

# The Design History of Robert M. Pirsig's Books

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**Abstract:** The two books of Robert M. Pirsig have been milestones for Design Theory through the development of a Metaphysics of Quality. This article analyses the design history of his two books that have been in print for more than 40 years. The editions range from cheap mass-market paperbacks to gilded collectors' hardcovers. The underlying challenge for all book designs has been to capture Pirsig's philosophical ideas in a visually attractive and meaningful way. This study also shows the publishing market consolidation. The book has been published and printed by many imprints and printers that have lost their independence. This results in a confusing number of reprints that occasionally fail to receive unique ISBN numbers. Moreover, the advertised editions are often not represented with their accurate cover design, which can be traced back to imprecise stock photo databases.

**Keywords:** book design, book illustration, publishing, design history

## Data availability statement:

The data for this article is available at <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/U9WX5>

## Introduction

Last year Robert Maynard Pirsig died aged 88 at his home in Maine. His work on the Metaphysics of Quality (MOQ) influenced the discipline of Design like few others had. He gave us the key to defining a true and unique Design Science by focusing it on Quality. It thereby is no longer succumbed to engineering that focuses on the objects being designed or succumbed to psychology that focuses on the people either creating or using the objects. Design works at the intersection of objects and subjects, and the MOQ defines this intersection as Quality. It would go beyond this article to fully explain the relationship between MOQ and Design and the interested reader might consult Bartneck (2009) for further details. The importance of this book extends far beyond the field of Design. Its impact on science and society has been documented (see chapter 8 and 9 in DiSanto and Steele 1990).

Robert Pirsig introduced MOQ in his famous book *Zen And The Art Of Motorcycle Maintenance – An Inquiry Into Values* (Pirsig 1974b), which is held to be one of the most widely read philosophy books. About 100,000 copies have been sold each year for the last 20 years (Essinger and Gurr 2018). Pirsig made his philosophical ideas accessible by embedding them into an autobiographical storyline and interweaving them in a travel journal of a motorcycle trip he took with his son Chris and two friends across the United States in 1968. After being flooded with readers' request for further explanations, he wrote the sequel *Lila – An Inquiry Into Morals* (Adams 2005) to further elaborate on his MOQ (Pirsig 1991). The Guggenheim Foundation provided Pirsig with a grant to support the writing of *Lila*. Pirsig himself considered *Lila* to be the more important book, although it never reached the public success of his first book.

Millions of copies in many editions and reprints have been published over the years. In this study I intend to document the design history of Pirsig's books. Since the books are partly autobiographical, it is also necessary to connect the story and the design of the books to his life. This is surprisingly difficult for such an acclaimed author, since Pirsig lived a secluded life. Only on the rarest of occasions did he agree to an interview or a public appearance. He also refrained from writing any further books and only a few letters and lectures are available (Pirsig 1995, 2003).

As will become clear shortly, Pirsig lived an extraordinary life, in which he suffered several tragedies and hardships. The writing and publication process of his first book continued this line of misfortunes until it ended in an unexpected and overwhelming success.

## Life and work

Robert Maynard Pirsig was born on 6 September 1928 to his father Maynard Pirsig and to his mother Harriet Marie nee Sjobeck. He grew up in Minneapolis and scored 170 on the Stanford–Binet Intelligence Test at the age of 9 1/2.

He started to take freshman courses in chemistry at the University of Minnesota in 1944, aged 15, but was expelled two years later due to failing grades, immaturity and inattention to studies. He then joined the army and experienced the end of World War II in Korea. Pirsig returned to the US in 1948 and rejoined the University of Minnesota to study philosophy, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in 1950. He then enrolled at the Benares Hindu University to study oriental philosophy for 18 months before studying journalism back in Minnesota.

He left the university without another degree and married Nancy Anne James in 1954. They had two sons – Chris, born in 1956, and Theodore, born in 1958. That same year he completed his journalism studies with a master's degree and the following year began teaching English at the Montana State College in Bozeman.

His work on Quality started as he experimented with new teaching methods for English composition. He continued his education towards a PhD in 1961 at the University of Chicago in the "Analysis of Ideas and Study of Methods" program, with the goal to focus his work on Quality.

His deep dedication to Quality while working as a teacher at the University of Illinois resulted in a complete mental breakdown towards the end of 1961. Pirsig was hospitalised but returned to his family a year later before being hospitalised again in 1963 at the Veterans Hospital in Minneapolis. This time he was stripped of his civil rights by a court order and exposed to Electro-Convulsive Shock Therapy, which

largely erased his memories and personality. He began his recovery and started working as a technical writer.

The idea of writing a book, possibly about Quality, stayed with him and he submitted a book proposal to 122 publishers in 1968. Twenty-two expressed an initial interest and Pirsig started to work with James Landis of William Morrow on his first book *Zen And The Art Of Motorcycle Maintenance – An Inquiry Into Values* (ZAMM). In the same year he took a motorcycle trip with his son Chris and two friends, which became one of the three storylines in the book. The second storyline was based on his experiences starting from teaching at Montana State University until his breakdown in 1961. The third storyline was a philosophical essay on Quality which was his intellectual goal leading up to his breakdown.

He continued to write throughout the next years, with several drafts being written and discarded. The writing took place during the early morning hours, while he kept his full-time day job as a technical writer. The manuscript was completed in 1973 and published a year later.

Pirsig and his wife learnt how to sail and he bought a sail boat. In 1975 he took the boat down the Hudson River to New York and then further down the Atlantic coast to Miami. The section of this trip between Kingston (New York) and Sandy Hook, Horseshoe Cove, (Highlands of Navesink) became the basis for the storyline in his second book *Lila – An Inquiry into Morals* (Lila), which he starts working on that same year. In 1976, Pirsig met Wendy Kimball, a freelance journalist, and they continued to live together on the boat. Pirsig and his wife Nancy divorced in 1978 and their son Chris was murdered on 17 November 1979 near Haight/Octavia in San Francisco.

Pirsig and Wendy subsequently sailed across the Atlantic and remained in Europe, where their daughter Nell was born in 1981. Four years later, the family returned to the US for Nell to start kindergarten. In 1991 the first edition of *Lila* was published but Pirsig and his family were by then becoming increasingly private, although Pirsig gave a few interviews and attended two conferences. On 24 April 2017, he died at his home in Maine.

## Definitions

The printing technology and the book have evolved dramatically during the past decades. From Pirsig's first book in 1974 to today's available books, the production methods, the publishers and the printers have all changed. It is therefore necessary to define the terms used in this article to talk about the books.

The *publisher* is the organisation which holds the copyright or licence to the book and which oversees their production and distribution. Pirsig's books were originally published by William Morrow and Company, but they have been licensed for printing to many other publishers, including Bantam or Alma Books. A considerable consolidation of publishers occurred in the past decades and most smaller publishers were bought or merged with competitors, resulting in five large publishing houses: Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster, Hachette Book Group and Macmillan.

While the ownership of the publishing houses shifted, the brands often remained intact and the publishers often refer to them as *imprints*. Penguin Random House, for example, maintains nearly 250 imprints, such as Penguin Books, Bantam and Vintage Books.

The exact history of the mergers and purchases is far too convoluted to disentangle them in this study. What is more important is to notice that several different publishing houses published Pirsig's books under different imprints. A publisher might use external *printers* to produce the books. With Pirsig's books only sometimes are external printers explicitly mentioned, such as Cox & Wyman Ltd or Clays Ltd. In other instances, the printer is only named as an acronym in the *printer's key* (see Figure 1), such as OPM referring to Offset Paperback Manufacturers, which is owned by the Bertelsmann Printing Group.

05 06 07 08 09 ♦/RRD 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

Figure 1: *Printer's key*. This key refers to a 3<sup>rd</sup> impression was printed by RR Donnelley in 2005

Publishers print books in batches often referred to as *impressions*. The same printing plates were reused to simply produce more copies of the same book. The impression of a book can be deduced from the *printer's key*, which consists of a line of numbers on the book's *copyright page*. As a rule of thumb, the lowest number in the printer's key identifies the impression of the book (see Figure 1). With the arrival of digital printing, the use of the printer's key has fallen out of fashion.

In this study I distinguish between *editions* of Pirsig's book. These editions show significant differences in terms of design and content. An edition might, for example, feature a new cover and foreword. In most cases, a new edition also has a new International Standard Book Number (ISBN), but this is not always the case. The original 1974 edition of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, for example, shares its ISBN number with its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition published in 1999.

Books usually first come to the market as *hardcovers* with a dust jacket, followed later by cheaper *paperbacks*. I do not distinguish between the hardcover and paperback version of an edition as long as the design of the book is identical. Only one book appeared as a hardcover and paperback within the same edition [21].

Table 1 shows that metadata for all editions in chronological order. For the purpose of the discussions in this article, I have given each edition a unique identification number, in square brackets, which I will refer to. The identification number matches the entry in the tables which refer to the online supplementary material.

## Source Data

For the purpose of this book I scanned the covers of almost all English editions. I digitally restored the resulting images to remove any damages and signs of use. I also colour corrected the scans and merged the front, spine and back cover into one image. I also digitised the copyright page and the first page of chapter one. The resulting images and a table with all the metadata is available at the Open Science Framework (<https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/U9WX5>).

## Design of Zen And The Art Of Motorcycle Maintenance

I have been able to identify 21 editions of this book (see Table 1). This comprises six hardcover editions, 14 paperback editions and one edition that appeared as hardcover and paperback at the same time. One of the hardcovers appeared as a limited edition and another as a special edition. I will work through these books in chronological order.

The first edition of ZAMM [1] was published in 1974 in the US by William Morrow as a hardcover with a dust jacket (see Figure 2). The book was designed by Helen Roberts while the cover was designed by Paul Bacon. The cover uses white text on a black background that is framed with a silver border. The illustration of a plant, possibly a lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*), dominates the centre of the cover. The lotus plant has a strong symbolic meaning in many Eastern religions and hence matches Pirsig's goal of connecting Eastern and Western philosophy. This merger is further emphasised by visualising the blossom as a spanner. The spanner is a standard tool for motorcycle maintenance and symbolizes rational thinking. The shape of the spanner and the shape of a lotus match in terms of their outline consisting of a slim stalk and an oval blossom. The greenery at the bottom of the illustration does not match the shape of the round lotus leaves and we have to assume some level of artistic licence.

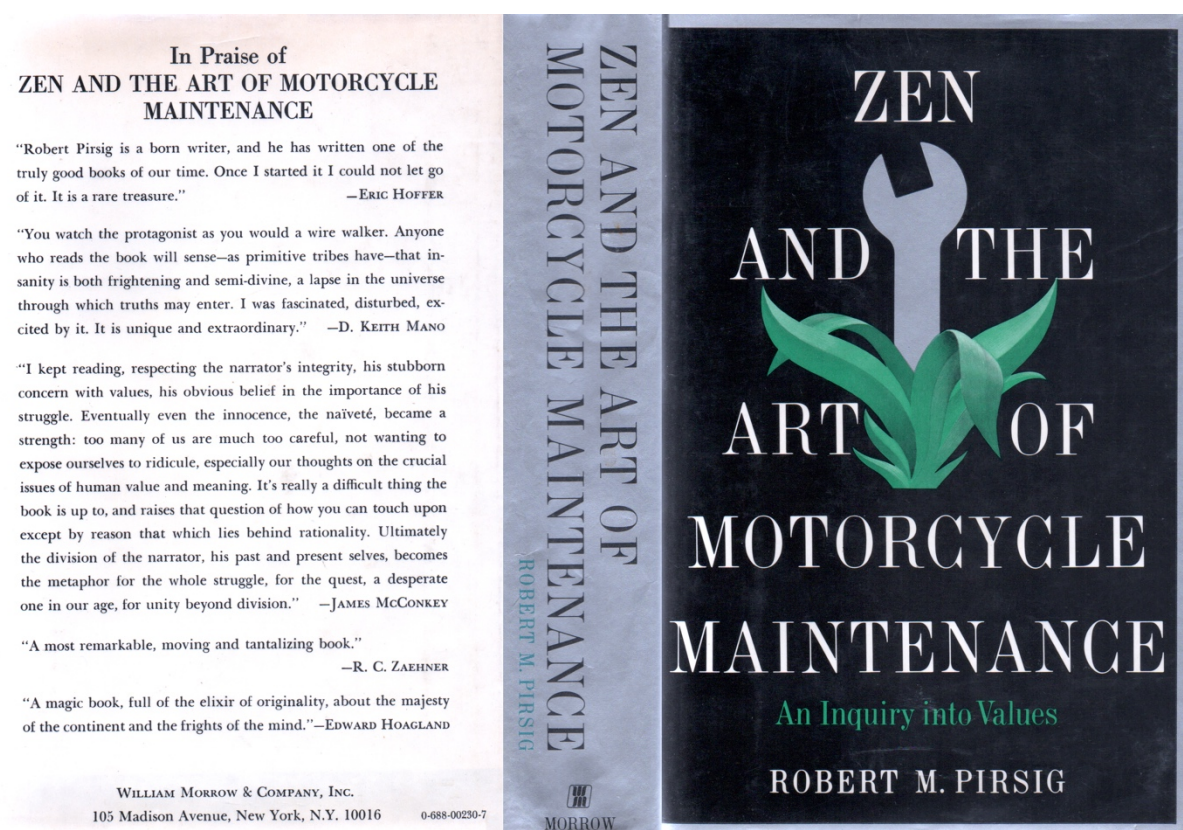


Figure 2: The original cover of ZAMM [1]

The Bodoni typeface, designed by Giambattista Bodoni (1740-1813), gives the cover a classical appearance, since this typeface design follows the aesthetical ideas of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The spine continues the silver border on which the text is set in black colour while the back features the conventional black on white text. The dust cover does not contain a photo of the author.

In a radio interview Pirsig explained that the publisher intended to market Pirsig as a mystery man (Pirsig 1974a). The typeface for the book itself is likely Times New Roman which was designed by Stanley Morison (1889-1967) in 1932 for the British newspaper *The Times*. The overall design of the cover and the book interior is very classical and elegant, even conservative. The design did not use any psychedelic art, as would have been fashionable at the time and which has been used in later editions.

Against the custom of the times, the typeface used in the book is not mentioned in the copyright page. The Library of Congress categorised the book as autobiographical,

which does not seem to do justice to the philosophical essay it contains. The Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data shown on this page omits the subtitle “An Inquiry Into Values”, while the online record of the library does include the full title<sup>1</sup>.

In the same year, The Bodley Head published the book [2] in the United Kingdom as a hardcover with a dust jacket which was printed by Redwood Burns Ltd. The interior book is identical to the US version [1], but the cover is a complete new design by John Swell. The front cover shows an ancient Greek leaning on a motorcycle in a thinking pose. His left gloved hand holds a spanner and a lotus plant is growing from his hair. The blossom is now clearly identifiable as a lotus while the shapes of the leaves remain ambiguous. The book begins with the sentence, “I can see by my watch, without taking my hand from the left grip of the cycle...”. Later in the book Pirsig even describes his gloves in great detail. Swell’s choice to fit a glove on the left hand of the Greek man hence seems appropriate.

The author’s name and the title of the book are arranged above this figure. It is interesting to note that the subtitle “An Inquiry Into Values” is omitted from the cover and the copyright page. This omission on the cover occurs in six other editions [4,12,14,15,16,17]. The cover uses the sans-serif Univers typeface designed by Adrian Frutiger (1928-2015). It was published by Deberny & Peignot in 1957. The whole front cover uses only three colours: black, yellow and green. The cover could therefore be printed by not using the CMYK process but rather a dedicated three-colour print.

The back cover shows a full-page, black-and-white photograph of Pirsig with his son Chris sitting on their Honda CB77 Super Hawk motorcycle<sup>2</sup>. The photo was taken during their 1968 trip across the US. In the previous edition [1], Pirsig remained hidden, but this cover shows him across the full page. Many books offer a photograph of the author, but this is often done on the inner flaps of their dust jacket. The motorcycle illustration shown on the front does not match that of the Honda CB77 but represents a more generic motorcycle. Swell took a more modern and personal approach to the cover design than in the previous edition [1].

A year after its initial release, Bantam Books published the first [3] in a long series of paperback editions of the book that differ mainly in their colouration [3,5,7,8]. The cover uses the initial lotus spanner illustration introduced in [1] on top. Below, the title of the book is arranged with many line breaks, resulting in a pyramid composition. The title uses the Bodoni typeface again, but this time the more accentuated Monotype Bodoni Poster Compressed version is used. The back cover uses the bold slogan - “The most explosive book you will read this year”. The back cover features a landscape illustration. A man and a child he has his arm around are standing with their backs to us in front of their motorcycle looking towards the mountains in the distance. The relationship of this illustration to Pirsig’s journey requires no further explanation. It is likely that the cover was printed on coloured paper using only black and red ink. All further colour variations of this cover can then be achieved by printing on different coloured paper. The book itself had to be typeset in a new design due to the smaller dimensions of the book, which results in a page count of 406.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://lccn.loc.gov/73012275>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/cycle-zen-art-and-motorcycle-maintenance-comes-smithsonian-180973836/>



The first UK paperback version was published in 1976 by Corgi [4], an imprint of Transworld Publishers, and it was printed by Hazel Watson & Viney Ltd. Transworld Publishers was established as the British division of Bantam Books. The interior uses the same design as its American predecessor [3] and even explicitly mentions the Times typeface for the book's text. The cover reverses the spanner-lotus relationship. This time the spanner is the root of the lotus plant and the illustration is placed on the left side of the cover. The blossom is now more clearly identifiable as a lotus. The spanner has two casting impressions. The 5/16W refers to the 5/16 inch British Standard Whitworth (BSW) size while the 3/8BSF impression refers to the 3/8 inch British Standard Fine, which is a fine-pitch alternative to the BSW. These imperial sizes were, and possibly still are, widely used in motorcycle and automotive maintenance in the UK. Honda, however, is a Japanese company which uses the metric system. Moreover, in the book Pirsig describes how he is using his metric sockets and box-ends. The illustration would have been closer to the content of the book if a metric spanner had been depicted. The cover is split into two columns with the illustration on the left and the typography on the right.

The title omits the book's subtitle again and makes the even bolder claim, "The most explosive book you will ever read!", on the back cover. It almost appears that the British editions seemed to be caught in an arms race with the American editions in praising the book.

In 1979 William Morrow released its own paperback version [6] under its imprint Quill. The book design is the same as their hardcover edition [1]. Only the cover was updated slightly, with new endorsements on the back and an adapted layout on the spine.

Two years later Bantam published a New Age Edition of its paperback series [7]. The main difference is the colouration of the front cover to pink and the New Age Books logo on the back. The New Age Books logo features a rainbow illustration which will have required a full CMYK colour printing process. It is interesting to note that the publisher decided to market the book as "new age" instead of "philosophy" or "autobiography". Given that the New Age Movement is associated with many irrational and unscientific ideas, it does seem inappropriate to link these ideas to Pirsig's chase of the ghosts of rationality. The interior has a complete new design that reduced the page count to 380. The book was printed by Offset Paperback Manufacturers (OPM) which is owned today by the Bertelsmann Printing Group.

To mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the book in 1984, William Morrow published an anniversary edition as a paperback [10] and as a limited edition [9]. The later was limited to 1000 copies and each was signed by the author. Pirsig wrote a new afterword, which tells not only the story of Chris' murder, but also the story of Nell's birth. The afterword thereby offers a rare insight into Pirsig's private life. The front cover is identical to [1], while the spine has some similarity to [6]. It does exclude the author's name and features the William Morrow logo instead of the Quill logo. The back cover only differs from [1] by the spacing of the last two lines of text, which is due to the smaller size of the cover. The book interior design is again by Helen Roberts using the original layout [1].

In the same year, Bantam updated its paperback with only minor changes to the cover [8], and even the colouration remained the same as the 1981 edition [7]. The New Age Books logo is now also included on the spine and on the top left of the front cover.

In 1989 a Black Swan edition was printed in the UK [11] that is very similar to the Corgi edition of 1976 [4]. Black Swan is another imprint of Transworld Publishers Ltd

mentioned above. The two columns design is now even more pronounced by introducing a colour contrast. The illustration remains unchanged on a blue background, while the right column is now blue text on a white background. The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition afterword of the author introduced in [8,9] is explicitly advertised on the front cover. The back makes again bold claims, this time in the form of an endorsement by *Newsweek*: “The most explosive detective story of high ideas in years”. The interior is a completely new design using the Mallard typeface. The book was set by Colset Private Limited (Singapore) and printed by The Guernsey Press Co. Ltd., located in Guernsey on the Channel Islands. No further information about the typeface, the typesetter nor the printing company is available. The *Guernsey Press* is a newspaper today and it is unclear when and how they were involved in printing books.

In the same year, Vintage Publishing, an imprint of Penguin Random House, released another paperback version [12]. The cover was illustrated by Dirk Van Dooren and the cover was designed by The Senate with photographs taken by Michael Ormerod. The cover features a large ball bearing on top and a photograph of a motorcyclist on an open road. It is unlikely a photograph of Pirsig and Chris since Ormerod was specifically mentioned on the cover and he was certainly not part of Pirsig's original tour. The book was printed by Cox & Wyman Ltd. which is today part of CPI Books. The book interior was set in Sabon Typeface by Falcon Typographic Art Ltd in a complete new design, which resulted in a 424-page book.

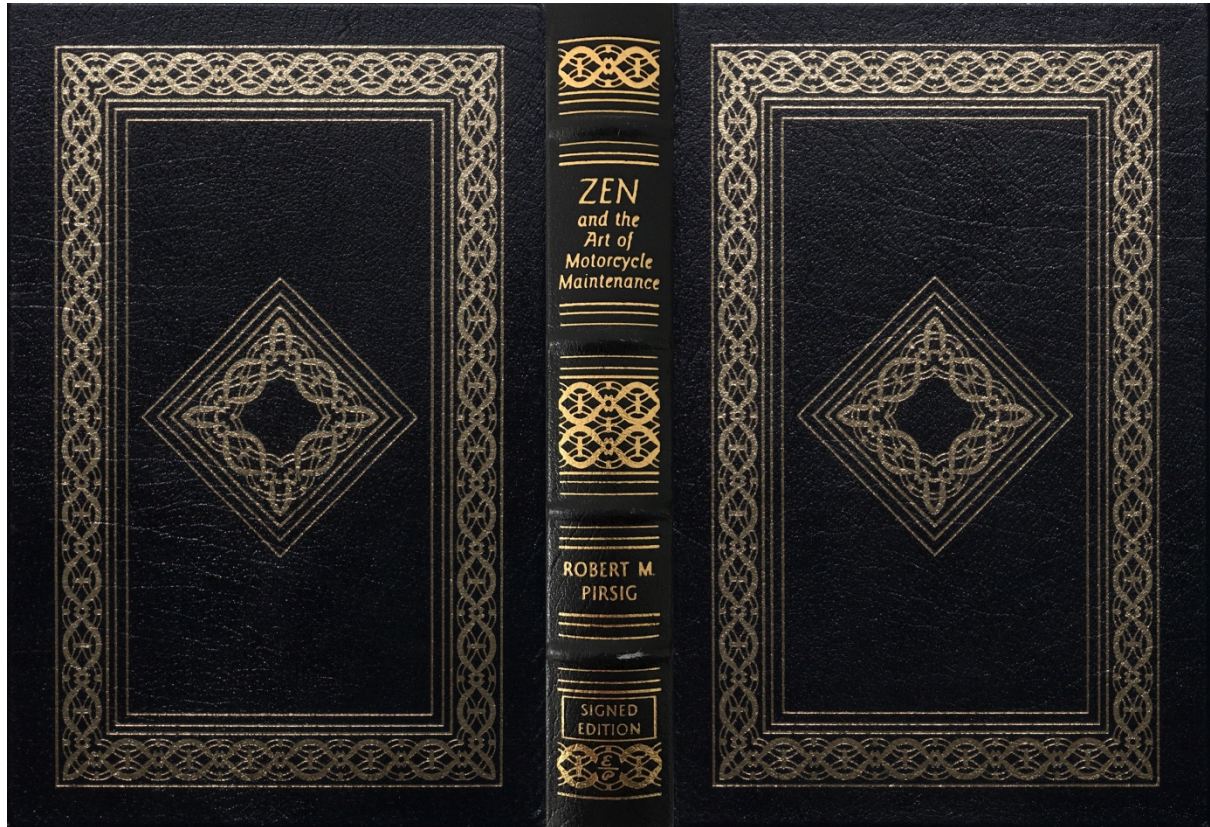
In 1999 William Morrow and Company published a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition as a hardcover [13]. The cover is very similar to the original 1974 edition [1]. Only a callout for the anniversary edition and a notification about a new introduction have been added. The spine uses a new layout that is based on the front cover design. The back cover now also uses the black background and silver border as seen on the front cover. The interior design is identical to that of the original edition [1] with only the addition of the new foreword. The last pages of chapter 31 start to show parts of the text set in a sans-serif typeface. The complete last chapter 32 is set in the same sans-serif typeface. This could be explained by the potential degeneration of the original printing plates which were only partially replaced. It is unclear why the publisher decided to use a completely different typeface. A replacement with the original Times New Roman would have easily been possible.

Vintage Publishing released a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary paperback in the same year that featured an extensive reading guide [14]. This guide included an introduction text, email correspondence between Pirsig and his editor James Landis, and an interview with the author. This reading guide is not included in the hardcover edition of the same year [13]. The interior is a completely new design that resulted in 432 pages, including the reading guide. The book was printed by the CPI Group and Randy Ruten created the cover illustration. For the first time, the cover is designed in the psychedelic style that was popular during the period of Pirsig's original motorcycle tour in San Francisco. The ornamented title on the cover is warped similarly to the work of Wes Wilson's famous posters. The cover uses a high colour contrast between the red title text and dark blue background. The spine features a scaled down cover illustration besides a more traditional title and author text. The back cover shows endorsements in white serif typeface on the dark blue background.

In 2001 Easton Press published a luxurious leather-bound collector's edition [15]. This edition was signed by the author and contains an authenticity certificate. The book is accented in 22-carat gold and printed on archival paper with gilded edges (see Figure 3). The title and author is only printed on the spine. The front and back cover show golden



ornaments in a frieze pattern. The interior of the book uses the original design by Helen Roberts [1]. This book does not contain an ISBN number and it is unclear how many copies of the book were printed. Unlike other special editions, these books are not serialised. A customer representative from Eason Press confirmed that the publisher does not release the number of copies printed.



*Figure 3: Collectors' Edition by Easton Press [15]*

Vintage Publishing released a new paperback edition in 2004 [16] that shares its ISBN number with the 1999 edition [14]. Furthermore, this book features the same readers' guide and has the same page numbers. The interior is identical to [14] and hence this book edition could be considered a reprint. The printer, however, was Clays Ltd, one of the largest printers in the UK at that time. Clays was sold to Elcograf in 2018, which is another indicator of the strong market consolidation in the printing industry. The cover shows the shadow of a lotus blossom in the lower half, on which a psychedelically styled title is shown (see ). The solid purple background and the sans-serif author's name on the top right are in contrast a very modern and simple design. The spine and back cover also follow a very sober, modern and simplistic style.

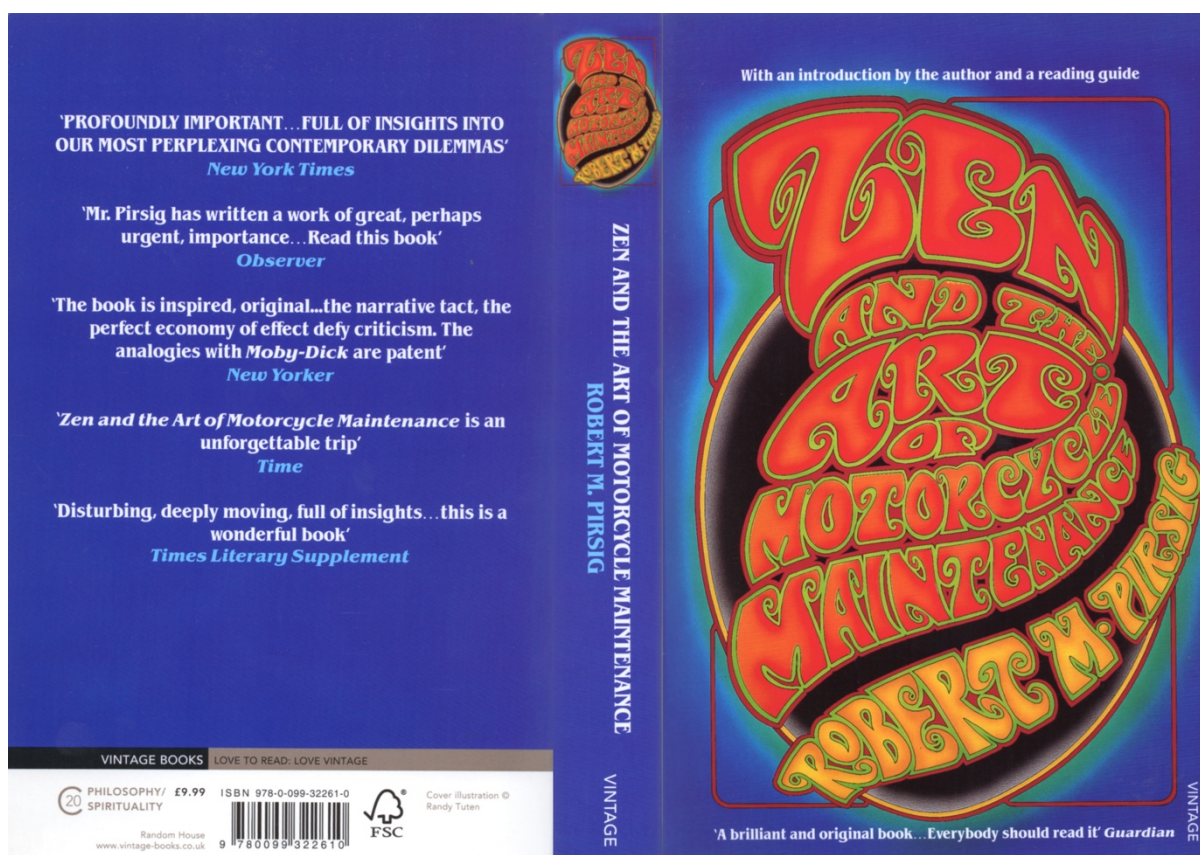


Figure 4: A psychedelic design of ZAMM [16]

Vintage Publishing released the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition in the same year [17]. The cover design is dominated by a photograph of a vintage motorcycle that is not a Honda CB77 Superhawk that Pirsig used for his trip. The photograph is colourised in red and splits across a grid of three by five tiles. The title of the book is positioned at the very top of the cover while the author's name is below the illustration. The back cover uses some tiles from the front and mixes them with blocks of text that describe the book's content. The content of the book and its design is identical to [16]. The book was also printed by Clays Ltd. It is unclear why Vintage Publishing released two paperback editions in the same year with identical content.

In 2005 HarperCollins published a paperback edition of the book that was printed by RR Donnelley [18]. The book appeared in the Harper Perennial Modern Classics series. The cover was designed by Mary Schuck using Paul Bacon's original illustration. The design of the cover uses the Monotype's Century Gothic sans-serif typeface, which was released in 1991. This geometric typeface, combined with the centred composition of the text and the use of only two muted colors, gave the cover a very modern and simple appearance. The interior uses the same readers' guide introduced in [14] but with a complete new interior design that resulted in a 464-page count using the Garamond typeface.

HarperCollins published a hardcover in the same year which was again printed by RR Donnelley [19]. The copyright page of this book shows the same ISBN number as [17] while the cover shows a different ISBN number. Furthermore, many sources list Perfection Learning as the publisher of this book while the copyright page lists HarperCollins. Perfection Learning does not seem to be an imprint of HarperCollins. It is a rather a publisher that specialises in library editions.



The interior design is identical to [18]. It is conceivable that Perfection Learning target libraries with this edition and reused the design of [18]. The cover was designed by Marc Cohen. The cover is similar in style as [1] but uses the Bodoni Condensed typeface. The name of the author is set in all lowercase. The spine has a white stripe on black background across the book. The title of the book is set in a sans-serif typeface in all-capitals while the author's name is set in the serif typeface Bodoni in all lower-case. The back cover is split into two columns. The left column uses white text on a black background while the right reverses this colour schema. The left column shows endorsements while the right introduces the author. The thick cardboard and robust binding makes this book a good candidate for libraries.

In 2006 HarperCollins published another paperback edition under their Harper Torch imprint [20]. The cover shows Paul Beacon's original illustration while the whole cover uses a modern sans-serif typeface, possibly Helvetica Neue, using all capital letters. This typeface was published in 1983 by Linotype. The style of the cover is very simplistic and modern using turquoise colours. The book was printed in the US by the QGM printer. It is unclear what the acronym QGM in the printers' line stands for. The new interior design results in 540 pages, which makes this edition one of the smallest in terms of height and width, but it is much thicker than earlier mass-market editions.

William Morrow and Company published a hardcover and paperback edition in 2008 [21] with identical covers. They were designed by Milan Bozic using Beacon's original illustration as a starting point. The illustration is now reduced to an outline in light green on a darker green uniform background. The title and author's name are all set in the Futura typeface using all capitals. Only the subtitle "An Inquiry into Values" uses the title case. Futura was designed by Paul Renner in 1927 and is a prime example of a geometric sans-serif typeface. The cover design is even more simplistic than [18].

The back cover does not even contain any endorsement but a single quote from the book set in all capitals: "THE SOLUTIONS ALL ARE SIMPLE ... AFTER YOU'VE ALREADY ARRIVED AT THEM. BUT THEY'RE SIMPLE ONLY WHEN YOU ALREADY KNOW WHAT THEY ARE". Towards the end of the book the typesetting does become unusual as first seen in [13]. As of page 407, sans-serif text is mixed in with the serif typeface of the rest of the book. As of page 409, the remaining text is all set in sans-serif. This may indicate that the original printing plates had worn out and that a few new ones were created. In 2008 digital printing technology was already widely available and it would have been easy for William Morrow and Company to design a complete new layout for the book's interior.

ID	Year	Publisher	Hardcover ISBN	Paperback ISBN	Edition	Width	Height	Depth	Pages	Design	URL
1	1974	William Morrow and Company	9780688002305			14.2	21.4	4.1	411	1	<a href="https://osf.io/djevrm/">https://osf.io/djevrm/</a>
2	1974	The Bodley Head Ltd	9780370103389			14.5	22.3	3.6	412	1	<a href="https://osf.io/ky6xb/">https://osf.io/ky6xb/</a>
3	1975	Bantam Books		9780553207088		10.5	17.7	2.3	406	2	<a href="https://osf.io/5twz3/">https://osf.io/5twz3/</a>
4	1976	Corgi		9780552101660		10.5	17.8	2.8	416	2	<a href="https://osf.io/dnb24/">https://osf.io/dnb24/</a>
5	1976	Bantam		9780553103106		10.5	17.5	2.8	406	2	<a href="https://osf.io/2f4y7/">https://osf.io/2f4y7/</a>
6	1979	Quill William Morrow		9780688052300		13.5	20.8	3.1	418	1	<a href="https://osf.io/b3rzj/">https://osf.io/b3rzj/</a>
7	1981	Bantam Books		9780553277470	New Age Edition	10.5	17.5	2.8	380	3	<a href="https://osf.io/u9wbm/">https://osf.io/u9wbm/</a>
8	1984	Bantam Books		9780553257489		10.5	17.5	2.8	380	3	<a href="https://osf.io/6b3y7/">https://osf.io/6b3y7/</a>
9	1984	William Morrow and Company	9780688032074		10th Anniversary Edition					1	<a href="https://osf.io/tg94x/">https://osf.io/tg94x/</a>
10	1984	William Morrow and Company		9780688032074	10th Anniversary Edition	14	19.7	2.8	412	1	<a href="https://osf.io/xfu3c/">https://osf.io/xfu3c/</a>
11	1989	Black Swan		9780552993784	Black Swan Edition	12.7	19.7	2.3	416	4	<a href="https://osf.io/s7vgj/">https://osf.io/s7vgj/</a>
12	1989	Vintage Publishing		9780099786405		12.9	19.8	2.7	424	6	<a href="https://osf.io/ay8w4/">https://osf.io/ay8w4/</a>
13	1999	William Morrow and Company	9780688002305		25th Anniversary Edition	14.5	21.6	3.6	418	1	<a href="https://osf.io/8tcmh/">https://osf.io/8tcmh/</a>
14	1999	Vintage Publishing		9780099322610	25th Anniversary Edition	12.9	19.9	2.7	432	5	<a href="https://osf.io/58pue/">https://osf.io/58pue/</a>
15	2001	Easton Press			Collectors Edition	20.32	22.86	3.4	418	1	<a href="https://osf.io/pq9td/">https://osf.io/pq9td/</a>
16	2004	Vintage Publishing		9780099786405		12.8	19.8	2.7	432	5	<a href="https://osf.io/mhevt/">https://osf.io/mhevt/</a>
17	2004	Vintage Publishing		9780099598169	40th Anniversary Edition	12.8	19.8	2.8	404	5	<a href="https://osf.io/qv9bc/">https://osf.io/qv9bc/</a>
18	2005	HarperCollins		9780060839871	Harper Perennial Modern Classics	13.5	20.3	2.8	464	7	<a href="https://osf.io/h4sne/">https://osf.io/h4sne/</a>
19	2005	HarperCollins		9780756902407	Perfection Learning	13.5	20.7	3.2	430	7	<a href="https://osf.io/kzhfd/">https://osf.io/kzhfd/</a>
20	2006	Harper Torch		9780060589462		10.5	17.1	3.1	540	8	<a href="https://osf.io/7fspt/">https://osf.io/7fspt/</a>
21	2008	William Morrow and Company	9780062008930	9780061673733		14.6	21.6	3.5	418	1	<a href="https://osf.io/mexsg/">https://osf.io/mexsg/</a>

Table 1: Editions Of Zen And The Art Of Motorcycle Maintenance

## Design of Lila

There are currently nine editions of *Lila – An Inquiry Into Morals*. Four of them are hardcovers and five are paperbacks. Two of the hardcovers are limited editions with slip cases. The cover designs will be presented in chronological order.

*Lila* was first published in 1991 in three hardcover editions. Bantam Press, an imprint of Transworld Publishers, had its UK edition printed by Mackays of Chatham [1]. It was set in the Bembo typeface that was released in 1928 by Monotype. This results in a page count of 418 pages.

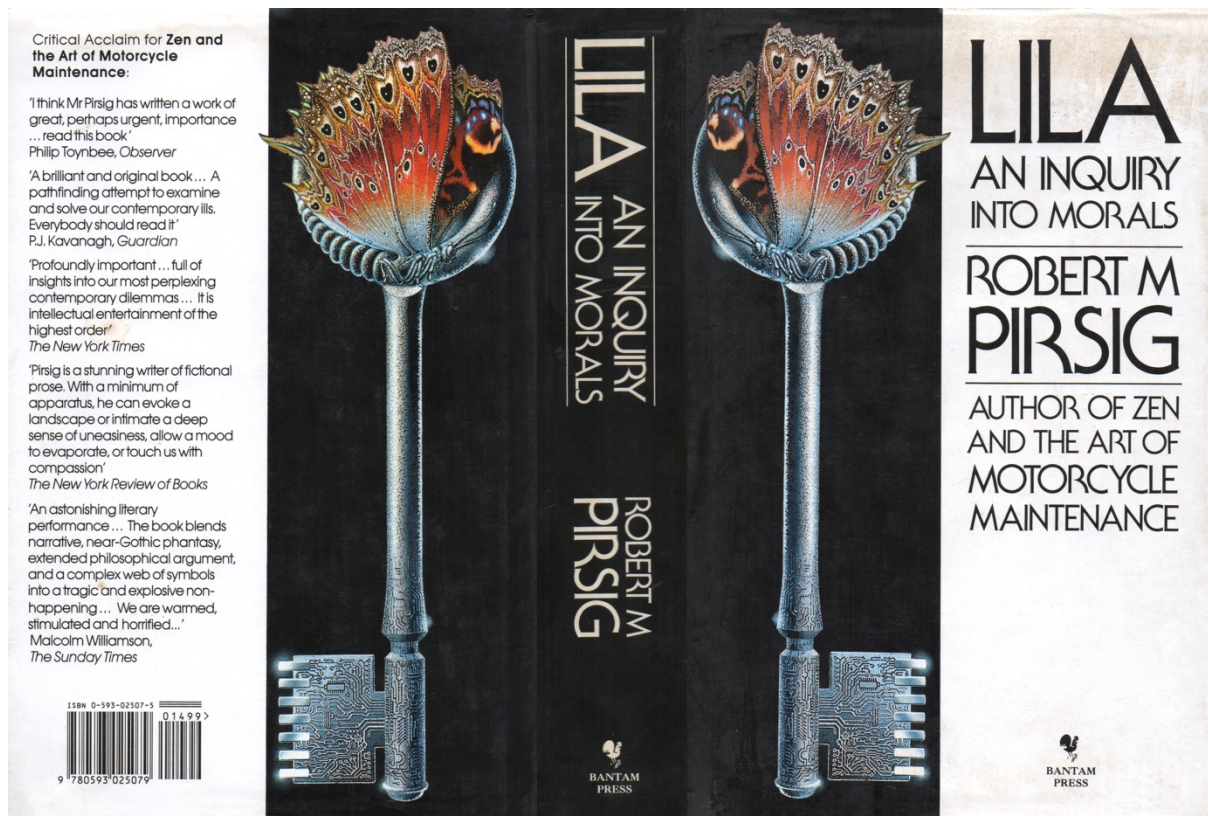


Figure 5: The original cover of *Lila* [1]

The cover was designed by Bill Gregory, showing an illustration of a key on the left that morphs into a butterfly at its bow (see Figure 5). There is no clear match between the illustration and common butterfly species in North America, but with a bit of artistic licence the butterfly could be interpreted to be an “American Lady” (*Vanessa virginiensis*). The Butterfly and Moth Information Network concluded that the image includes elements from multiple unrelated species. The bit has the texture of a printed circuit board (PCB). The grey key is set against a black background which takes half of the cover.

The symbolism in this illustration is difficult to decipher. The PCB texture could refer to the classical quality Pirsig introduced in *ZAMM*. The butterfly could represent the metamorphoses of the *Lila* character in the story, in relation to her becoming increasingly detached from reality. On the right half, the title and author’s name is set in black on a white background. The text reminds us that Pirsig is also the author of *ZAMM*. The spine has again white text on black background that continues around to the back. There, the key illustration is repeated on the right with the endorsements placed on the left.

The US edition was printed by Berryville Graphics, which belongs to the Bertelsmann Printing Group [2]. It uses a different cover and book design. The cover is dominated by the large title and author's name on a white background. In the middle a small illustration of a swallow is placed. Its outline is filled with the view on an ocean. On its horizon the silhouette of a sailing boat is shown. The photo of the sailboat is by Jeff Cook and the dust jacket design is by One Plus One Studio. The front cover again refers to Pirsig's previous ZAMM book while the back cover contains only endorsements. The spine shows only the author's name, the short title "Lila", and the swallow illustration. Claire Vaccaro designed the book interior, which results in 409 pages.

Claire Vaccaro's book design was also used for the third edition of 1991 [3]. The limited edition was signed and enumerated by the author and had a print run of 375 copies. The black cloth slipcase had a gilded swallow on the front. The book was cloth-bound with gilded lettering on the spine and a gilded swallow on the front. The edges of the book were also gilded.

In 1992 Bantam published its first UK paperback edition [4], printed by Cox & Wyman Ltd. Bantam classified the book as being part of its Black Swan editions. The cover is similar to [1] and, instead of the Bantam logo, a small black swan logo is placed at the bottom of the front cover. An endorsement from the *New York Times* also found its way on to the front cover. The illustration on the back cover was replaced with the text from the dust jacket [1] and new endorsements are shown on the left. The interior book design uses a new layout using the Melior typeface, designed by Hermann Zapf in 1952 for the Linotype company.



ID	Year	Publisher	Hardcover/ISBN	Paperback/ISBN	Edition	Width	Height	Depth	Pages	Design	URL
1	1991	Bantam Press	9780593025079			16	23.9	3.8	418	1	<a href="https://osf.io/fw5ua/">https://osf.io/fw5ua/</a>
2	1991	Bantam Press	9780553077377			15.8	24.2	3.3	409	2	<a href="https://osf.io/7ehwm/">https://osf.io/7ehwm/</a>
3	1991	Bantam			Limited Edition	15.7	24.1	3.3	409	2	<a href="https://osf.io/jejud/">https://osf.io/jejud/</a>
4	1992	Bantam Press	9780553078732		Black Swan Edition	12.7	19.7	2.6	476	3	<a href="https://osf.io/6rmah/">https://osf.io/6rmah/</a>
5	1992	Bantam Press				10.6	17.5	3.4	468	4	<a href="https://osf.io/p39z7/">https://osf.io/p39z7/</a>
6	1992	Bantam Press				10.6	17.5	3.4	468	4	<a href="https://osf.io/h698j/">https://osf.io/h698j/</a>
7	2006	Alma Books	9781846880131		Limited Edition	14.6	22.4	3.9	445	5	<a href="https://osf.io/y4tks/">https://osf.io/y4tks/</a>
8	2006	Alma Books				12.7	19.7	3	443	5	<a href="https://osf.io/venc2/">https://osf.io/venc2/</a>
9	2011	Alma Books				12.8	19.2	2.9	439	6	<a href="https://osf.io/uz5vt/">https://osf.io/uz5vt/</a>

Table 2: Editions of *Lila*

In the same year Bantam also published its US paperback [5]. It was printed by Offset Paperback Manufacturers which belongs to the Bertelsmann Group. The front cover is

similar to [2] but is now using white letters on a turquoise background. The spine uses the same elements which are now oriented vertically. The back cover features the typical endorsement but also includes the swallow illustration and the title of the book in a large typeface. The interior is different from its UK counterpart [4] and results in 468 pages. Bantam published another paperback in the same year [6] as an international edition that was printed in the US by RAD. The cover differs from [5] only in the choice of colours and the embossed text. It uses white text on a dark blue background. The interior book design is identical to [5].

Alma Books published a limited and signed hardcover edition in 2006 [7]. The book was printed by The National Press in Jordan. The black slip case features a gilded butterfly besides the title and author's name. The book itself has gilded text on the spine but is otherwise plain black. The interior has a new layout which results in a page count of 445.

Alma Books also published a paperback in the same year [8]. It was printed by Cox and Wayman Ltd. and the cover was designed by Transmission-UK. Its design is based on the gilded butterfly on black ground of the limited edition. It features a gold-like effect achieved through gradients within the lettering. The cover is, however, printed in CMYK. In the middle of a cover is a top view of a golden monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*).

Alma Books continued to publish *Lila* editions in 2011 with a paperback that was printed by CPI Cox & Wyman Ltd [9]. It includes an introduction by the author. The interior layout is almost identical to [7,8] which results in a page count of 439. Only titles for the parts have been added. The cover design is in the psychedelic style. The text on the front, spine and back combine to form an outline in the shape of a butterfly. The white, red and orange text is set against a black background.

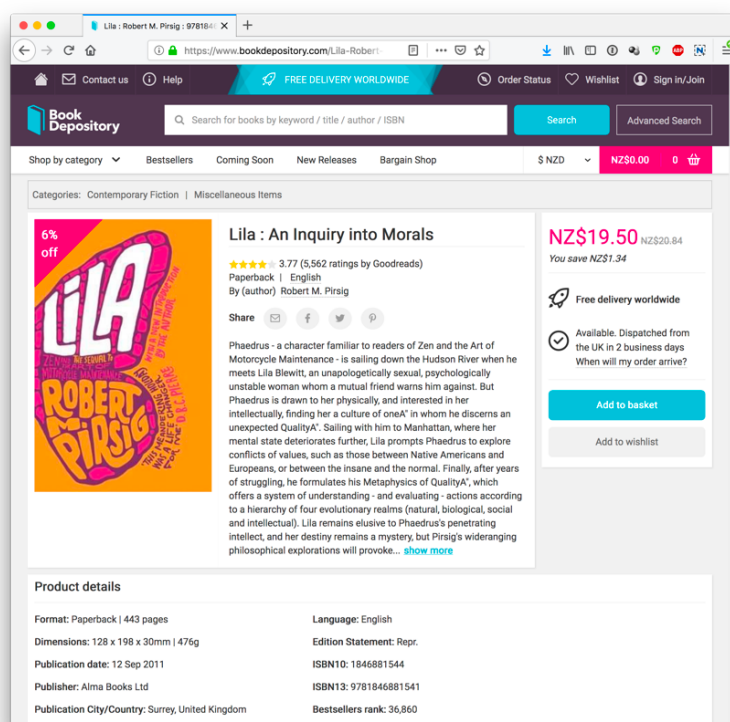


Figure 6: Screenshot of a re-seller advertising an Alma Book Edition with an unavailable cover.

Alma Books seems to advertise another edition with the same ISBN number as [9] but that has a cover that uses another colour palette (see Figure 6). An order of this book was fulfilled with a book that has a cover which is almost identical to [9]. It did not have the orange background design, but features a slightly more glossy print. Another ambiguous edition is the one with the ISBN number 9780553078732. None of the main booksellers show an actual cover for this book and the book delivered from ordering this book was usually one of the mass-market paperbacks.

## Conclusions

The two books of Robert M. Pirsig have been in print for a long time and are an ideal starting point from which to observe the changing design and publishing world. ZAMM in particular has been produced in a variety of formats - from affordable mass-market paperbacks to gilded collectors' editions.

The mass-market paperbacks are optimised for affordability and often use only colour variations for new covers. The exclusive limited and signed editions showcase the art of book making. The limited editions of ZAMM are far more expensive than similar quality editions of *Lila*, which cannot be explained by their age alone. Pirsig even claimed that *Lila* is the more important book in an NPR radio interview (Adams 2005). It would appear that ZAMM has been more of a culture bearer than *Lila* although the latter was conceived to be an explanation of the first. *Lila* certainly offers a more detailed account of the Metaphysics of Quality.

All book cover artists struggled with giving a face to Pirsig's philosophical ideas of Quality. Several approaches can be identified.

The first of these is a focus on the book's metadata such as the title, author and subtitle. Many editions omit illustrations or decorations and take a minimalistic approach. The first editions of ZAMM even omitted a photograph of the author. According to the NPR interview, the marketing approach was to present Pirsig as a mystery author (Pirsig 1974a). Given Pirsig's reclusive lifestyle, this seems to have been a fitting approach.

Secondly, a psychedelic style is used to represent the popular culture of the time in which the story takes place. While Pirsig's first motorcycle trip did indeed take place in the late 1960s, ZAMM itself was published in 1974. It contains a reflection on why the hippy movement failed. *Lila* was published in 1991 and hence the psychedelic style seems to refer more to ZAMM, which is often mentioned on the cover of *Lila*.

Thirdly, the contrast between the classical and romantic Quality is revealed by symbols of technology and nature. The wrench, circuit board and ball bearing are examples of engineering precision. The lotus plant, butterfly and swallow are instantiations of nature. The design challenge is to show not the difference between classical and romantic quality, but their union. Hence the wrench grows out of the flower plant and the key morphs into a butterfly.

Lastly, the book covers show the means of transportation used in the stories. Motorcycles are shown for ZAMM and sailing boats for *Lila*. This design choice focuses on the autobiographical account of Pirsig's journeys, but they fail to capture the essence of the Metaphysics of Quality. Pirsig in the first page of ZAMM even notes that his book is not very factual on motorcycles. The covers of this type have been rather inaccurate, since none of them show the Honda CB77 Super Hawk motorcycle that Pirsig used for his road trip. Instead, the covers show vintage motorcycles that are

difficult to identify. That may be because the publisher had to try to avoid using copyright protected material.

This study also discovered several practical challenges that are possibly based on the changing book economy. Many of the publishers and printers that released Pirsig's books have lost their independence and have become imprints of ever bigger media conglomerates. The complex web of mergers and takeovers is difficult to follow and is a sign of the dramatic market consolidation that took place. William Morrow and Company, the original publisher of the books, was founded in 1926 and acquired by Scott Foresman in 1967. It was then sold to Hearst Corporation in 1981 and News Corp in 1999. Today William Morrow is an imprint of HarperCollins which is one of the big five publishers. The publishers mentioned on the cover or the copyright page are therefore often no longer active as a separate entity.

The ever-changing publishing world also resulted in the book being sold by different publishers in different editions, but with identical International Standard Book Number (ISBN) numbers. This defeats the purpose of the ISBN numbers as being a unique identifier. This ambiguity makes tracing the editions challenging, in particular since many resellers use stock photography covers that do not represent the actual covers of the books.

Often sellers did not bother to accurately identify their books. Several orders made for the purpose of this article resulted in the delivery of the wrong editions. The most challenging edition was the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary limited edition of ZAMM [9], which is only available in the second-hand market for at least \$US400. The only library holding this book is the Sonoma State University Library, which stores a copy in its rare book collection. Unfortunately, the library has been unable to provide high resolution scans of the book and neither is it able to make it available via an interloan.

## Limitations

This study only considered the English language version of the books and an analysis of the many other language versions would certainly be an interesting topic of investigation. Additional funding would be necessary to acquire the necessary editions.

It would have been ideal to include the artwork directly in this manuscript but tracing the copyrights of all the editions across the maze of publishers and imprints exceeds the ability of the author. All the book covers, slipcases, copyright pages and the first text page are therefore archived at the Open Science Framework Repository<sup>3</sup>. The artwork was carefully scanned and digitally restored.

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