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ESTONIAN LITERATURE IN EXILE. An Essay by Ants Oras. With a bio-bibliographic appendix by Bernard Kangro. Lund, Estonian PEN-Club [and] Eesti Kirjanike Kooperatiiv, 1967, 88pp.

Like the national cultures and literatures of Finland, Latvia and Lithuania, those of Estonia, particularly its literature, are practically unknown in other countries. This is specifically true of the English-speaking world — a regrettable fact, since in some fields, notably in epic and folk poetry as well as in *Kunstdichtung*, Estonia can compete with a number of larger nations. There is, however, no English verse translation of the Estonian epic *Kalevipoeg* (The Son of Kalev) nor is there any anthology of Estonian folk verse in English. (Estonia can be proud of her magnificent folk poetry, at least 400,000 examples of which have been produced over the years by a country with a population of only one million). The attempts of the late Professor W. K. Matthews to translate Estonian poetry into English (*Anthology of Modern Estonian Poetry*, 1958, *Flames on the Wind*, a selection from the poetry of Gustav Suits, 1958, and *Child of Man*, selections from the poetry by Marie Under, 1955) must be considered interesting failures of a man in love with Estonian verse. Estonian literary poetry made a rather anemic start in the 17th century but in the 19th and especially in the 20th century it achieved high perfection and originality. If somebody should be looking for great unknowns to be translated into English, he could find them in Juhan Liiv, Gustav Suits, Marie Under, Heiti Talvik, or Betti Alver. Estonian prose has attained international stature with writers like Friedebert Tuglas, Anton Hansen Tammsaare, Karl August Hindrey, Karl Ristikivi, and Bernard Kangro. Not one of them is translated into English. There is not one satisfactory literary history of Estonia in English or in French, German or Spanish. The most sympathetic account is E. Howard Harris' *Literature in Estonia* (1943, 1947). Henno Jänes' *Geschichte der estnischen Literatur* (1965) is written with a similar warmth, but in descriptive quality it remains, with Harris' study, on the level of a college text book. Arvo Mägi's *Estonian Literature / An Outline* (1968) employs embarrassing English and is full of pretentious judgements (the author, himself a literary critic and novelist-poet-writer, devotes more space to his own writings than to many truly talented authors!). Against this background, what remains are the attempts at literary history in Soviet-occupied Estonia (*Eesti Kirjanduse Ajalugu*, I, II, III, 1965-69, with two additional volumes in preparation) where everything is judged as social or socialist development with its supposedly predestined tendency towards so-called "critical realism" and "socialist realism."

Free of the narrowness of some emigree critics as well as most of the critics of Soviet-occupied Estonia, the writings of Ants Oras, Estonia's leading essayist, critic, and poet-translator, now professor of English literature at the University of Florida, may strike one as truly illuminating. Oras has not yet written the general literary history of Estonia he has been planning, but in addition to his essays on Estonian writers scattered in periodicals he must be acclaimed for his three attempts in book form: *Storia della letteratura estone* (Milano, 1957, new edition in preparation); *Estonian Literary Reader* (Indiana University, 1963) with a brief but authoritative survey of Estonian literature, well chosen selections from Estonian prose and poetry, and a complete glossary; and *Estonian Literature In Exile*, an extensive critical essay devoted to the Estonian letters produced outside Estonia from 1945 to 1967. It is informative to read in the introduction to the latter that "quantitatively [Estonian literature in exile] exceeds the Estonian literature produced behind the Iron Curtain. 70,000 Estonians [living in exile] handicapped in a hundred ways but free, produce more than 1,000,000 Estonians enclosed behind the Iron Curtain. The comparative bibliography of Estonian post-war publications compiled by Bernard Kangro shows how deadening restrictions of the Communist regime have cramped literary production: less than 65,000 pages of belles-letters published in Soviet-occupied Estonia since 1945 as against 95,000 pages of refugee literature." Statistics aside, the high artistic quality of refugee writers is certainly astonishing. The situation may be compared to that of the great Polish emigration of the 19th century, with Mickiewicz, Norwid, Słowacki, and others. Ants Oras writes with vision, coherence and analytical depth. His panorama is both a masterful literary essay, supplemented by a few convincing verse-translations, and a scholarly investigation in poetics. Practically every high quality Estonian author is mentioned, but one misses very much Hanno Kompus, dean of Estonian art critics, considered one of Estonia's foremost literary stylists. An Estonian publishing house strangely omitted is the highly discriminating Vaba Eesti in Stockholm, which has produced Oras' own selected essays, *Laiemasse ringi* (Into a wider circle), 1961. Missing also, for obvious reasons, is an evaluation of Oras' own attainments as stylist-essayist and poet-translator which have enriched and widened the possibilities of Estonian literary expression. Readers interested in these achievements may be advised to consult *Estonian Poetry and*

Language / Studies in Honor of Ants Oras, edited by Viktor Koressaar, 1965, with a number of contributions dealing with Oras as writer, critic, and translator.

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