Pratchett's lifelong fascination with the chaos theory and contains the following statement: “Nine-tenths of the universe is the knowledge of the position and direction of everything in the other tenth. [...] It is unaccounted for because it is doing the accounting for the rest of it, and you cannot see the back of your own head” (Pratchett 1994, p. 2) The line is glossed with Pratchett's own, joke-adding footnote: “Except in very *small* universes” (emphasis in original). To this, Kantůrek adds in a footnote-to-footnote: “And at the barber's” (Pratchett 2002, p. 5). Not all of these comments complement Pratchett's writing; at times, they directly contradict the author, such as a footnote in *Pátý elefant*, where Pratchett makes up a list of fictional, vaguely Germanic-sounding meals suitable for the (gothic) Germany-inspired Überwald, such as “noggi – Buckwheat dumplings stuffed with stuff”. Kantůrek, dissatisfied with this seeming lack of creativity in Pratchett's food-related inventions, adds the following footnote: “While I hold the author in the highest possible regard, I think it would have sufficed to go through one good Eastern European cookbook and he would have found far more wonderful recipes and meals than he was able to make up in this case” (*The Fifth Elephant*, Pratchett 2001, p. 151).

Another feature of these additional footnotes are Kantůrek's own anecdotes, showing the human being with interests and occupations of his own behind the translations. Perhaps the funniest can be found in the following scene in *Zimoděj*, where a bookseller is tasked to find a book based on a particularly unhelpful description. Kantůrek's footnote uses this occasion to add a story from his own career as a bookseller, where a customer buying a

book titled *The Life and Times on the Court of king Rudolf II* asked whether the store stocked the first volume as well (*Wintersmith*, Pratchett 2007b, pp. 222-223). At other times, Kantůrek shares his own problems with snoring when commenting on a character with a similar affliction (*Wintersmith/Zimoděj*, Pratchett 2007b, p. 246), wonders if Pratchett saw an iconic Czech comedy about the Slavic water spirit *vodník* (Pratchett 2005, p. 181), or adds the following to a character named Locomotion/Lokomotiva in *Pod parou*: “You find that funny? Then don’t. The latest statistics show that Czech baby prams carry [...]” (*Raising Steam*, Pratchett 2015a, p. 204), followed by a list of increasingly more exotic sounding names found in recent birth censuses. Perhaps the most interesting of these additional footnotes can be found in *Obléknu si pŕlnoc*, where Kantůrek not only comments on Pratchett’s work, but directly mentions their connection in real life. Addressing a joke that rests on a reference to the song Long Tall Sally by Little Richard, Kantůrek’s lengthy footnote begins with: “It is with real pleasure that I note that this name proves that Mr Pratchett and I were born within a week of each other. It is a reference to a song that accompanied us throughout our lives, and is older than Beatles or Elvis Presley, although it was sung by both of them” (*I Shall Wear Midnight*, Pratchett 2011a, pp. 230-231). The footnote continues with mentions of other musicians who performed the song throughout the years, including various Czech singers and Kantůrek himself. Footnotes such as these remind the reader that both the author and the translator are living human beings with dates of birth and preferred music. At the same time, by consciously placing himself alongside Pratchett, without any of the usual hierarchies of the secondary nature of translation, Kantůrek elevates the role of a translator and places him on equal footing with the author himself.

## 5. Conclusion

Far from the derivative, counting-inevitable-losses discourse that surrounds translation in common parlance, Kantůrek’s translation elevates the original source text so that it can not only stand proudly alongside the original version, but sometimes even surpass or supplement its original brilliance. As the by necessity short overview of the 379 footnotes he adds to the *Discworld* novels attests, these range from the educational to the uselessly cryptic, they showcase the breadth of the translator’s research, cleverly adjust for cultural variables between the two source and target countries, and enter into conversation with the author himself, whether to correct, complement or simply acknowledge the presence of two authorial voices in these translations. At the same time, Kantůrek’s tongue-in-cheek sarcastic tone in these footnotes matches remarkably well with Pratchett’s own writing,

creating a translation that is well suited for both the Czech fantasy-reading public, and the Czech sense of humour. This symbiosis is also visible on the strong Czech local presence of the Pratchett fandom, a fact which interestingly impacted the author's own work. According to an interview with his Czech publisher, Pratchett loved visiting the Czech Republic and exploring its culture and folklore, which trickled down into his novels – the inclusion of golems, which are traditionally tied with stories of Prague's Jewish quarter, is supposedly one of these influences (Aktuálně.cz 2013). This symbiotically connected relationship between author and translator and through them of the source and target cultures enhance the reading experience and create translations that gain, rather than lose in the process of linguistic transfer.

Although the reasons for why Kantůrek included such a wealth of additional and highly original footnotes was likely a combination of his own creativity, the playfulness of the source text and the relative lack of editorial constraints, they become a fascinating study on the value of the translator's voice from a translation studies perspective. Kantůrek's footnotes use a traditionally undervalued paratextual elements and utilise them in order to reinsert the person of the translator back into the text, in ways that are entertaining enough that very few readers would willingly forego reading them. The "transitional field" of the paratext and the borderland of the footnote (Genette 1997, p. 319) become coveted instances where the reader has an opportunity to form a kind of parasocial relationship with the translator as well as with the author, blurring the lines in the traditional two-way exchanges between author, translator and reader and replacing it with a communication triad. Kantůrek's example opens up a broad range of further possibilities for similar stepping up from the shadows of invisibility and highlighting both the hard work and considerable creative abilities that are inevitably part of a good translator's toolkit. It is no surprise that it is in fantasy where this kind of experimental dialogue found its place, as the genre is by definition supporting creativity in both content and form. However the footnote's adaptability and well-accepted presence in both literary fiction and non-fiction works could make them into the ideal vehicle for raising the translator's voice from its traditional obscurity and to elevate it so that it stands alongside the author's in equal regard.

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