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## ***Malina* in Poland – reception and translation analysis of selected fragments of the Polish translation**

### ***Malina* w Polsce – recepcja i analiza translologiczna wybranych fragmentów polskiego przekładu**

#### **Abstract**

This article analyses *Malina* by Ingeborg Bachmann, focusing on its structure, themes, reception and translation into Polish. The author discusses the challenges faced by translator Sławomir Błaż, emphasising his fidelity to the original, linguistic precision and ability to convey Bachmann's poetic and fragmentary style. The text indicates that the difficult language, literary innovation and cultural differences influenced the niche reception of the novel in Poland, despite its high artistic and research value.

**Keywords:** Ingeborg Bachmann, *Malina*, translation

#### **Streszczenie**

Artykuł poświęcony jest analizie powieści *Malina* Ingeborg Bachmann, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem jej struktury, tematyki oraz recepcji i przekładu na język polski. Autorka omawia wyzwania, przed jakimi stanął tłumacz Sławomir Błaż, podkreślając jego wierność oryginałowi, precyzję językową oraz umiejętność oddania poetyckiego i fragmentarycznego stylu Bachmann. Tekst wskazuje, że trudny język, nowatorstwo literackie oraz różnice kulturowe wpłynęły na niszowy odbiór powieści w Polsce, mimo jej wysokiej wartości artystycznej i badawczej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Ingeborg Bachmann, *Malina*, przekład

## **Malina – structure, characters, content**

Ingeborg Bachmann's phantasmagorical novel *Malina*, which she began in 1967 alongside other texts, was published on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1971 by Suhrkamp Verlag, ending Bachmann's several-year hiatus from publishing. The once-esteemed poet now appeared in a new guise as a novelist, which she sought to promote during two promotional tours and numerous interviews. The book, considered rather inappropriate after the 1968 revolution, remained on the bestseller list for many weeks, despite harsh criticism and serious accusations from literary critics (Albrecht, Götttsche, 2002: 130).

In terms of structure, the novel *Malina* is divided into a list of characters, a prologue and three consecutive chapters. In addition, it contains the legend *Die Geschehnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran*, which is a graphically distinguished part of the novel.

*Malina* marks both the beginning and the end of a long writing process that is similar to a musical composition. Recurring themes and motifs intertwine, and Bachmann consciously uses musical intertexts such as sheet music, librettos and allusions to composers and singers. Furthermore, while reading, one repeatedly encounters intratextual references within the novel, which in turn are linked to the themes, characters and motifs of other texts in the Todesarten series, making the novel appear as part of a whole. References and allusions to literature, philosophy, music and cultural history are equally numerous and blur the genre boundaries of the novel.

This is characterised by a contradictory juxtaposition of texts and paratexts. Thus, although *Malina* is titled as a novel on the title page, the list of characters at the beginning of the book and the reflection on place and time resemble a drama, and the musical instructions at the end of the dialogues, which are intended exclusively for the first-person character and contain tempo, volume, expression, etc., but are not marked with quotation marks, allow us to perceive two-person dialogues (Albrecht, Götttsche, 2002: 131).

Difficulties arise not only in determining the genre, but also in misleading readers' expectations. The text on the cover suggests that this is a story about an unhappy love affair, while the text on the back cover points to a crime novel and a murder story.

This polyphony is also continued in the narrative style. There is a first-person character who writes and eludes all possibilities of narration, approaching it through telephone conversations, interviews, monologue duets, quotations, allusions and references, dream analyses and the legend of his own history, but cannot be captured narratively.

In this way, readers learn neither the narrator's name nor the reason for the gaps or difficulties in his memory, and the story in question is not explicitly mentioned (Ibidem). At the end of the book, the reader is faced with the mystery of the sentence 'It was murder', as no subject of the action can be identified.

The narrative tense is, with few exceptions, the present tense. In the first chapter, the historical present tense is used throughout, which at the end of the third chapter changes to the simple present tense, referring to the action taking place at the moment of speaking. This type of present tense also dominates the prologue and the beginning of the second chapter. In the legend *Die Geschehnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran* (*The Events of the Princess of Kagran*), it shifts to the past tense, which is also used when the narrator

describes something from her past. Excerpts from the ‘beautiful book’ that the narrator wants to create for Ivan are presented in the future tense.

The sentences are mostly fragmentary, which is particularly evident in the dialogues, as well as confusing and multi-line. The use of foreign expressions and the repetition of certain expressions in the text are also striking.

A certain structure can also be discerned from the dialogues. While the first chapter contains dialogues, mainly telephone conversations between the narrator and Ivan, and none with Malina, in the second chapter, the dialogue with Ivan is interrupted and replaced by dialogues with Malina. The third chapter contains dialogues with Malina, but only three conversations with Ivan. This structure allows us to draw conclusions about the changing relationships between the characters.

The main characters in the novel *Malina* are the narrator, Malina, Ivan and the narrator’s father. There are also other characters, such as Ivan’s children, Béla and Andrés, Lina, Miss Jellinek and Mr Mühlbauer. All the other characters do not actively participate in the events, i.e. they are talked or written about, thought about or dreamed about.

It can be said that the novel tells the story of the process of overcoming the traditional concept of love, which is brutal and painful. The murder of a woman by a man who prevented her from breaking free from her role is the main theme of the novel. Therefore, it is not about a woman’s suicide, but about her being driven to death by Ivan’s resignation, which is specifically expressed in the words: ‘I live in Ivan and die in Malina’.

## ***Malina* and its reception in Poland**

Bachmann’s public image is ambivalent, as is her work. An important aspect is her biographical ambivalence. On the one hand, she was a ‘diva’, and on the other, a ‘victim’. Her public image was therefore full of contradictions. Bachmann was undoubtedly the ‘first lady’ of post-war literature, a confident intellectual with a doctorate who shone in Group 47. In her private life, however, she was an extremely sensitive person, struggling with addictions and fears, which often led to her being perceived (often unfairly and hurtfully) solely through the prism of her suffering and her relationships with men.

On the one hand, she is considered one of the classics of German-language literature, but on the other hand, the above-mentioned legends surrounding her private life are more popular (Bartsch, 1997: VII). Her works play a secondary role in this constellation, which is due to the stereotypes circulating about her. This is evidenced by the fact that the prose writer’s works only gained recognition among literary scholars in the late 1970s (Bartsch, 1997: VII).

Ingeborg Bachmann was one of the most influential and enigmatic figures in the landscape of post-war German-language literature. Her work, which included poetry, prose, radio plays and essays, is an artistic testimony to the trauma of the Second World War and a radical reflection on the condition of the individual, especially women, in a society of consumerism and regained freedom.

Knowing Bachmann’s biography, we can conclude that despite the many awards and distinctions she received, her work was not properly appreciated by contemporary literary

scholars. Furthermore, we can venture to say that Ingeborg Bachmann's work, although more noticed today, is still not fully discovered, which means that it remains a challenging field of research.

The key to understanding Bachmann's reception in Poland, and especially her flagship novel *Malina*, is to understand the Austrian writer's message, which is presented in the following quote:

I prefer to read on the floor, or on my bed, almost everything lying down. No, it's not so much about the books, it's mainly about reading, black on white, letters, syllables, poems, these inhuman fixations, signs, these arrangements, this madness frozen in expression that comes out of people. Believe me, expression is madness, it flows from our madness. What also matters is turning the pages, rushing from one side to the other, escaping, participating in a frenzied, congealed outpouring, what matters is the wickedness of metastasis, insuring life in a single sentence, insuring the secondary sentences in life. Reading is an addiction that can replace all other addictions or sometimes, instead of them, help everyone live more intensely; it is debauchery, a miserable mania. No, I don't take drugs, I take books, and of course I have my preferences, many books don't appeal to me, some I only swallow before noon, others only at night. There are books I cannot put down, I walk around the flat with them, I move them from the room to the kitchen, I read standing in the hallway, I don't use bookmarks, I don't move my lips when I read (...) (Bachmann, 2015: 86, transl. A.L.).

The Austrian expressed herself, her being and her experiences through words. Without her writing, Bachmann felt incomplete. The numerous letters and poems that the poet wrote were a source of spiritual strength for her, a special kind of omnipotence, as well as an attempt to cope with the hardships of everyday life, which often took away a part of herself.

Bachmann's work exuded a love of literature, which can be seen, for example, in the imaginative novel *Malina*, where the narrator 'consumes books' and 'cannot tear herself away from them'.

The psychological study and philosophical trends that often creep into her works make the plot more realistic, and the poetic language of her work, full of understatements, undoubtedly enriches the literary quality of Bachmann's works. However, discussing Bachmann's work is an extremely difficult task, as, despite half a century of reception, the writing of the author of *Malina* has received relatively few comprehensive reviews, especially on the Polish publishing market.

This fact undoubtedly prompts reflection on why the reception of *Malina*'s work, especially in Poland, has met with niche interest among researchers. What was the factor that hindered the reception of Bachmann's *Malina* in Poland? Does Bachmann's unconventional, understatement-filled literary language, which is difficult to translate, generate a problem with the reception of the writer's autobiographical novel?

The reception of Ingeborg Bachmann's work is not a popular topic in Poland, and thus an interesting one from a research perspective. The reason for the poor reception of Bachmann's *Malina* is not entirely clear. Based on an analysis of source materials, it can be assumed that the inhibiting factor is that only Germanists have access to Bachmann's complete works, which means that only a few people who are fluent in the Austrian

writer's language are familiar with her work. Another research hypothesis that explains the limited reception of Bachmann's *Malina* is that the writer's sensitivity and language, full of understatements that blur the line between reality and dream, have not been fully expressed in the translation of her works.

Tackling the absorbing and ambiguous research problem concerning the reception of the author of *Malina* requires conducting multidirectional research covering linguistic conditions (textual) conditions, translating into an in-depth analysis of the Polish translation in search of the degree of equivalence of the target text at the level of intention operis (according to Umberto Eco's terminology = the intention of the text) manifested in Bachmann's style, linguistic depiction of the world, intertextual dialogue with philosophical and literary works, and intratextual dialogue (references to her own work), and finally the innovativeness of form, as well as extratextual conditions, i.e. contextual conditions including cultural differences, different historical and literary situations, including political ones, and different points of view in the source and target cultures with regard to recent historical events.

Ingeborg Bachmann's flagship novel is an extraordinary love story that exposes every possible aspect of a woman's love for a man. It could be said that Ingeborg Bachmann's artistic autobiography is primarily a book pleading for love, a confession of passion and a portrayal of difficult love. The story of an unusual love triangle presented in *Malina* can be treated as a kind of psychological study, as Bachmann presents the emotions and experiences of the characters in her imaginative autobiographical novel with great precision and accuracy.

Moreover, the unusual plot of *Malina* is ennobled by its unconventional, poetic and full of understatement language, which certainly makes Ingeborg Bachmann's novel difficult to read. The theatrical drama depicted in *Malina*, as well as the digressions and side stories introduced by the writer, deepen, as Monika Roszak-Malanowicz points out, the dual nature of the work and allow the reader to observe with distance the successive scenes sketched by the narrator, which may also contribute to the difficulty of reading *Malina* among Polish readers. One of the most important European novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was summed up by German literary critic Joachim Kaiser in the German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* as follows:

*Malina* has something of a protocol in its eccentric fragments, something of a text documenting a troubled soul... This confessional book, often rich in literary variations, can only be read properly if one is aware of the dizzying chasm that separates it from contemporary literary production. A love story that is an absolute renunciation of even the slightest erotic provocation... Written in a language that attempts to capture the earliest feelings. An exciting, beautiful, anti-fashionable book. Poetic in its collection of human possibilities (Bachmann, 2015: I, transl. A.L.).

But *Malina* is above all, as Monika Roszak-Malanowicz writes, the story of a woman whose relationships with the three men in her life – her father, Malina and Ivan – strongly influence the disintegration of her identity (Roszak, Musiał, 2010: 78).

This novel is primarily a study of a woman's search for identity, or perhaps the loss of that identity and the torment of living without it. The lost identity of a modern woman

and, ultimately, her escape into the crevice of existence, until she is lost. It is not difficult to see that Ingeborg Bachmann's phantasmagorical autobiographical novel was well received by German literary critics. Joachim Kaiser draws attention to the poetic language of the novel and the literary innovation of the author of *Malina*, which set new trends in European literature. Due to its emotionality and poetic nature, the work was highly regarded, which resulted in the translation of *Malina* into other languages.

The Polish edition of Bachmann's first novel did not take long to appear. The poet's first and only completed novel was published for the first time in Poland four years after its premiere, translated by Sławomir Błaut and published by Czytelnik. In the 1970s, Poland opened up to Western literary trends and Polish magazines such as *Nowe Książki*, *Nurt*, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* and *Nurt* attempted to engage in dialogue with Bachmann's difficult prose (Roszak, Musiał, 2010: 7–8).

Bachmann's language, previously unknown to Polish readers, full of emotional ferocity, dynamism and violence, broken by a certain dose of melancholy, irretrievable loss and sadness, introduced Polish readers to new literary territory, which resulted in an empathetic reception of the Austrian author's work. However, over time, interest in Bachmann's prose among readers became increasingly lukewarm. The reason for this can be found in the fact that in the 1980s and 1990s, the empathetic reception of Bachmann's work in Poland was replaced by a stereotypical view of the writer, which resulted in reduced interest in her work (Roszak, Musiał, 2010: 8).

According to the editors of *Konstelacje*, the poor reception of *Malina* in Poland was influenced by stereotypes present in the Polish reception of the novel, such as the 'neuroticism' of the Austrian writer's work, her "colonising" language, and the man who enslaves the female 'self' (Roszak, Musiał, 2010: 9).

Furthermore, it should be noted that in *Malina*, the woman is portrayed by the writer as silent and even submissive to the man, which is inconsistent with the established Western European pattern of representing the 'female self', as a result of which Bachmann's *Malina* can be seen as a gendered presentation of both the female and male self.

In the Polish reception of the Austrian author's first novel, clichés caused interest in Bachmann's flagship novel to wane. The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the author's death provided an excellent reason to revisit the difficult subject matter of Bachmann's prose, thanks to Wydawnictwo A5, which released *Time of the Heart. Letters* and *Malina*. The published collection of correspondence *Time of the Heart. Letters*, which contains letters reflecting the love between Bachmann and Celan, became the cornerstone for the reissue of *Malina* in a translation by Sławomir Błaut, published by Wydawnictwo A5.

Reviews of *Malina* were favourable. In her article "The Woman Who Wasn't There", Eliza Szybowicz writes a relatively extensive review of Ingeborg Bachmann's *Malina* in *Dwutygodnik*. The author presents an authoritative summary of the Austrian writer's novel. Szybowicz sums up *Malina* as 'a clearly autobiographical novel by Ingeborg Bachmann' (Szybowicz, 2011), which, as the literary critic writes, "is actually an anti-autobiographical anti-novel, because the narrator cannot, though she must, tell her own story" (Szybowicz, 2011).

These words support the earlier thesis that Bachmann's prose is difficult to read and understand for those who are unfamiliar with Bachmann's biography. The literary critic presents her opinion of Bachmann's novel as follows:

By reissuing Ingeborg Bachmann's *Malina*, a novel written 40 years ago, the Wydawnictwo A5 offers us a difficult piece of prose that has much in common with the late European avant-garde. Everything in this book is problematic: the characters, the plot, the drama, the logic of the sentences, even individual words. The formal explorations of the Austrian poet and writer, a predecessor of Elfriede Jelinek, are anchored in psychological and social specifics, particularities, thanks to which they can be followed today without impatience, even though we have already read quite a few novels about the inexpressible. The universalist ambitions that have befallen avant-garde prose usually make it indigestible. Literary particularism, such as that practised by Bachmann, clearly ages more slowly (Szybowicz, 2011, transl. A.L.).

The website [niewinni-czarodzieje.pl](http://niewinni-czarodzieje.pl) (Rogacz, 2011) has a few words to say about Bachmann's style:

Bachmann rightly rejects quick metaphors, dispassionately devoured incomprehensible paragraphs, and easy comparisons. She aims at the reader with words, which she herself described as a powerful weapon. This is probably why *Malina* reads so slowly, as we follow – sometimes clumsily – this peculiar stream of thought. The words connect with the consciousness of the here and now, and the reader gets the impression that the prose uncontrollably turns into poetry, which in turn creates a drama without the appropriate structure characteristic of drama. After a while, however, it turns out that we are reading a lyrical diary interspersed with excerpts from a philosophical treatise on the meaning of existence. This, however, quite unexpectedly, is concluded with what may seem to be the most absurd sentence in the world. The language of the novel is therefore an experiment that needs to be matured, because if carried out improperly, it can have unpleasant consequences (transl. A.L.).

The reviews of *Malina* presented here confirm that the emotional nature of the novel and the poet's unusual language may influence the restrained reception of *Malina* in Poland. However, as presented in the above reviews, *Malina* is a novel with extraordinary research potential, where the words, the author's character and the aura of the novel encourage reflection on the legitimacy of rediscovering this remarkable writer.

Nevertheless, it can be said that the factor inhibiting the reception of Ingeborg Bachmann's *Malina* in Poland is its unusual language, full of understatements and metaphors, blurring the line between reality and dream. One could also venture to say that the literary innovation (in terms of form) and the unprecedented linguistic sensitivity of the author of *Malina* have not been fully noticed, and perhaps not fully understood, by Polish readers, which has contributed to the poor reception of Ingeborg Bachmann's artistic autobiography.

The author of *Malina* undoubtedly set new trends in literature, for which Polish readers may not have been fully prepared, as Poland and Austria were not culturally close. Furthermore, it should also be noted that interpreting the Austrian writer's novel may undoubtedly be difficult for Polish readers who are unfamiliar with Ingeborg Bachmann's biography, which also does not contribute to increasing interest in the Austrian writer's

novel. Polish readers who do not speak the writer's language know Ingeborg Bachmann's biography only from what they have heard about her. The mentioned legends and rumours surrounding Bachmann, which have largely found their way into Polish reading circles, have undoubtedly influenced the reception of the Austrian poet's prose.

However, it should be mentioned here that even literary scholars who were aware of the interpretative risk often admitted to interpretative errors (Roszak, Musiał, 2010: 8). Even a personal conversation with Ingeborg Bachmann did not protect against interpretative failures, as literary scholar Stefan Kaszyński points out in his review of *Malina* prepared for *Miesięcznik Literacki*:

During conversations, she would sometimes fall into deep thought. It was then that one could see how intensely she experienced simple human emotions. Her statements, often interrupted mid-sentence or expressed in a single word, were the result of fascinating intellectual journeys, the intricate paths of which none of us questioners could fathom (Roszak, Musiał, 2010: 8, transl. A.L.).

It can be said that Ingeborg Bachmann's work undoubtedly constitutes an interesting field of research for literary scholars, which is to a large extent an intellectual challenge for researchers, resulting in her work enjoying increasing interest among young people, as evidenced by the growing number of publications about the author of *Malina*.

## **Bachmann's *Malina* in Polish translation by Sławomir Błaut**

It is worth noting that Bachmann's novel *Malina*, translated by Sławomir Błaut, is an absolute classic of Polish German studies and one of the most important translations of Austrian literature into Polish. Sławomir Błaut's translation of *Malina* is the first and so far the only complete translation of this novel into Polish.

The first edition was published in 1975 by Czytelnik. Years later, in 2010, the translation was reissued by Wydawnictwo a5. This edition is currently the most widely available in bookshops and libraries.

Sławomir Błaut was one of the most outstanding Polish translators of German-language literature (he translated works by Günter Grass, Jan de Hartog and Hermann Kant, among others) (Gedanopedia). It should be mentioned here that his translation of *Malina* was faithful to the spirit of modernism. Błaut perfectly captured the complex structure of the novel, which mixes first-person narration, almost musical passages, dreams and letters.

Above all, it should be emphasised that the translation of *Malina* is extremely precise in terms of language. The translator coped with Bachmann's extremely dense, poetic language, while preserving its specific rhythm and anxiety.

## Translation analysis of selected fragments of the Polish translation of *Malina*

A translation analysis of Sławomir Błaut's translation of *Malina* is a very interesting topic from a research perspective, as Ingeborg Bachmann's text is considered one of the most difficult to translate in 20<sup>th</sup>-century German-language literature. Błaut had to tackle prose that balances on the border between poetry, philosophical treatise and musical score.

Bachmann was fascinated by music, which is also evident in the structure of the sentences that appear in *Malina*. The challenge for Błaut was that the Austrian author uses long, complex sentences that have their own specific 'breath' and rhythm, which can often be considered close to poetic metre, which should come as no surprise, as Bachmann was a poet. Błaut's strategy in this case was to focus on functional equivalence. Instead of shortening the sentences for the convenience of the Polish reader, he preserved their dreamlike, sometimes even stifling, heavy character. Błaut skilfully uses inverted syntax to convey the narrator's growing emotional tension.

It should also be noted here that *Malina* is a study of the disintegration of the female 'I' in confrontation with the male order of the world, which is why the translator is faced with the problem of the 'gender' of language. In German, articles and endings often allow for subtle games with identity. Malina (a male character) and the narrator often merge into 'one'. The translator had to use Polish inflection, i.e. feminine and masculine endings, very precisely in order not to 'betray' the secret of Malina's identity too early, while at the same time conveying the process of annihilation of the female voice. In the last chapter, Błaut masterfully conveys the painful process of the narrator's disappearance into the 'wall'.

The novel is saturated with references to Viennese culture, Wittgenstein's philosophy and the topography of Vienna (e.g. Ungargasse). Błaut decided to leave the Viennese realities in their original form, which creates distance and a specific coldness in Bachmann's prose. Bachmann quotes, among other things, opera texts. The translator had to decide whether to translate these passages anew or to use existing Polish librettos. He chose stylistic consistency with the rest of the text, which reinforces the protagonist's internal monologue.

Błaut's translation is an example of a translation that is modernising in an artistic sense, but remains faithful to the letter of the text. The translator did not try to 'facilitate' reading. The Polish *Malina* is as demanding, dense and painful as the original, which testifies to the highest level of translation craftsmanship.

It should be noted that the most famous and shocking sentence in Bachmann's entire novel, which is key to the translational and philosophical interpretation of the entire work, is one of the examples of the brilliant translation of *Malina* into Polish:

Es war Mord. (Bachmann, 2015: 354)

To było morderstwo. (Bachmann, 2010: 322)

In German, there is a distinction between 'Mord' (premeditated murder) and 'Totschlag' (manslaughter). Bachmann uses the most emotionally charged word, and it should be

emphasised that this is a word with ‘great impact’. By choosing the word ‘murder’ rather than the milder ‘killing’, Błaut perfectly captures Bachmann’s idea and intentions in the text of *Malina*. This emphasises that the narrator’s disappearance into the wall was not an accident, but the result of systematic, slow violence.

Bachmann ends the novel with an extremely short, dry, cold sentence that follows hundreds of pages of rich, dreamlike text. The translator has retained the same structure (subject + predicate + complement). In Polish, we often tend to add inflectional endings, e.g. “To było morderstwem” (“It was murder”). Błaut, however, opted for the nominative case (“To było morderstwo” – “It was murder”), which gives the sentence a serious, heavy character, often found in final judgments or court records.

A comparative analysis shows that Błaut did not attempt to ‘soften’ Bachmann’s language. His Polish in *Malina* is at times rough, difficult and disturbing – exactly as it should be to convey the trauma recorded in the original. The translator was aware that in Bachmann’s novel, language itself is a weapon.

The excerpt from Ingeborg Bachmann’s novel *Malina*, translated by Sławomir Błaut, shows the clash of two linguistic systems and an attempt to convey the specific, existential suffocation of the Austrian author’s prose:

Denn Heute ist ein Wort, das nur Selbstmörder verwenden dürften, für alle anderen hat es schlechterdings keinen Sinn, »heute« ist bloß die Bezeichnung eines beliebigen Tages für sie, eben für heute, ihnen ist klar, daß sie wieder nur acht Stunden zu arbeiten haben oder sich freinehmen, ein paar Wege machen werden, etwas einkaufen müssen, eine Morgen- und eine Abendzeitung lesen, einen Kaffee trinken, etwas vergessen haben, verabredet sind, jemand anrufen müssen, ein Tag also, an dem etwas zu geschehen hat oder besser doch nicht zu viel geschieht. (Bachmann, 2015: 9)

Bo „dzisiaj” to słowo, które powinno być zastrzeżone tylko dla samobójców, dla wszystkich innych nie ma po prostu sensu, „dzisiaj” to dla nich jedynie określenie dowolnego dnia, właśnie dzisiejszego, zdają sobie sprawę, że znów muszą pracować osiem godzin albo zwolnić się z pracy, pójść tu i tam, kupić coś, przeczytają poranną i wieczorną gazetę, wypiją kawę, zapomną o czymś, umówią się, zadzwonią do kogoś, jest to zatem dzień, w którym musi się coś wydarzyć, lepiej jednak, żeby nie wydarzyło się za wiele. (Bachmann, 2010: 7)

Błaut opts for a translation that is faithful in terms of meaning, but makes certain shifts to give the Polish translation the appropriate emotional weight and poetic character.

In the case of the translation of the word ‘Selbstmörder’, i.e. suicide, the German term is key here. Bachmann gives the word ‘today’ / ‘heute’ an exclusive status – a word that is meaningful to someone who does not plan for ‘tomorrow’. Błaut accurately preserves this radicalism.

The German adverb schlechterdings has a more absolute, almost archaic connotation, which can be translated as ‘utterly’ or ‘downright’. Błaut’s translation simply colloquialises this lack of meaning, making it more colloquial, which may slightly weaken the philosophical rigour of the original.

In addition, Bachmann’s original is characterised by a long, almost claustrophobic phrase that is intended to convey the monotony and compulsion of everyday life. Bachmann uses a series of infinitives, i.e. ‘arbeiten haben’, ‘freinehmen’, ‘einkaufen müssen’, ‘vergessen haben’, which creates the effect of a list of duties from which there is no es-

cape. The translator adapts the text of the translation to Polish linguistic conditions. Błaut changes the structure to the personal forms of the future/present tense, e.g. ‘pójdą, kupią, przeczytają, zapomną’, even though this slightly changes the perspective, i.e. from a description of a state to a description of an action, it effectively conveys the Polish narrative dynamics, while maintaining the rhythm of the ‘spinning wheel’ in which the author spins.

In Bachmann’s text, Heute is objectified. The original reads: ‘»heute« ist bloß die Bezeichnung eines beliebigen Tages für sie’, and Błaut translates this as: ‘today’ is just a term for any day for them. The use of quotation marks/emphasis in both languages emphasises the narrator’s distance from this word. For ‘others’ (people living normal lives), today is just an empty label of time. For the narrator and the aforementioned suicides, it should be something special and, at the same time, final.

It is also worth noting the passage about newspapers, i.e. eine Morgen- und eine Abendzeitung lesen / they will read the morning and evening newspapers. In Bachmann’s time, the rhythm of the day set by newspaper publications was a symbol of bourgeois stability. Błaut preserves this image, which today has taken on a nostalgic and ironic character.

In the original, Bachmann uses an infinitive construction with ‘zu’, which is very strong in German – it falls between having to and being obliged to. Błaut rightly abandons the literal ‘mają do przepracowania’ (‘they have to work’) in favour of the verb ‘muszą’ (‘they must’). In Polish, ‘must’ is harsh, inexorable and physically palpable, which perfectly conveys the existential burden of an eight-hour working day in the world of *Malina*.

Błaut compensates stylistically. In places where German grammar allows for cold, impersonal modal constructions with ‘zu’, Polish could sound too stiff. The translator replaces them with the strong pressure of the verb ‘must’ and the mechanical rhythm of the future tense, which takes away their agency and gives them an automatic character. Thanks to this, the Polish reader not only learns that the narrator feels compulsion, but actually hears this compulsion in the rhythm of the sentences.

Sławomir Błaut’s translation is very reliable. The translator is aware that *Malina* is not only about content, but also about rendering Bachmann’s language. By preserving long strings of sentences, Błaut manages to transfer to Polish the specific atmosphere of fear of an ‘ordinary day’ that is the foundation of Bachmann’s prose.

The following example reveals a deep understanding of the rhythm and emotional charge of the original:

Oft kann ich es in deinem Gesicht sehen  
 Damals hast du alt ausgesehen  
 Manchmal siehst du richtig alt aus  
 Heute siehst du zwanzig Jahre jünger aus  
 Lach mehr, lies weniger, schlaf mehr, denk weniger  
 Das macht dich doch alt, was du machst  
 Graue und braune Kleider machen dich alt  
 Verschenk deine Trauerkleider ans Rote Kreuz  
 Wer hat dir diese Grabkleider erlaubt?

Często widzę to w twojej twarzy  
 Wtedy wyglądałaś staro  
 Nieraz wyglądasz naprawdę staro  
 Dzisiaj wyglądasz dwadzieścia lat młodziej  
 Więcej śmieję się, mniej czytam, więcej śpiję, mniej myślę  
 Postarza cię to, co robisz  
 Postarzają cię szare i brązowe suknie  
 Podaruj swoje żałobne suknie Czerwonemu Krzyżowi  
 Kto ci pozwolił na te cmentarne suknie?

<p>Natürlich bin ich böse, ich habe Lust, böse zu sein Gleich siehst du jünger aus, ich treib dir das Alter aus! (Bachmann, 2015: 104)</p>	<p>Naturalnie jestem zły, mam chęć być zły Od razu wyglądasz młodziej, wybije ci to z głowy tę starość! (Bachmann, 2010: 95)</p>
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In the original, Bachmann uses short, almost abrupt phrases that convey the anxiety and internal linguistic tension in the novel. Błaut skilfully preserves this staccato rhythm. In the sentence ‘Lach mehr, lies weniger, schlaf mehr, denk weniger’ / ‘Laugh more, read less, sleep more, think less’ the translator used inversion (placing the adverb before the verb), which in Polish gives the sentence the character of an almost maxim, a golden thought or a strict recommendation, perfectly reflecting the imperative tone of the original.

Błaut opts here for vocabulary that reinforces the dark, existential dimension of the text. The German word ‘Grabkleider’ (literally, grave clothes) has been translated as ‘cemetery dresses’. This is an amplification technique that gives the translation a more poetic, yet incredibly tragic and shocking tone, which fits in with the obsession with ageing and death present in this passage.

It is also worth noting the translation of ‘Graue und braune Kleider’, in which the translator translated the word ‘Kleider’ as ‘dresses’ instead of the neutral clothing. This emphasises the female point of view of the protagonist and sets the text in a specific, stifling aesthetic.

In addition, the translator shows great freedom in rendering German idiomatic constructions, seeking natural Polish equivalents. The sentence ‘ich treib dir das Alter aus!’ / ‘I’ll knock that old age out of your head!’ is a good example of functional equivalence. The German austreiben (to drive out, e.g. demons) has been replaced by the Polish phrase wybijać z głowy, which retains the slightly aggressive but also protective nature of the statement.

Sławomir Błaut’s translation is faithful to the Austrian author’s language while paying attention to the vividness of the Polish language. The translator is not afraid of strong words, e.g. ‘cmentarne’ (‘cemetery’), ‘wybiję Ci z głowy’ (“I’ll knock it out of your head”), which allows the Polish reader to feel the same pressure and coldness in the relationships between the characters that are the foundation of Bachmann’s prose.

## Concluding remarks

This article analyses Ingeborg Bachmann’s novel *Malina*, focusing on its structure, themes, reception and translation into Polish. *Malina* is a work with a complex, multi-layered structure, combining elements of novel, drama and music, with numerous inter- and intra-textual references. The narrative is fragmentary, often in the present tense, with numerous dialogues and references to other works by the author and to culture in the broad sense.

The reception of Bachmann’s work in Poland has been limited – despite recognition among literary scholars, her works, including *Malina*, have remained niche, mainly due to their difficult, poetic language and specific themes. Sławomir Błaut’s translation,

the only complete translation of the novel into Polish, is considered to be very faithful to the original and to convey both the rhythm and emotional weight of the text. The translator had to face challenges related to the gendered nature of the language, long, complex sentences and numerous cultural references.

Translation analysis indicates that Błaut preserved the difficulty and density of the original, without attempting to ‘simplify’ it for the Polish reader. The translation is an example of a modernising translation that remains faithful to the letter of the text. Particular attention was paid to key passages, such as the famous sentence ‘It was murder’, which retains the power and coldness of the original in the Polish version.

It should be emphasised that the factors hindering a wider reception of *Malina* in Poland are not only Bachmann’s difficult language and literary innovation, but also cultural differences and Polish readers’ lack of knowledge about the author’s biography. Nevertheless, the novel remains an important field of research and an inspiration for future generations of literary scholars.

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