

Difficult labour. On the linguistic characteristics and translation difficulties of Katja Kettu's *Kättilö*

Katja Kettu's *Kättilö* (2011; *The Midwife*, transl. by David Hackston, 2016; in Hungarian: *A bába*, transl. by Laura Bába, 2013) is a novel with a unique language: dialogues are written in a stylized Finnish dialect, many of the characters have their well recognizable own idiolect, and the narration abounds with poetic imagery and neologisms. All these features make the book a difficult task to translate. In this paper, I am giving an overall view of the linguistic landscape of the novel through some examples, as well as of the difficulties these characteristics pose for a translator, and am discussing the choices I have made as the Hungarian translator of the book.

The main plot is set in Lapland, 1944, where a Finnish midwife and a young German soldier fall in love. However, the Moscow Armistice between Finland and the Soviet Union and the following outburst of the Lapland War turn German troops stationed in Finnish Lapland from allied into enemies. As the German soldier is redirected to a local Nazi prison camp, his Finnish lover follows him so that they could be together. Eventually, they become persecuted. Other plotlines shed light on the story of the midwife's family as well as on the life of the local community.

The stylized dialect of the dialogues follows mainly the characteristics of the Finnish Peräpohjola dialects, however, with additional features from other – in some cases Eastern – dialects. The Hungarian translation uses some characteristics that are widespread among the Hungarian dialects as well as disregards some orthographical rules in favour of a pronunciation-based spelling. Some of the characters speak in other dialects, some speak standard Finnish (or the local dialect) as a second language, and many of them use foreign expressions (Saami, Russian, German) in their speech.

Apart from the dialogues, the narrative stands out with its rich poetic imagery and neologism, which had also have to find their way into the Hungarian translation. The Hungarian versions of these expressions follow sometimes the logic of the Finnish originals, sometimes they differ from them, respecting, however, the intended meaning of the expressions and the overall style of the text.

Kettu's novel has been sold over 130 000 copies in Finland, has received one of the most renowned Finnish literary prizes (Runeberg prize, 2012), and has been translated into 17 languages.

Keywords: literary translation, dialects, neologisms.

LAURA BÁBA