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Aleksis Rubulis, BALTIC LITERATURE: A SURVEY OF FINNISH, ESTONIAN, LATVIAN, AND LITHUANIAN LITERATURES, (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), xv, 215 pp.

This book should never have been published. The University of Notre Dame Press deserves a fair share of the blame, because even a casual glance at this book makes it clear that something is drastically wrong with its editorial staff. Many of the mistakes which entirely destroy whatever value the book might have had are such that any mildly competent editor should be able to spot them. The book deserves no more by way of review. The illustrations below are appended for the benefit of those who find this condemnation too harsh.

Pages 170-174 could be the worst in the book. The Lithuanian poet, Antanas Baranauskas, is introduced with the words "another great poet of the time" (p. 170). This immediately follows several pages devoted to Donelaitis. However, Donelaitis died in 1780, while Baranauskas was born in 1835. Concerning the latter, among other things, we learn that "he accepted romanticism, which had been reinforced by the works of Adam Mickiewicz." The next page ends with the following sentence: "Thus, in 1865, a decree was passed which prohibited the use of Latin characters." Those who understood this as a ban on Mexican bandits have to wait several sentences before getting a chance to correct their error. On turning the page, the reader learns that the newspaper *Aušra* was smuggled into Lithuania where it became an important "instrument"; that Maironis "served both as a romantic poet and a prophet." The same Maironis, "after prohibition of the national anthem, .. .composed a prayer that resounded all over the country." What prohibition? The government of independent Lithuania surely did not ban its own national anthem. Could this have occurred during the first occupation by the Soviet Union, that is, in 1940? Since Maironis died in 1932, it is a small wonder that this prayer did become so famous.

The next section, on "Literature in the Twentieth Century," begins in an equally auspicious manner. We are told that at the "turn of the century," two important literary figures emerged. This particular century, thus, must have turned sometime after 1910, since neither of the two authors published anything before 1910. There is another oddity. The section which precedes the one dealing with literature in the twentieth century contains, among others, the accounts of four writers who belong almost completely to the twentieth century. Their dates of death are 1932, 1953, 1944, and one was still alive. This is what happens when some chapters in a book deal with periods of time and others, with particular literary movements.

It is not only the Lithuanian section which suffers from this queer attitude towards time. On p. 3, a person who died in 1884 is described as "late professor of Finnish at Helsinki University." Young Finland is said to be a literary movement which "originated" "toward the end of the nineteenth century" (p. 23). However, a "significant literary figure of this movement" was born in 1818, died in 1898, and his "chief contribution" was published in 1853. The contribution in question is a "historical novel." However, on p. 20, we find the claim that the "first novel written in the Finnish language" appeared in 1870. I guess that the earlier novel was written in Swedish, but this is only a guess and the author is of no help.

The absence of an objective time order is by no means the only fault. Many sentences are unintelligible, others, trivial to the point of being silly. Thus, Sibelius gets credit for composing "the famous symphonic poem whose intrinsic musical merit serves as a symbol of Finnish nationalism" (p. 24). Page 29 contains at least two choice items: "the impulsive novelist. .. heralded his original but subjective concepts in the volumes of his prose poems"; and "true individualists bearing typical Finnish images were critically presented by.. . ." And then we have an Estonian writer who "anticipated false prophets and the destruction of the world" (p. 94). A Latvian, to play no favorites, gets credit for a translation of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* which in style is "superior in quality" to the original. The same person wrote a long poem which "plays the most important role among his numerous works, for it serves as a model for any diligent and persevering youth." No doubt, an appropriate model. The poem's hero becomes "exhausted," "is struck by illness and dies" (p. 116).

Many readers will be startled to find out that the *Kalevala* "was the strongest foundation-stone of Finnish literature" and that "in this respect it was of even greater significance than Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey"* (p. 20). It is no less astonishing that "World War II induced changes in Krėvė's life and work" (p. 175). In any case, the "Estonians had their songs, myths, and tales prior to the birth of Christ." Many of these were even "rather original." But this originality, sad to say, is lost forever. "Many of these oral traditions failed to survive" (p. 57).

Any professional reader ought to be able to spot mistakes of this sort.

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