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Paul Maar's Sams: a Revolutionary Bestseller in German Children's Literature and its Polish Rendition

Abstract: Paul Maar (born in 1937) is one of the most important modern German writers for children and young people. He is widely known for his best-selling series of books about Sams (1973) – a strange creature – a mixture of a child, a monkey and a pig that can grant wishes. Sams is an incorporation of anarchy and playfulness and in this way resembles Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Langstrumpf, but first of all it refers to E. T. A. Hoffmann's fantastic tale "The strange child" (1817). Hoffmann's and Paul Maar's stories reveal a lot of similarities and both are revolutionary as far as the methods of children's education are concerned. Both underline the importance of play, creativity and freedom for children's development.

The first book about Sams was translated into Polish in 2009, more than 35 years after its German premiere. The Polish version was probably too late to be able to play a similarly revolutionary role. The connection to E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Strange Child" could also not be noticed as its Polish rendition was published even later – in 2014 (translated by the author of the paper). But the shape of Polish translation can also be one of the reasons why Sams did not gain a comparable popularity as the original story. Polish Sams – due to some modifications in the translation – is a much more well-behaved and disciplined creature than the anarchic and playful German Sams.

Keywords: children's literature translation studies, Paul Maar, intertextuality in translation

Paul Maar (born in 1937) is one of the most important German writers for children and young people. The fact that nine schools in Germany bear his name shows how popular Paul Maar is in his homeland as a children's book author. He has been given many awards including the German Youth Literature Prize, the Austrian State Prize and the Brothers Grimm Prize.

His most recognizable work is a series about the Sams ("Slurb" in English) – a strange, cheeky creature that can fulfill one's wishes. Maar has written eight

Sams stories so far: the first one was published in 1973 (*Eine Woche voller Samstage*) and the last one in 2015 (*Ein Sams zu viel*)¹.

The first part of the original series was published in Germany in the beginning of the seventies and reflects the atmosphere and educational patterns of that time very clearly: children are supposed to be obedient and silent and when they revolt (like Sams) they can expect not just verbal abuse but also physical violence. For example, in the chapter describing a visit in the warehouse a salesman pulls Sams' hair because it took a lump of Dutch cheese without paying for it². It is symptomatic that such a violent reaction from the salesman does not shock anybody. In the chapter describing Sams' visit to school we can also observe that rigid discipline and obedience is something common in the classroom: the teacher, Mr Groll (English: grudge), behaves more like a soldier than a friendly pedagogue because he communicates with his pupils shouting one-word commands: "*Ruhe!*" [silence], "*Setzen!*" [sit] (Maar 1973: 87). In encounters with several grown-ups (Mr Taschenbier's landlady, busman) Sams is symptomatically called one and the same name: "*der unverschämte Bengel*" [cheeky brat] (Maar 1973: 70.71)³. This shows that Sams' unconventional behavior is condemned by different adults identically with a ritualized statement – i. e. according to the same educational pattern (children must be silent and obedient).

1. WHO IS THE SAMS?

The title figure (German: *das Sams*) looks like mixture of a red-haired child, a monkey and a pig and is shown in the fictional reality of Maar's books as a representative of a different species. It is not a human being but rather a magical human-like character that always appears to a chosen person on Saturday⁴. It can grant wishes as long as there are enough blue spots on its face or rather on its snout.

The creature that visits Mr Taschenbier is a representative of the Sams species and therefore the word "Sams" cannot be understood as a proper name. This can be seen already in the first scene when the little creature appears to Mr Taschenbier and Mr Taschenbier recognizes it to be (to his own surprise) "a Sams" saying unwillingly: "*Du bist bestimmt ein Sams!*" [You must be a Sams!] (Maar 1973: 20). The use of the non-definitive article "*ein*" which proves that the figure is

¹ The series in chronological order: *Eine Woche voller Samstage* (1973), *Am Samstag kam das Sams zurück* (1980), *Neue Punkte für das Sams* (1992), *Ein Sams für Martin Taschenbier* (1996), *Sams in Gefahr* (2003), *Onkel Alwin und das Sams* (2009), *Sams im Glück* (2011), *Ein Sams zu viel* (2015).

² The original text: "*Der Verkäufer stürzte auf es zu, packte es an den Haaren und riss ihm die Käsekugel weg*" (Maar 1973: 52); the Polish translation: "*Sprzedawca rzucił się na Sobka i szarpiać go za włosy, wyrwał mu z ręki krążek sera*" (Maar 2009: 50).

³ In the Polish translation the repeated insult is translated once as "*bezczelny smarkacz*" (Maar 2009: 69) and once as "*smarkacz*" (Maar 2009: 71) without the adjective "cheeky".

⁴ Hence the name of the creature derived from the German word for Saturday: *Samstag*.

a representative of a species is repeated in another dialogue: “*Wie hast du das herausgefunden? Woher weißt du, dass ich ein Sams bin?*“ [How have you found it out? How do you know that I am a Sams?] (Maar 1973: 20)⁵.

Paul Maar, a great admirer of E.T.A. Hoffmann's work, created a figure resembling Hoffmann's “strange child” from his fantastic tale *Das fremde Kind* (1817). The Sams, similarly to the strange child, comes from a mysterious background and has magical abilities: the strange child can fly and understand the language of nature and the Sams can grant people's wishes (and also eat all kinds of substances such as wood or iron). Maar repeats Hoffmann's method concerning the age and name of the magical being. The following description of the strange child could be referred without any alteration to the contemporary strange child, i. e. to the Sams:

The strange child is unusual for several reasons: the mysterious background [...], the family situation [...] and its loneliness. In addition, the strange child has inexplicable magic abilities. [...] Further clues involve the peculiar details concerning its age and name. The strange child has no proper name and is addressed as >strange child< or >dear child<. (Kümmerling-Meibauer 2008²: 196)

Another significant resemblance between the strange child and the Sams is their gender neutrality. Hoffmann's strange child is neither a boy nor a girl. It actually “embodies a sexless being, a third sex, equivalent to the neuter gender” (Kümmerling-Meibauer 2008²: 197). Sams' sexual identity is described nearly in the same way as the strange child's gender in Hoffmann's tale. The natural division in the male and female sex is of no use in its case.

When asked by Mr Taschenbier if the creature is a girl or a boy (while buying clothes in a shopping mall): “*Bist du ein Junge oder ein Mädchen?*” [Are you a boy or a girl?] (Maar 1973: 51), the Sams answers with astonishment: “*Ich bin ein Sams, das weißt du doch, Papa*” (Maar 1973: 51) [I am a Sams, you know that, Daddy]. The reader may suspect that Maar cites Hoffmann quite literally⁶.

2. THE SAMS AND THE PLAY

2.1 THE SAMS AS AN INCORPORATION OF PLAY

It is important to underline Sams' nature and character. The little creature is a combination of anarchy and playfulness. Its sudden appearance in Mr Taschenbier's quiet but dull life changes everything and sets off a series of adventures and incredible events. In this way the Sams resembles Astrid

⁵ The presence of the non-definitive and definitive article creates a translation problem in the Polish rendition of the book due to the lack of articles in the Polish language.

⁶ „So Felix thought the strange child was a boy, and Christlieb insisted that their new friend was a girl, and they could not agree” (Hoffmann 2010: 155).

Lindgren's Pippi Langstrumpf. This proves another connection between E. T. A. Hoffmann and Paul Maar as Pippi Langstrumpf is regarded as a significant continuation⁷ of the strange child's motive⁸.

The anarchic nature of the Sams provokes – on the fictional level – nearly all grown-ups in the story, but we can suspect that the figure was also intended to function as a challenge for all grown-up readers.

When we first meet the mysterious creature it is insulting a group of grown-ups singing a provocative song which concludes with the words “You are all stupid, stupid, stupid!”. Then the situation is getting even worse: the Sams eats Mr Taschenbier's furniture, calls his landlady funny names and does incredible things that every child obviously dreams of. In the story the Sams makes nearly all the grown-ups angry as it questions the famous German “*Kinderstube*”, i. e. all standards of polite manners a child is supposed to possess.

Also in this context, Hoffmann's and Paul Maar's stories reveal a lot of similarities because both are revolutionary as far as the methods of children's education are concerned. Both underline the importance of play, creativity and freedom for children's development⁹.

2.2 PLAY WITH WORDS: PUNS AND SONGS

Paul Maar's series about the Sams is famous for its puns and wordplays. From this perspective it is also often described as untranslatable. The translation difficulties start right at the beginning of the story because the name of the Sams is a part of the word “*Samstag*” [Saturday] hence the title of the book: “*Eine Woche voller Samstage* [Sams-tage]” which can be understood as “a week full of Saturdays” or “a week full of days (spent) with the Sams”.

Sams meets Mr. Taschenbier on Saturday which is preceded by a series of strange events happening on each day of the week:

1. on Monday (German: *Montag*) a friend from school, whose name is Mon, brings Mr. Taschenbier a bunch of poppy flowers (German: *Mohnblumen*);

⁷ “The Strange Child” also influenced such works as: Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Snow-image: a Childish Miracle* (1850), J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904) and Steven Spielberg's movie *E. T.* (1982).

⁸ In Sweden, the publisher of *Das fremde Kind* was “the publisher of the Swedish Romanticists and also saw it as his mission to translate the works of their German models” (Klingberg 2008: 31). So Hoffmann's fantastic tale influenced the children's literature of Swedish romanticism but it affected first of all Astrid Lindgren's work. Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer sees a clear relationship between the figure of the strange child and Lindgren's most famous protagonist: Pippi Langstrumpf (cf. Kümmerling-Meibauer 2008: 69). Pippi, similarly to the strange child is a sexless being with magical abilities who comes to transform the lives of two siblings: a sister and a brother.

⁹ „Hoffmann insists on keeping the child in us alive until we die. Without imagination we can become instrumentalized and exploited” (Zipes 2007: 103).

2. Tuesday (German: *Dienstag*) is a day of “*Dienst*” [work];
3. on Wednesday it is the middle of the week because “*Mittwoch*”, the German word for Wednesday, means: middle of the week;
4. on Thursday (German: *Donnerstag*) Mr. Taschenbier hears some thunderstorms (German: *Donner*);
5. on Friday Mr. Taschenbier gets a day off work as “*Freitag*” can be also understood as a free day (*Frei-Tag*) (Maar 1973: 10).

In this way it is obvious that the event on Saturday must be connected in some way with the word “Sams” that is why Mr. Taschenbier recognizes the creature to be “a Sams”, i. e. a “Saturday creature”.

Throughout the book Sams presents songs that are reminiscent of absurd nursery rhymes and are based merely on puns and phonetic similarities. For example, the nursery rhyme: “*Kaufhaus, Feldmaus/Kaufmaus, Kopflaus/Kauflaus, Blumenstrauß*”¹⁰ (Maar 1973: 39) which expresses Sams’ joy about going to a warehouse (German: *Kaufhaus*) consists of compounds which rhyme with “*Haus*” [house]: *Maus* [mouse], *Laus* [louse], *Strauß* [bunch of flowers] but get more and more absurd while imitating the word “*Kaufhaus*” [warehouse] with non-existent words such as “*Kaufmaus*” [ware-mouse] or “*Kauflaus*” [ware-louse].

2.3 PLAY WITH TRADITION

The Sams series can also be analyzed as a play with literary tradition, i. e. with German children’s books. As it was already stated above, the Sams figure reveals a lot of similarities with the title figure from E. T. A. Hoffmann’s fantastic tale *The strange child*. In other parts of the series there are numerous allusions referring to Hoffmann’s life and work which are not suitable for a child but could probably inspire an adult¹¹.

A very interesting intertextual element is the presence of the name Rumpelstiltskin (German: *Rumpelstilzchen*) referring to the famous tale by the Brothers Grimm. When the Sams appears for the first time it wants the onlookers to guess its name by singing a song which contains quite an explicit reference to the famous rhyme sung by Rumpelstiltskin in the Grimms’ tale: “*Ach, wie gut ist, daß niemand weiß, daß ich Rumpelstilzchen heiß*” [Oh, how good it is that nobody knows that my name is Rumpelstiltskin]. The Sams sings: “*Keiner weiß, wie ich heiß*” [nobody knows what my name is]. It should not come as a surprise that one of the onlookers answers to such a song: “*Wir spielen hier doch nicht Rumpelstilzchen*” [We are not playing Rumpelstiltskin here] (Maar 1973: 18).

¹⁰ Polish translation: “Centrum handlowe jest kolorowe / Smakowite, karmelkowe, / A sprzedawca purpurowy!” (Maar 2009: 37).

¹¹ So there are for example two teachers, Mrs Felix and Mrs Christlieb whose surnames are identical to the first names of the siblings, Felix and Christlieb, who encountered the strange child in Hoffmann’s story. The Taschenbiers live in the E. T. A. Hoffmann Street.

Even if not all of the allusions referring to E. T. A. Hoffmann's life and work are recognizable for the younger reader we can assume that it will not be a case with Grimm's tales. "Children's and Household Tales" by the Brothers Grimm are common knowledge in Germany and in this way even a young reader is able to encounter a play with tradition and to learn the joys of intertextual games.

Now it is time to ask what happens when the book is transferred to another language for readers who possess a different literary background by a translator who can adhere to a different educational model.

3. POLISH TRANSLATION

The Polish translation of the book "Eine Woche voller Samstage", originally published in 1973, had its premiere 36 years later – in 2009 (Poznań: Media Rodzina). It was done by Anna Gamroth in cooperation with Jan Karp who is responsible for the translation of rhymes.

In 2009 nearly four decades passed since the German premiere and this shows that Paul Maar has never become a recognizable author in Poland. It remains an open question if the publishing of the three Sams books¹² in Polish has changed the situation¹³.

The discussed Polish rendition of the German bestseller deserves a thorough translation analysis. It can be proved that the Polish version of Paul Maar's books shows all signs of an adaptation aimed at a younger reader¹⁴ which should be discussed in a separate paper.

But before the three levels of play discussed above are analyzed it is important to state that the Polish translation shows all signs of domestication strategy: the speaking names are either translated into Polish (*Taschenbier* [pocket beer] – *Piwko* [small beer]; *Rotkohl* [red cabbage] – *Kapusta* [cabbage], *Groll* [grudge] – *Złośny* [angry], *Mon*¹⁵ [poppy] – *Mak* [poppy]) or they are given

¹² Since 2009 three first parts of the Sams series have been published in Poland.

¹³ A look at online reviews shows that the Sams books were scarcely commented on and rated.

¹⁴ A more detailed analysis of the Polish translation by the author of the paper cf. Pieciul-Karمیńska 2017.

¹⁵ As far as the translation of the name "Mon" is concerned it was not recognized (or it was ignored) that "*Mon*" refers in the first place to the word "*Montag*" [Monday] and not to the flower "poppy". Because of the similarity between the words: "*Montag*" [Monday] and "*Mohn*" [poppy] Mr Mon brings a bunch of poppy flowers (Mohnblumen) on Monday. This connection was also ignored in the Polish translation – the word "poppy" was

Polish spelling: *Oberstein* – *Obersztajn*. The latter solution is quite dubious as in other parts the translator tends to polonize all German names (for example there is a certain “pan Lewandowski” in the second part of the series). Also the names of institutions such as “*Studienrat*” for a qualified teacher is rendered with a generalizing “*profesor*”. It is also quite surprising that the currency (German Mark) is rendered in Euro which again seems to be rather unlogical. The reality described in the first parts of the books is quite distant from now: Mr Taschenbier's boss uses a “*Rechenmaschine*” (a mechanical abacus – in the picture depicted with a handle) and “Euro” suggests a contemporary story. The place of pictures showing old-fashioned people is also quite a contradiction in this context.

3.0 SAMS – SOBEK – SOBOTKO (?)

The main problem arises with the rendition of the name “Sams”. As we already know – “Sams” is a part of the word “*Samstag*” [Saturday] and has in German no independent meaning. This means that the author chose a meaningless word for the description of the different species (in Plural they are called “*Samsen*”) and it is interesting that it does not function in the book as a proper name but as a neuter appellative (always accompanied by an article, non-definitive in the beginning, definitive throughout the rest of the story). Summing it up, we can state that the German word “Sams” is

- 1) a neologism without lexicalized meaning;
- 2) a recognizable part of the word “*Samstag*” (*Sams-Tag* – Saturday as a day of Sams);
- 3) a common name preceded by an article;
- 4) neuter.

In the Polish translation the word for “Sams” is *Sobek* and if we compare it with the original name we can see that “*Sobek*”

- 1) is a noun with a lexicalized meaning: in Polish “*sobek*” means “egoist” which automatically evokes negative associations¹⁶;
- 2) is not a clear part of the word “*sobota*” [Saturday] because it is only partially connected with it: “*Sob-ek*” – “*sob-ota*”;
- 3) functions in the Polish translation as a proper name not only because it is written with a capital letter¹⁷ but, first of all, because it is explicitly described as a proper name (the original statement of Mr Taschenbier during his first encounter with the Sams: “*Du bist bestimmt ein Sams*” [you

rendered (“*bukiet maków*”) but its function as a pun (*Mohn* – *Montag*) was transferred to an addition: “*kwiaty z działek*” [flowers from a garden spot/allotment] as a rhyme to “*poniedziałek*” [Monday] (Maar 2009: 7).

¹⁶ This meaning leads the reader to conclusions absolutely not intended in the original.

¹⁷ The capital letter for „Sams” in German is no explanation as all German nouns are marked with capital letters.

must be a sams] (Maar 1973: 20) gets distorted in the Polish translation: *'Nazywasz się Sobek'* [your name is Sobek]¹⁸ (Maar 2009: 18);

4) it is masculine, not neuter.

Personally I would suggest a word *"sobotko"* (created from *"sobota"* – Saturday¹⁹) which would display nearly all the features of the German original. *"Sobotko"*

1) is a neologism;

2) is a much clearer allusion to the word *"sobota"* (Saturday) than *"Sobek"*;

3) written with a small letter functions as an appellative designating a kind and not an individual;

4) is neuter²⁰.

3.1 SAMS AS INCORPORATION OF PLAY IN THE POLISH TRANSLATION

This level of play is expressed explicitly in Sams' words and deeds. So for a translation it should not be a problematic question. It would be enough to transfer the plot of the book faithfully.

However, as it was stated above, Sams incorporates some (Western) educational convictions about the role of fantasy, play and freedom in a child's life. Such an ideological level often gets distorted or at least ignored especially if the translation is done by a person who supports opposite or at least different views. We could expect that a translation carried out forty years after the book's premiere would not distort the educational ideas of Paul Maar as he was a visionary for his times and very contemporary in his opinions.

¹⁸ Even if Polish lacks articles and it is impossible to keep the information expressed by non-definite/definite article in the original (*"Du bist ein Sams"*) it is still possible to render the intended meaning by using lexical means and correcting the sentence *"Nazywasz się Sobek"* [your name is Sobek] into *"na pewno jesteś sobkiem (or better: sobotkiem)"* [you must be a sobek].

¹⁹ The uniqueness of the Polish name for Saturday: *"sobota"* is a such a twist of fate that it should be used more explicitly in the Polish translation of the book about a Sams – a Saturday creature. Polish names for weekdays are semantically connected with the succession of days that is why they mostly refer to numbers and the location in the day sequence. The central day is *"Sunday"* and its exceptional position is marked by a separate, non-numeric meaning. *"Niedziela"* [Sunday] means a *"day without work/non-work day"* and all following day (with the exception of Saturday) are counted in the reference to Sunday. In this way *"poniedziałek"* [Monday] – means *"a day after Sunday"*, *"wtorek"* [Tuesday] – the second day (after Sunday), *"środa"* [Wednesday] – the middle (of the week), *"czwartek"* [Thursday] – the fourth day (after Sunday), *"piątek"* [Friday] – the fifth day (after Sunday). An exception in this numerical sequence is *"sobota"* [Saturday] and this must be regarded as really lucky for the Polish translation of the Sams who is a creature connected exactly with this day of the week. The Polish word for Saturday stems from the religious *"sabbath"*.

²⁰ Analogically to *"Popielątko"* as suggested by Danuta Danek for the translation of *"das Aschenputtel"* [Cinderella].

Surprisingly, we can find in the Polish translation numerous distortions which could be associated more with the translation tendencies of the past. We can distinguish here all strategies directed at a young reader: infantilization, moralization, censorship (cf. Borodo 2011).

In a symptomatic way the translation of the provocative song "*Ihr seid alle dumm dumm dumm*" [you are all stupid stupid stupid] (Maar 1973: 18) contains some milder (and for the Polish reader) archaic descriptions like "*safanduly*" [duffers]²¹ as if the translation could not contain negative descriptions for adults. And when the neutral word "*Kind*" [child] is rendered with an excessively negative word "*gówniarz*" [whipster]²² it is a symptom of the same strategy in which negative expressions for adults are censored and the negative behavior of children gets stigmatized.

Even the behavior of Mr Taschenbier who is a patient and indulgent father for the Sams is described in the Polish translation with expressions revealing a much more rigorous nature. When Mr Taschenbier "says" something to the Sams it is rendered in Polish as "scolding"²³ and when he is just "*ein bißchen wütend*" [a little angry] in the Polish text he is telling off the Sams "as severely as possible"²⁴.

3.2 PLAY WITH WORDS IN THE POLISH TRANSLATION

Paul Maar's books are regarded as untranslatable due to a high number of puns. The initial wordplay based on the semantic transparency of German weekdays cannot be rendered because of the different tradition of numerical weekday names in Polish. Nearly all rhymes sung by the Sams are pieces of absurd poetry and because they mostly use phonetic similarities or play with compounds characteristic for German they cannot be rendered in Polish with the same method.

It is also worth mentioning that one can observe inconsequent translations of the puns in the context of the story because of the fact that the Polish version

²¹ The provoking song ("*Ihr seid alle dumm,/Dumm, dumm, dumm!/Drum tanz ich hier herum,/Rum, rum, rum!*" [You are all stupid/stupid, stupid, stupid/That's why I am dancing here around/around, around around!]; Maar 1973: 18) was rendered in Polish in a much milder and less revolutionary way: "*Obtańczę was dookoła!/Kto stado gap tych zwołał?/Same safanduly wkoło,/A ja tańczę tu wesolo.*" [I am dancing here merrily/ Who called all these onlookers? / Real duffers they are/ And I am dancing here merrily] (Maar 2009: 16)

²² German: "*Das Kind singt Spottverse auf anständige Leute und der Vater steht dabei und freut sich noch!*" (Maar 1973: 21); Polish: "*Gówniarz obrzuca nas kpiącymi obraźliwymi epitetami, a ojciec jak gdyby nigdy nic stoi obok i śmieje się w kulak*" (Maar 2009: 19).

²³ German: ">Du hast ja wieder was Schönes angerichtet, < sagte er" (Maar 1973: 85); Polish: "*Ładne rzeczy – skarcił Sobka pan Piwko*" (Maar 2009: 82).

²⁴ German: "*Das finde ich ausgesprochen frech – sagte Herr Taschenbier und war richtig ein bisschen wütend.*" (Maar 1973: 21); Polish: "*Uważam, że to bardzo nieładnie – powiedział najostrzej, jak potrafił pan Piwko*" (Maar 2009: 19).

had two translators: Anna Gamroth translated the story as such and Jan Karp was responsible for the rhyming parts.

For example, in the original Sams sings a funny song about a woman whose name was *Rosenkohl* [brussel sprouts] insulting in this way Mrs *Rotkohl* [red cabbage] but explaining to her that he could have not insulted her with this song because her name was not *Rosenkohl* but *Rotkohl*²⁵. In the Polish translation the text gets illogical because the song contains the word “Fafusta” [distorted for “Kapusta”, i. e. cabbage] and the dialogue refers to “Brukselka” [brussel sprouts]²⁶. We can guess that the rhyming parts and the story were translated separately.

3.3 PLAY WITH LITERARY TRADITION IN THE POLISH TRANSLATION

As we all know the play with literary tradition cannot be rendered without loss in a translation done for readers with different literary canon. In such a situation it must be considered if it should not be the task of the translator to make up for cultural differences and to explain some relevant contexts in footnotes.

For example, in my opinion it must be considered as a serious loss when the Polish translation gives up the allusion to Brothers Grimm’s tale “Rumpelstiltskin”. In the Polish translation of the sentence “*Wir spielen hier doch nicht Rumpelstilzchen*” [We are not playing Rumpelstiltskin here] we can find a generalization: “Nie bawimy się tutaj w zgaduj-zgadule” [We are not playing quizzes here].

All allusions to E. T. A. Hoffmann’s book “The Strange Child” were most probably not recognized by the translator²⁷. But still if the translator had decided to render at least the neuter gender of the creature it would have opened the translation for later analysis including the knowledge of Hoffmann’s figure of the strange child.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Paul Maar’s book was revolutionary for the seventies – what about the Polish translation which appeared in the first decade of the 21st century? Was it not

²⁵ German: “>Frau Rosenkohl ist innen hohl!/ Frau Rosenkohl ist innen hohl!<, >Für diese Beleidigung werden Sie mir büßen<, rief Frau Rotkohl durch die Tür. [...] >Heißen Sie denn Frau Rosenkohl?<, fragte das Sams und tat ganz erstaunt.” (Maar 1973: 36)

²⁶ Polish: “>Choć Fafusta w środku pusta,/ Głupot pełne ma wciąż usta!< – Pan mnie obraża! Pożaluje pan tego! krzyknęła pani Kapusta zza drzwi. [...] – Wszystko słyszałam o tej brukselce!” (Maar 2009: 34).

²⁷ This does not come as a surprise as Hoffmann’s fantastic tale „The strange child” is not very popular in Poland. The two pre-war translations are inaccessible and the new contemporary translation done by the author of the paper was published in 2014, i. e. five years after Paul Maar’s Polish translation.

too late? Can a book which was revolutionary in the seventies keep its freshness forty years later?

Even the best translation would not make up for four decades and social changes that have taken place since then. But unluckily the discussed translation ignored most of the important features of the original which can be considered as visionary and still valid for contemporary readers. In this way the one and only translation into Polish has gravely influenced Paul Maar's reception in Poland. It could have been observed by a small number of the book reviews and quite reserved reactions of Polish readers, young and old. Also the very successful Sams movies are not known in Poland.

One thing is sure: the Polish Sams was not a bestseller. It was too "wishy-washy" to compete with other (mostly Scandinavian) progressive children's books. It is quite sad because it is very probable that this "middle of the road" translation by Anna Gamroth will stay the only Maar's translation for a long time and narrow our understanding of what a great writer and visionary Paul Maar is.

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