RELATIONS OF ESTONIAN EXILE BOOK TO THE NATIVE COUNTRY AND THE WORLD

ANNE VALMAS

Tallinna ulikooli akadeemiline raamatukogu Ravala pst. 10 15042 Tallinn, Estonia E. mail: Anne. Valmas@ear.ce

The objective of the article is to study the problems connected with the formation of Estonian literature in exile (1944–1991) and its mediation to foreign languages. The most widely spread means of connection with their homeland – the book – was not available to Estonian refugees due to political reasons. The publication of books in foreign languages was complicated owing to the authors' poor knowledge of languages, but quite often through the scantiness of interest of the world-wide public towards the subject matter of their works. Therefore, the creation of Estonian authors in exile for the most part remained inside the closed exile community and managed to take only a brief part in the world literature.

The article is based on the data, derived from the Collection of Estonian Literature in Exile by Academic Library of Tallinn Pedagogical University, the database Veiluvõõr, which records polite literature by Estonian authors in exile, as well as information, acquired in the Estonian archives of exile in the USA and Australia. The theoretical problems, related to the study and publication of exile literature in the world, have been only scantily investigated, a few of the treatments on the literature of various nations in exile have been employed in the article. In the article historicoanalytical methods have been followed.

The possibilities and preconditions for the formation of Estonian literature in exile

A forced leaving of the native country, that befell upon a large part of the population of Estonia as well as the other Baltic countries during World War II, caused a serious crises among Estonian intelligentsia, who had to seek alternative solutions to carry on their activities in unfamiliar conditions. The situation of authors, who were not proficient at foreign languages, proved especially complicated, most certainly they were not capable of creating belles-lettres under the given circumstances. The subject matter of their works was another handicap to their success.

The Estonians, who had to flee from their country, experienced a constrained transformation of the semeiosphere in exile, where their culture could no longer follow its natural rhythm of evolution. The abrupt alteration of their cultural area injected the Estonians with an ardent endeavour to preserve and foster the evolution of the Estonian creation even in the unfavourable conditions of exile, whereas it was practically inconceivable to forward the cause under the influence of the prevailing totalitarian system at home. The activities brought along a specific kind of cultural outbreak without the normal development to follow it. Although the Estonians in exile worked hard for the enlargement of their semeiospere by means of their national culture, by the nature of things the Estonian culture as a whole, including literature, remained but a subcultural phenomenon in the literary heritage of the world.

The losing their native country is doubtlessly a painful experience for all refugees. It was still tougher for those Estonians, who left their country in fear of the Russian invasion during World War II, hoping to return in a short while, the most optimistic individuals even within a couple of months.

Printed word became the primary source of information for the Estonian refugees, who were eagerly looking for any news about their native country from the very first days in exile. Their hopes did not come true because of the iron curtain, a certain extent of objective information could be retrieved only from the press of the free world.

As on account of their poor knowledge of foreign languages the majority of refugees were not able to learn about the events of the day from the information channels of the world, they realized that their primary task was to originate the literature, first of all the journals, in their native language.

The Estonians, who all of a sudden had to start anew in exile, had practically not managed to take any publications of the mother tongue along with them. At the same time they had an urgent need for reading as there was plenty of spare time in the refugee camps and they suffered from unbearable longing for home. The Estonian language books could have helped to relieve the pain. The first books were published at the end of 1944 and the literature in exile continued to appear until the liberation of Estonia. The Estonians in exile attempted to identify themselves through literature, as literature has been the most important means of identity for a nation throughout the whole history of mankind.

The formation of literature in exile was largely due to a great number of writers, who had fled from Estonia. In Sweden alone there were more than twenty authors, who were striving to publish their works. Several of them had brought along manuscripts, which they had completed at home. The presence of Estonian intelligentsia, providing a fertile ground for creative work, played a favourable role in the emergence of literary activities within the Estonian community in exile.

Thus, after 1944 another sphere of Estonian literature had arisen in the conditions of exile, which was not geographically but politically defined. The literature originated in the free world and books in Estonian have never been published in such a great amount all over the world, as within the period of 1944–1980. The number decreased later on. Nearly 4000 books, about 1500 of them belletristic, appeared during the whole era of exile. As a matter of fact, the production of polite literature within the decade of 1944–1954 was even higher in exile than in the homeland.

Introduction of Estonia to the world

Several other aspects besides supplying required reading material became important afterwards, including the necessity to preserve and advance the national culture as well as to introduce the real status of Estonia, actually of all the Baltic countries to the world, and thereby initiate the fight for freedom. Several works that explained the situation in Estonia, were translated into foreign languages for that reason, among them "Graves without crosses" (Ristideta hauad), an epic about the struggle of Estonian patriotic partisans by Arved Viirlaid that was published in eight languages, "When the Soviets come" (Kui venelased tulid) by Robert Raid in four languages, a travel book "Sailing to freedom" by Voldemar Veedam in more than twenty languages. Belletristic books by Estonian authors in exile and their descendants have been published in 25 foreign languages. Among the overall output of 400 odd titles in foreign languages, 140 were in English, 114 in Swedish, 27 in Latvian and merely 3 in Lithuanian. In addition to that a considerably large amount of political literature was published for disseminating in the course of protest demonstrations. Among several voluminous collections mention should be made of "The Baltic States 1940-1972", "The drama of Baltic peoples", "The history of the Estonian people". The symposium "Aspects of Estonian culture" was compiled with the aim of acquainting other nations with various branches of Estonian culture. Numerous articles on Estonian music, architecture, literature, science and history were published as separate editions on the basis of that comprehensive collection.

An admirable book "Estonia – story of a nation", which rendered Estonian issues to the world, was published in America under the auspieces of the jubilee foundation of K. Päts. The book was issued in at least 15 000 copies and was distributed in Canada as well. It is considered as a title with the largest impression among Estonian publications in foreign languages and maybe even within the entire literary output of exile.

Political propaganda literature was rather abundantly represented among the printed matter of exile, e.g. "Have the small nations a right to freedom and independence?", "Human rights and genocide in the Baltic states" and many others. Quite a number of political organizations were operating in exile and the publication of political works

was one of their functions among the rest. The Estonian National Foundation in Sweden, that had been organized in in 1946 in order to introduce the problems of Estonia and other Baltic countries to the rest of the world, was the most productive producer of such publications. In addition to the publication of 80 books during 1946–1996, the National Foundation published various periodicals. The best known titles among several others are "Newsletter from Behind the Iron Curtain", which was a weekly at the outset and a montly afterwards, a serial "East and West" and an information bulletin "Nachrichten aus dem Baltikum". The Estonian National Council in Sweden as well as the Estonian National Council in America, the Central Council of the Estonians in Canada and many other organizations were also characterized by enthusiastic activities.

Translation of polite literature of exile into foreign languages

While the Soviet literature in Estonia was produced in the Estonian language, the Estonian authors in exile, within the conditions of a free world, had the opportunity to enter the world literature. Yet they did not manage to reach that goal. The most highly renowned Estonian authors from the beginning of the forties, recognized as classics today, whose best works had appeared in Estonia and had been translated into foreign languages prior to their forced transition, namely Gustav Suits, Marie Under, August Gailit, August Mälk, Albert Kivikas, had moved to exile. The most frequently translated author in Estonia had been August Gailit, during the period of exile the number of translations was increased by eight of his books, several of them were reprints of his earlier works. "Toomas Nipernaadi" proved to be his most popular novel - it appeared in the German, Dutch, Czech, French, Finnish, Lithuanian, Latvian and Polish languages. The novels of August Mälk have been translated into the Finnish, Swedish, German and Latvian languages, nine anthologies of poetry by Marie Under have appeared in the English, German, Swedish, French and Finnish languages, the novel of Albert Kivikas "Nimed marmortahvlil" in the Finnish language and the anthology of poems by Gustav Suits "Flames in the wind" in the English language. During the time of exile 48 translations of the works by the above mentioned authors. mostly reprints of earlier editions, were published. Only a dozen or so of the translations were original, among them the greatest majority was formed by translations into the Latvian language, giving evidence of the lasting cultural relations between the two neighbouring nations in the conditions of exile. It appeared that only a few Estonian authors were readily acceptable to readers of other nationalities. The most highly renowned Estonian authors from the beginning of the forties, whose best works had appeared in Estonia and who are recognized as classics today, namely Gustav Suits, Marie Under, August Gailit, August Mälk, Albert Kivikas had moved to exile. It turned out that only a few authors were readily acceptable to other nationalities, for example August Gailit's works were translated into eight languages. "Toomas Nipernaadi" proved to be his most popular novel – it appeared in the Lithuanian, Latvian and Polish languages as well. But after all, the creation of those writers still remained rather marginal in the context of the world literature.

The situation of the younger generation of writers in exile, who had been educated in Estonia, was even more complicated. They were too old to acquire sufficient command of foreign languages, only a few of them succeeded in this matter. They proceeded to write in the Estonian language that they had learned in their homeland, while they had no opportunity to follow up with the evolution of the language in the native country. The native country, people and language are known to be the primary factors that are necessary for the development of a literature. Those conditions were only partly met in exile – the presence of merely a small ethnic group and at its disposal the language, learned in the homeland. The relative political freedom could compensate the serious deficiences only to a certain extent. Furthermore, the majority of readers had remained in Estonia as well. On the other hand it was far from easy to win through as an author in exile on the territory of a strange country, where the national subject matter was related either to the past experiences or the limited sphere of the Estonian community in exile.

The most heavily translated authors of the younger generation were Ain Kalmus, Arved Viirlaid and Valev Uibopuu. The first mentioned was fully capable to write his works in the English language, while the other two gentlemen managed to organize the translation of their creation in a sufficiently productive way.

The problems and conditions of their resident countries remained practically unfamiliar to the Estonian writers, who neither commanded foreign languages nor had any closer relations with the local inhabitants of their resident countries. Literature of such a peculiar essence could naturally spread only among the Estonian community in exile. It was distributed, at least in case of the output of larger publishing houses, to the Estonians all over the world, excluding the native country. In the conditions of exile society contacts with readers were weak, their opinion remained obscure. The number of actual readers could be rather meagre, as the books were frequently bought for other reasons, such as the contribution to the "Estonian cause", the enrichment of the national collection on the bookshelf, etc. The reception of Estonian literature has never been studied in exile and at the present time it is not possible any longer.

The descendants of the Estonians in exile, who had been raised and educated outside Estonia, were not particularly interested in the national literature any more. They were more closely interrelated with the surroundings of their country of residence than the previous generation.

The relations of literature of exile with homeland

The literature of exile aroused great expectations and curiosity in the native country, as the Estonians at home hoped to learn through it about the way of thinking and life of their fellow countrymen in the free world. Unfortunately, the spreading of the publications was prevented by the iron curtain and its gradual penetration into Estonia started only in the middle of the 60ies, when the literature in exile was lectured as a special course to the students of philology at Tartu University. Still, the rigid censorship officially allowed the introduction of an extremely limited amount of publications. All printed matter that described the life in Estonia before World War II as well as the life of the Estonians in exile was a strictly prohibited reading in the homeland. The judgement of the censors was unpredictable. On several occasions the authors in exile strived to compose their works in the best possible way to please the censors of the Estonian SSR, in spite of that the works never reached the readers in the native country. The author's name could present a sufficient reason for banning a publication. After the regaining of freedom at the end of the previous century, when the literature of exile finally arrived in the homeland without restrictions, a large part of it had already lost its timeliness and unhappily proved of no particulal interest any longer.

The literature of exile within the world

There was even less hope for the literature of exile to become part of the world literature. Katarina Warfvinge of Estonian descent has written in a symposium, published by Uppsala University in Sweden:

"The rich Swedish Estonian literature has not received much attention from Swedish society. The general public has been unaware that close to fifty Estonian authors have lived and worked in Sweded for many years. Swedish literature would surely be enhanced if greater attention were paid to the literature that is published here in foreign language" [5; 257].

Estonian autors in exile were evidently addressing their works just to their own community, their creation was practically unknown to the rest of the world. The language of writing was probably the greatest barrier to its comprehension. The number of translators, who could render Estonian texts into foreign languages was very small. On the other hand, it is most likely that the works of just a few Estonian authors could have aroused a wider interest. Political circumstances were also disfavourable. The attitude of the authorities in Sweden, which was the country of residence for the most outstanding authors in exile, was quite representative of the case – in fear of provoking the "Russian bear" with a slightest consideration of the needs of the refugees, they literally disregarded the presence of Estonian writers in their country.

The world would only acknowledge an earnest message of global importance in a perfectly phrased written form. The written text would then capture the attention of a translator and reach its goal. For a small nation with relatively scanty intellectual resources, it was extremely difficult to manifest itself on the universal level. Estonian authors confined themselves to the problems of their small ethnic group and community in exile time and again. An Estonian author of exile Ain Kalmus discussed those issues as early as in 1954, "Ripped off from his native country and people the author is compelled to search for other conditions and topics. Proceeding from the former principle, we could suppose that our literature of exile should develop into a so-called world literature, because the foremost preconditions of international literature are release from limited nationalism and interpretation of universal problems" [2, 8]. Even the most outstanding representatives of the Estonian literature of exile (Karl Ristikivi, Gert Helbemäe) were not able to pilot their way into the world literature. The Russian expatriate authors of "the third wave" were in no better situation. According to Eduard Limonov, the works of Vladimir Nabokov had been rejected by the American publishers for 26 and his own works for even more times [3, 219]. Sergei Dovlatov maintained that in America only those individuals, who were driven by a strong inward urge, committed themselves to serious literature. Literature was not prestigious in that country. Even when an author had been a respected person in Moscow or Leningrad, he was nobody in America. Literature was appreciated by a very small circle of readers. While it was oppressed by ideological conditions in Russia, in America the market and the demand were practically the only factors to be considered. "A gifted book" and "a profitable book" do not always coincide, yet "an ideological book" is practically never "a gifted book". In Soviet Union it was naturally thought otherwise. Therefore the American system gave an author at least a little bit of hope and opportunity [3, 239]. The Finns, who had moved to Sweden in search of better living conditions during 1960-70, were in a totally different situation. They had left their country just for economic reasons with no political motives involved. Therefore fewer representatives of the intelligentsia, including the writers, came to live in Sweden. Still, the belletristic literature in Sweden was published both in the Finnish and the Swedish languages. It was mostly focussed on the issues of their own society, dealing with their common problems. Among the leading motives were work and unempoyment as well as the homesickness that overshadowed their lives, but the hardships were compensated by better living conditions. Contrary to the Baltic expatriates they had the opportunity to return home whenever they wanted. On the social plane their literature attempted to reinforce the cultural identity of the Swedish Finns and to display its strength. Only a few works of the Finnish expatriates have gained publicity outside the Finnish or Swedish society [4, 234]. They were evidently confronted with the same difficulties as the Estonian authors in exile - the lack of support from their native country, the

development of their native language in the homeland and of the small ethnic group abroad, deficiency of interest towards their problems ouside their close community. The literature of the younger generation of Estonian refugees and the descendants of Estonian refugees in exile. Those authors, who had received their education in a foreign country, had been raised and schooled in different conditions, were in a better position to introduce their creation to the world. A completely new pleiad of writers has arisen by now. Although deriving from Estonian families, they no longer write in the Estonian language. On the other hand, they quite frequently use Estonian subject matter or base their memoirs on the spoken recollections of their parents. The Estonian language skills and writing abilities are notably diverse among that generation of authors. The writers, who were born in the 30ies and attended school in Estonia for a couple of years or even without any schooling in their homeland, have proceeded to create in the Estonian language. Enn Nou, Helga Nou, Ilona Laaman and Elin Toona are probably the best known representatives of that group. The latter is perfectly capable of writing her stories in the English language as well and has published her works in both of the languages. Elin Toona herself composed the English language version "In search of Coffee Mountains" of her novel "Lotukata". The youngest in the list of purely Estonian language based writers is Aarand Roos, who was born in 1940.

All the writers, whose date of birth was in the 40ies, have not been writing in the Estonian language any longer. Most of them were born outside Estonia. It is an eloquent sign of the considerable decline of national significance, depending on the ambitions of the families, their children were raised as Estonians or the citizens of the country, where they were currently living. Thus it was possible, that even when both of the parents were Estonian, their children did not understand Estonian. A few of the authors of Estonian origin might have some knowledge of their mother tongue, but usually they are no longer capable to write in it. They can be considered as authors of Estonian descent, who are using Estonian matter in their works (Maarja Talgre, Enel Melberg, Ann Mihkelson and some others). They write about their parents, their homeland and flight from it. Several of the works have been translated into Estonian and published in Estonia, but for the most part they are only available in the English or Swedish language. The majority of those books have no longer been created in the conditions of a closed society and therefore they are universally more popular with the readers. A few of the writers of Estonian descent have managed to make their way in the world with considerably better results, although not always in the genres of serious literature. Among the latter, Malle Vällik (under the pseudonym of Molly Liholm) from Canada has recently established herself as the most prolific author, whose 7 different novels in ten languages have been published within a women's book series by the publishing house Harlequin Books since the end of the 90ies. Her books have not been translated into Estonian and as a matter of fact they would be of no impact for the Estonian cultural inheritance.

Sergei Dovlatov, an author of Russian origin, who was a journalist in Tallinn at one time and afterwards emigrated to the USA, has discussed the delicate issue of literature in exile, "Then I finally understood what is most important. It is pointless to divide literature into the official and underground, the Russian and Soviet, literature inside and that of the diaspora. There is one literature – world literature. And if you are lucky at birth (you have talent) and you will have a good translator and efficient literary agent, then after a while, you will become a small part of the enormous whole" [1, 323].

Although in 1944 the cream of Estonian writers fled to the west, where they were followed by a younger generation in exile, their impact to the world literature in the conditions of a tolerant political situation remained rather marginal. They did not have adequate political and linguistic freedom to disseminate their creation even under the circumstances of a liberal world. Therefore the authors primarily addressed their own community. Estonian culture in exile remained but a subcultural phenomenon in their countries of residence as well as the homeland, as their books were not available at home at the time, when they would have been received with great interest. Afterwards, when independence was restored in Estonia, those works had largely lost their timeliness. Most probably there were no such bright stars or extremely powerful writers among the authors in exile, who would have been able to establish the high status of Estonian literature in the world. New Estonian authors were not born in exile. The younger generation of writers was sooner related to their country of residence than to Estonia.

Submited in January 2005

REFERENCES

- DOVLATOV, Sergei. From the USA with Love. In Soviet and East European literature in exile.
 Los Angeles, 1984.
- MÄND, Evald. Kirjanduslik päevik: Kuhu suundub pagulaskirjandus? Vaba Eesti Sõna, 1954,
 märts.
 - 3. The Third Wave: Russian Literature in Emigration. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984. ISBN 0-88233-782-3
 - 4. VALLENIUS, Erkki. Kansankodin kuokkavieraat. Helsinki, SKS, 1998. ISBN 951-746-017-1
- WARFVINGE, Katarina. Fran flyktinglitteratur till sverigeestnisk litteratur. In Litteraturens gränsland – Invandrar- och minoritetslitteratur I nordiskt perspektiv. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2002. ISBN 9186624547

RELATIONS OF ESTONIAN EXILE BOOK TO THE NATIVE COUNTRY AND THE WORLD

ANNE VALMAS

Abstract

Exile is nothing extraordinary by itself, all through the history men of culture were particularly accustomed to staying abroad once and again either for study, self-improvement or drawing of inspiration.

The massive flee of the inhabitants of the Baltic countries in the autumn of 1944 turned into a totally unprecedented situation. The refugees, who had presumably left their country in fear of the Russian invaders only for a few months and hoped to return in a short while, could actually come back to their homeland not before the lapse of a half-century.

The first books were published in the autumn of 1944, altogether 4000 titles were issued within the fifty years of exile. Unfortunately, the creation in exile bears the impress of isolation as the Estonians outside Estonia were blocked from their homeland as well as the rest of the world. The lack of contact with their native country and people had a detrimental influence on the development of their language as well as their recognition of the problems of the Estonian people at home.

As the substance of the literary composition of Estonian authors in exile was primarily limited to the internal matters of their own community, their works were not readily translated. Several attempts were made to expand the circulation area of Estonian publications in exile. The works of the older generation of writers, who had already become widely known earlier in Estonia, reached slightly higher figures of distribution. Quite often the translation of the publications of the Estonian authors in exile was hampered for political reasons. For instance, the authorities of Sweden were in such dread of the Russians that they simply disregarded the existence of refugees in their country.

The creation of quite a few outstanding Estonian authors in exile has remained in obscurity for the sake of international policy.

Those Estonians, who were educated in foreign countries, had shaped and studied under materially different circumstances, were in a better position regarding the resources to present their creation to readers. By now a whole Pleiad of young authors has emerged, who spring from Estonian families but no longer write in the Estonian language, although quite often they use Estonian substance or base their memoirs on the spoken recollections of their parents. The production of Estonian authors in exile would have been of great interest in Estonia at the time of its creation. Unfortunately it was impossible then, the works of Estonian authors of exile started to arrive in the homeland without hindrance only after the gaining of independence at the beginning of the 90ics. By that time many a work had lost its ideological acuteness.

Although the cream of Estonian writers left the country in 1944 and they were followed by a younger generation of authors in exile, their impact to the world literature remained rather marginal in the conditions of a tolerant political situation. They did not have adequate political or linguistic freedom to disseminate their creation even under the circumstances of a liberal world. Therefore the authors primarily addressed only their own community and Estonian culture in exile remained but a subcultural phenomenon in the homeland as well as the countries of residence.

ESTŲ EMIGRANTŲ KNYGOS SANTYKIAI SU GIMTAJA ŠALIMI IR PASAULIU

ANNE VALMAS

Santrauka

Emigracija ar išvykimas savaime nėra ypatingas reiškinys, nes ilgus amžius kultūros veikėjai vykdavo studijuoti, tobulėti ar semtis ikvėpimo i svečias šalis.

1944 metų masinis Baltijos regiono gyventojų pasitraukimas buvo visiškai anksčiau nematyta situacija. Pabėgėliai, kurie, regis, paliko tėvynę tik keliems mėnesiams ir tikėjosi netrukus sugrįžti, iš tikrųjų pamatė namus tik po pusės šimto metu.

Pirmoji knyga buvo išleista 1944 metų rudenį, o iš viso per 50 emigracijos metų pasirodė 4000 pavadinimų knygų. Deja, kūryba emigracijoje buvo izoliuota, nes estai už Estijos ribų buvo atskirti ir nuo gimtinės, ir nuo likusio pasaulio. Tai, kad ryšiai su tėvyne ir jos žmonėmis visiškai nutrūko, neigiamai paveikė ir kalbos raida, ir galimybę suvokti Estijoje likusių žmonių problemas.

Kadangi emigrantų estų autorių literatūrinės kūrybos esmę sudarė riboti nuosavos bendruomenės vidaus reikalai, tai jų niekas nesiveržė versti. Buvo pastangų išplėsti estų leidinių platinimo teritoriją emigracijoje. Senosios kartos rašytojų, kurie tapo plačiai žinomi dar Estijoje, darbai buvo išplatinami didesniais tiražais. Dažnai estų autorių vertimą į kitas kalbas varžė politinės priežastys. Pavyzdži Švedijos valdžia taip bijojo Rusijos, kad paprasčiausiai nekreipė dėmesio į šalyje gyvenanči emigrantus.

Kelių žymių estų autorių kūriniai emigracijoje liko niekam nežinomi dėl tarptautinės politikos sumetimu.

Tie estai, kurie mokėsi užsienio šalyse, brendo ir studijavo kitomis materialinėmis sąlygomis, turėjo daugiau galimybių pateikti savo kūrinius skaitytojams. Šiuo metu atsirado gana nemažai jaunų autorių, kurie kilo iš estiškų šeimų, bet neberašo estų kalba, nors dažnai savo darbuose naudoja estiškus motyvus ir atsiminimus iš tėvų pasakojimų. Estų autorių darbai emigracijoje būtų labai dominę skaitytojus to laikotarpio Estijoje. Tačiau jų platinimas šalyje tuo metu buvo neįmanomas, tik atkūrus Nepriklausomybę emigracijos autorių darbai nekliudomai galėjo pasiekti Estijos skaitytojus. Tuo metu daugelis jų jau prarado ideologinį aktualumą.

Nors 1944 m. iš Estijos išvyko geriausi rašytojai, o vėliau užaugo jaunieji emigracijos talentai, jų indėlis į pasaulio literatūrą politinės tolerancijos sąlygomis buvo nedidelis. Jie neturėjo pakankamai pilietinės ar kalbinės laisvės, kad galėtų platinti kūrinius netgi liberaliame pasaulyje. Todėl autoriai dažniausiai rašė tik savo bendruomenei, o Estijos emigrantų kultūra liko ir savo tėvynės, ir gyvenamosios šalies subkultūra.