Images of Finland in Interwar Romania

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1. Introduction

At a closer look, it would seem that there have been a lot of translation of Finnish literature into Romanian, and that Romania was more interested in Finland that vice versa. Finnish culture has been taken along with the "Northern combo pack" comprising Danish, Norwegian and Swedish. Romania has always been drawn to Finland and its Northern model. This, however, has not always been a two-way street. Although the Finns have left early confessions about us, especially in the shape of travel journals, at a higher cultural level, Romania has published more comprehensive works on Finland. The present article presents three important interwar personalities in the field of Finnish culture and literature reception in Romania: Raoul Bossy, I. Simionescu and Horia Oprişan.

2. Raoul Bossy

Romanian Ambassador Raoul Bossy only spent two years in Finland, during the interwar period (1934–1936). His activity was not confined to diplomatic contacts and implicitly, to strengthening political and strategic relations between Romania and Finland. Raoul Bossy carried out an intense cultural activity, brought Romanian culture to the far north through solid cultural measures – encouraging the exchange of ideas, organizing an extraordinary exhibit for Romanian culture in Helsinki, gathering scattered Finnish writings about Romania in a volume to which he added valuable comments. Regarding the Romanian perspective on Finland, we can find a rich source of information in *Amintiri din viaţa diplomatică (1918–1940)* (Memories of a Diplomatic Life), published in 1999 at Humanitas, a memoir volume written by Raoul Bossy where, he presents, in retrospect, key moments from his diplomatic career. The Helsingfors or Helsinki "episode" is presented here, from the period 1934–1936. Bossy confesses how, even before leaving Bucharest, N. Titulescu had encouraged him to find an appropriate formula for closing an agreement with Finland "un pact de amiciţie, conciliaţiune şi arbitraj"[1] (Bossy 1999: 236).

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[1] "[...] a pact for friendship, conciliation and arbitrage".

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He reaches his destination and thanks to his contacts with other representatives of diplomatic missions, Bossy understands Finland's delicate situation at the time. Through formal or less formal diplomatic contacts, he manages to portray Finland as seen from both the outside and the inside.

In the fall of 1934, Raoul Bossy participates to the celebration of Finland's centenary for its great writer Aleksis Kivi: "avusesem şi grijă să public în *Convorbiri literare* un articol al meu despre Kivi, ca să arăt că autorul finlandez este cunoscut la noi"[2] (Bossy 1999: 244). One year later, in 1935, at the *Kalevala* centenary, Bossy discovered that *Convorbiri literare* had published some fragments from it in Romanian translation a few decades before.

Raoul Bossy's volume of memoirs is a valuable source for understanding the way in which the Romanian space was regarded in the interwar period. The Romanian diplomat would have the opportunity to meet different local personalities who introduced him to the Finnish patriarchal lifestyle, especially through trips into the natural landscape, to mansions that reminded the author of the aristocratic ones back home. The Finnish adventure is, unfortunately, short lived: on November 28, 1936, Raoul Bossy would leave Helsinki.

An exotic detail: on July 17, 1934, Raoul Bossy leaves for the far Finnish north, covering thousands of kilometres and discovering the unique regions of Lapland. After travelling by train, car, ship, after visiting Rovaniemi, Inari, Ivalo, Bossy finally reaches the Arctic Ocean, in the remote lands of the frozen north: "De cînd este lumea, n-a fost picior de român pe aici, şi nici nu-mi vine să cred să mai fie altul vreme îndelungată! De altminteri, prea puţină omenire trebuie să se fi perindat pe meleagurile acestea sălbatice din vremurile preistorice pînă azi"[3] (Bossy 1999: 252–253). Bossy travels to an impressive number of regions and neighbouring cuntries and describes, for instance, nature and the tribes of Lapland. He crosses over to the neighbouring country and admires the impressive Norwegian coasts. Raoul Bossy takes other trips to the Scandinavian countries, and visits Stockholm, Uppsala, Copenhagen, but also Carelia, Tallinn and Russia; however, these visits are only briefly described.

3. I. Simionescu

I. Simionescu's book, *Finlanda. Oameni, locuri, lucruri* (Finland. People, Places, Things) is published shortly after the First World War, in 1922. This work is structured in five chapters – where each of them highlights a particular aspect of this Nordic territory. This is the first valuable, documented monograph to be published in our country. We will focus on a few aspects which can only be described as often amusing and far from being *politically correct*, as the modern terminology would describe them.

[2] "I had made sure to publish one of my articles on Kivi in *Convorbiri literare*, to show that the Finnish writer is well known in our country".

[3] "No Romanian has set foot here since the beginning of time, and it is hard to believe that another will for a long time to come! In fact, few people must have walked these wild places since prehistoric times to our day".

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Chapter I, titled *Locurile* (*The Places*), highlights Finland's geographical setting. Even if "după aşezare [...] ar trebui să fie un pustiu de ghiaţă, la margenea căruia abea câteva săptămâni din an ar creşte puţină iarbă firavă, pipernicită şi rară"[4] (Simionescu 1922: 3), the people is very hard-working and manages to get by very well. The author states that the Finns have reached "o stare [...] mai înfloritoare ca a noastră"[5] (Simionescu 1922: 3). These pieces of information, generally of less importance, have a greater value due to the period when they were collected. An interesting detail: it is mentioned here that Finlad has over 100,000 lakes. Surprisingly enough, one of the oldest authorized Romanian writings about Finland manages to get this close to the real number of lakes. Certain works published tens of years after, or even travel journals published after 1989, wrongly count the total number of lakes.

The second chapter is reserved to the inhabitants. The typical Finn is described as "mai mult înalt, decât scund, cu părul bălan, cu ochii albaştri şi cu trăsături grosolane"[6] (Simionescu 1922: 7). From a linguistic point of view, Finnish is relatively similar to Hungarian; thus, the common origins of the two peoples. Yet the Finns differ in character from the Hungarians in that they are "răbdător, stăruitor, dar şi închis în fire, încet la mişcări, neîncrezător şi iute la mânie. La beţie repede scoate cuţitul nelipsit de la brâu"[7] (Simionescu 1922: 7). A rather raw quotation that cannot be commented, for obvious reasons.

The author continues to discuss about the saunas or "steam showers" which are a must of every Finnish household. After each sauna, the Finns have a cold shower or, many times, no matter the cold, they step outside in the snow. As they have been accustomed since childhood "nu se ruşinează să intre bărbaţi la un loc cu femei. Nu se aude niciodată o vorbă jignitoare, vreun cuvânt cu înţeles necuviincios"[8] (Simionescu 1922: 7).

Culture is also an important part of Finns' lives. The first people to achieve literacy were the priests, and the book that taught them to write and read was the Bible. Until the 19th century, when local schools were founded, culture belonged to the sphere of religion. Culture began its development when secular literacy policy was implemented. Not too long afterwards the universities were founded. By 1910 Finland had an illiteracy rate of 1%, while Romania's was as high as 60%. In 1919 340 journals and magazines were published. At the end of this chapter the author concludes that Finland is superior to the countries of Western Europe.

The third chapter talks about *The Past* of the Finnish people. At its origins there are the Finns, who were invaded by Germanic tribes and then by the Swedes. The Christianization of the Finns was carried out at the beginning of the 12th century by the Swedes, which facilitated the latter's extension of their political domination

[4] "[...] judging by its location […] it should be an ice desert, at the edge of which there is some thin, runty and scattered grass growing for a mere few weeks a year".

[5] "[...] a more prosperous state than ours".

[6] "[...] rather tall, than short, with blond hair, blue eyes and harsh features".

[7] "[...] patient, persistent, but also an introvert, slow in his movements, mistrustful and swift to anger. When drunk they quickly reach for the knife they always carry on them".

[8] "[...] there is no shame in having men in the same place with women. One never hears offensive or inappropriate words".

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over Finland. I. Simionescu considers this Swedish influence as beneficial for the Finns, even though Finland took part in all armed conflicts of the Swedes. The religious reform led to a rapprochement between the two countries, although Finland was in the position of a conquered state. The fight against the Eastern threat brought Finland the title of Grand Duchy. On December 6th 1917 Finland gains its independence. This country will become a democratic republic, with a president elected for six years. The parliament had 200 members, elected for three years through direct vote by the people. The legal age to vote was 24, equally applied for men and women. Women also had the right to be members of the parliament.

Chapter IV is reserved to economy and infrastructure, and *The cultural and artistic life* of the Finnish people is analyzed in the last chapter, the fifth. I. Simionescu describes Finland's literary life as intense and he divides it into three periods. The first period lasts until the 16th century and is dedicated to oral traditional poetry. The second half of the 17th century marks the appearance of the first printed books; the literature published in this period belonged to the field of theology. The third period is characterized by the fight for supremacy between the Swedish and Finnish languages. Due to the political context, Swedish was more often used for literary works. In the nineteenth century, *Kalevala*, the national epic poem of Finland, marks the beginnings of modern literature. Among the painters, Edelfelt and Gallén are mentioned, and among musicians Sibelius is remembered as the one whose concerts had become known worldwide (Simionescu 1922).

I. Simionescu manages, thus, to offer Romania an early picture of Finland, taking into account different and complex aspects.

4. Horia Oprişan

Horia Oprişan is among the few Romanians who had the chance to live longer in Finland in the interwar period. The opportunity came through his appointment as press attaché and, for a shorter period, as a lecturer at the University of Helsinki. Horia Oprişan became known in Romanian culture because of his writings from the interwar period on the subject of Finnish literature and culture reception. He also signed a series of articles on the subject for *Universul literar*. One of the articles is *Doi mari scriitori finlandezi: Aleksis Stenvall Kivi şi Frans Eemil Sillanpää* (Two great Finnish writers: Aleksis Stenvall Kivi and Frans Eemil Sillanpää), "socotiţi a fi cei mai de seamă din întreaga viaţă literară a Finlandei"[9] (Oprişan 1943a: 4). Aleksis Kivi's work illustrates the 19th century, while Sillanpää's focuses on the 20th century. The similar living environments of the two, the subjects they dedicated their writings to, the themes they have approached are factors that make their works very similar. Horia Oprişan motivates the choice for presenting the two through the argument that Romanian readers want to know their works "deoarece ambii au note comune de mare intensitate ca subiect şi fel de a trata, cu scriitorii noştri din epoca zisă a Sămănătorismului şi chiar după el"[10] (Oprişan 1943a: 4). Finland has never

[9] "[...] considered to be the most important writers of the entire literary life of Finland".

[10] "[...] as both have common ground regarding subject and manner of approach with our writers from the *Sămănătorism*era and even beyond that".

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known this kind of literary movement, even though "este o ţară numai de ţărani"[11] (Oprişan 1943a: 4). Horia Oprişan states that even if the Finnish peasant did not manage to build cities such as those of the Western World, he channelled the spirit of Finland. Oprişan states that a statistic study of what was written between 1840 and 1940 would show that 80% of the works have the village as the location for the plot. This leads to the conclusion that there may be a parallelism between Finnish and Romanian literature, as the two writers can be compared with Mihail Sadoveanu and Liviu Rebreanu. Liviu Rebreanu is similar to Frans Eemil Sillanpää, and his novel *Ion* is translated into Finnish, while Mihail Sadoveanu is similar to Kivi.

The first Finnish writer he portrays in number 4 of the magazine *Universul literar* is Aleksis Stenvall Kivi. The writer comes from a modest background, yet he will come to write the masterpiece of Finnish literature *Seven Brothers*. With a frail health, he will be admitted to a hospital in Helsinki. Two years later, on December 31st, the writer will pass away at the age of 38. The author notes here „strania coincidenţă biografică cu Mihail Eminescu"[12] (Oprişan 1943a: 4). The novel *Seven Brothers*, which took him nine years to complete, is an epic tale, in dialogue, which portrays country life, with strong religious accents and in which the influence of Cervantes and Homer can be detected. The central element of the novel is the Finnish peasant, with everything this entails: humour, flaws, qualities. The novel *Seven Brothers* represents the synthesis of the Finnish spirit, which, in time, has become a masterpiece of Finnish literature, but by then had not received good reviews: "August Ahlqvist, poet şi profesor la Universitate, a atacat cu o furie sângeroasă această operă, acuzată că aduce pe primul plan urâtul, instinctele primare, vulgarul şi atâtea alte elemente cari constitue esenţa sufletului şi a caracterului ţăranului finlandez"[13] (Oprişan 1943a: 4). Horia Oprişan states that Kivi's peasant character was too tough, rough, in shades too harsh for August Ahlqvist, who would probably have accepted much easier "nişte ţărani gen Alecsandri sau Grigorescu, diafani, nenaturali"[14] (Oprişan 1943a: 4).

But what is Horia Oprişan's opinion on interwar Frans Eemil Sillanpä?" [...] spre deosebire de Kivi, acesta este un fin şi pătrunzător psiholog. Cu o artă de chirurg şi cu o plăcere diabolică, taie şi scoate la lumină măruntaele sufletului omenesc"[15] (Oprişan 1943b: 6). He was the writer of the poor; and his work portrayed their life of suffering, their permanent struggle for survival. Among the remarkable novels depicting this endless struggle of man, we list *Meek Heritage*, published in 1919, *The Maid Silja* (1931), *A Man's Way* (1932), *People in the Summer Night* (1935).

Still in the literary domain, Horia Oprişan writes about *Viaţa literară fineză* (Finnish literary life). Published in Helsinki, in 1943, the article does not necessarily

[11] "[...] it is a country of peasants".

[12] "[...] the strange biographical coincidence with MihaiEminescu".

[13] "August Ahlqvist, poet and University professor, has furiously attacked this work, accused that it brings to the foreground the ugly, the primal instincts, the vulgar and so many other elements that constitute the essence of the Finnish peasant's spiritual essence and character".

[14] "[...] some peasants in the style of Alecsandri or Grigorescu, ethereal, unauthentic".

[15] "[...] unlike Kiwi, he is a subtle and thorough psychologist. With the artistic skill and pleasure of a diabolical surgeon, he cuts and reveals the insides of the human soul".

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begin on an optimistic note; its author mentions since the first time that literary life in Finland "pentru răstimpul ultimilor doi ani, nu aduce elemente de mare răsunet menite a reliefa efortul spiritual al ţării întru câştigarea unui loc de frunte în concernul nordic"[16] (Oprişan 1943c: 4). This is motivated, to some degree, by the wars that Finland was involved in, as in his view Finns are not „pe drumul luptei spirituale şi al unei eflorescenţe literaro-artistice"[17] (Oprişan 1943c: 4).

The first genre to be analyzed is drama, whose quality is disputed, as the author claims it lacks a national repertoire since its origins are influenced by Swedish theatre. For this reason, there have not been many Finnish theatre plays. On Kivi's, Sillanpää's or Topelius' works, Horia Oprişan argues that they have been somewhat forgotten, as they were played only under certain conditions, to remember those who wrote them. A play worthy of being staged is a genuine literary event. In this sense, Maria Jotuni whose writings are "consecrate analizei sufletului feminin, dar mai ales conflictelor de ordin sexual şi psiho-fiziologic"[18] (Oprişan 1943c: 4), is a good example. An accomplished play seems to be Arvi Pohjanpää's comedy, *Keisarin Käräjät*, one of the best in Finnish theatre. The two authors are joined by playwright Lauri Haarla who makes his debut in 1923 with the play *Lemminpoika*; in 1940 he offers the drama *Kunianmies*, "scrisă într´un stil colorat, cu un vocabular stilizat şi´ntr´o factură romantico-expresionistă"[19] (Oprişan 1943: 4); but one that lacks dynamic and plot.

Just like theatre, Finnish poetry has not come forth with creations of great significance; it has rather been characterized as "sub mediocre ca valoare şi sărace cantitativ, aceasta chiar pentru lirica războiului"[20] (Oprişan 1943c: 4). Still Yrjö Jylhä stands out, with the volume *Kiirastuli* (Purgatory). We should mention here also Elina Vaara, with the volume *Loitsu* (The Spell) and Paavo Hynynen who dedicated his poetry to the land and to those who fought to defend the country. Arvi Kivimaa and Unto Kupiainen are other war poets, whose works have a high aesthetic class.

If the two genres had a harder time in making themselves known in Finland's literary history, the epic genre generated a few echoes. Thus, Martti Merenmaa's novel, *Markkinat Kissapotissa*, is considered the best novel of 1942. The writer is said to be a Hamsun of Finland, as the Norwegian author had a great influence on Finnish writers; an influence that Sillanpää and Maria Jotuni have also felt. The plots of the works are developed around life in the Finnish village, a fact which contrasts with the rise of industrial Finland. Economic development seems unnatural and the return to rural life through literature comes as a refuge. One controversial novel was *Ruumiinviisaus* (Wiseness of the Body) of author Iris Uurto. The novel tells the extraordinary story of a woman who falls in love with her husband only after his death. "Iris Uweto [sic!] se dovedeşte a fi o foarte fină psihologă, vădind o

[16] "[...] for the last two years, does not bring elements of impact, meant to highlight the spiritual effort of the country to win a top place in the Northern group".

[17] "[...] on the path of spiritual struggle and literary-artistic efflorescence".

[18] "[...] dedicated to the analysis of the feminine spirit, especially sexual and psycho-physiological conflicts".

[19] "[...] written in a colourful style, figurative vocabulary and in a romantic-expressionist manner".

[20] "[...] below average and poor in quantity, this even for the poetry of war".

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deosebită înclinaţiune pentru analiză, spirit de observaţie şi aducere pe prim plan a stărilor care stau ascunse în străfundurile sufletului"[21] (Oprişan 1943c: 4).

Towards the end of 1943, Horia Oprişan writes an article about the characters of Finnish literature (*Siluete literare fino-suedeze*/ Finnish-Swedish Literary Figures). "Johannes Linnankoski (1869–1913) [...] cel mai delicat şi totodată cel mai fin şi uman dintre toţi scriitorii pe care pământul finez i-a născut"[22] (Oprişan 1943d: 7). Horia Oprişan is impressed by the way in which this writer manages to cross Finnish borders into universal literature. He refers to *The Song of the Blood-Red Flower*[23] as "perla literaturii fineze"[24] (Oprişan 1943d: 7).

The series of articles dedicated to Finland also includes the one where Horia Oprişan analyses *Cartea, editorii şi cetitorii în Finlanda* (Book, Editors and Readers in Finland) from a socio-literary point of view; he plans to analyse the importance attached to the book in Finnish life during the interwar period. The author was impressed to discover the number of copies in which a book was printed, and even more by the fact that those who step inside the library are passionate readers; he highlights, however, the fact that not everything written and printed was valuable. In a somewhat harsh manner he states that: "Ironici cum suntem şi ne stă bine astfel, am putea spune că e ceva natural această frenezie a imprimeriei într-o ţară în care hârtia e mai ieftină decât apa şi unde scriitorul şi cetitorul nu cer prea mult unul de la altul"[25] (Oprişan 1943e: 5); he explains in the following lines that the Finns struggle to resist two temptations: alcohol and paper. If against the first one, the state took certain measures, the second was left to spread at will. As Finland is covered in forests, it can afford the luxury of printing many books, and, moreover, deforestation cleared the path for agriculture. He also remarks on the aesthetic aspect of the book where he feels more was invested in it than into the actual content of the book; he considers this a better attitude than that of the Romanian people, who stayed faithful to the critical spirit and the seriousness of the French style. In Romania, a book "nu e o şuncă sau bucată de brânză care se vând după aspect"[26] (Oprişan 1943e: 5).

In terms of translations, after titles from Swedish literature, the next in number are translations from English, then German, and further behind, French, Spanish, Italian etc. The Finns' appetite for reading determined Horia Oprişan to state that "în Finlanda şi ţăranii citesc cărţi de literatură. Am rămas surprins de ceea ce am văzut în casele ţăranilor"[27] (Oprişan 1943e: 5). Furthermore, it would be worth mentioning that more than five hundred newspapers are printed throughout the entire country.

[21] "Iris Uweto [sic!] Turns out to be a very subtle psychologist, revealing a particular tendency for analysis, observance and bringing to the foreground the hidden feelings from the depth of the soul".

[22] "Johannes Linnankoski (1869–1913) [...] the most delicate, subtle and humane of writers born on Finnish land".

[23] *Laulu tulipunaisesta kukasta*, in original.

[24] "The pearl of Finnish literature".

[25] "Ironic as we are and as it suits us, we might say that there is a certain natural character to this printing frenzy in a country where paper is cheaper than water and where the writer and reader do not demand too much from one another".

[26] "[...] is not a piece of ham or a piece of cheese that you sell based on their exterior".

[27] "[...] in Finland, even peasants read literature books. I was surprised about what I saw inside the peasants' homes".

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The Finns are more interested in local literature rather than in the foreign one; they do not have a special interest for one group of authors or another, and "dacă s´a tradus mai mult din engleză şi germană e pentru că aceste literaturi posedă mai buni traducători aici, sunt mai apropiate ca atmosferă, subiect şi stare psihică de sufletul finez şi pentru că în aceste momente literatura franceză nu oferă ceva remarcabil"[28] (Oprişan 1943e: 5). Financial considerations, editor preferences and educational outcomes are taken into account. An example of this is the fact that the French language is not taught in the Northern countries. This indifference is not only shown towards the French, but to most Latin languages which are considered "streine ca structură, atmosferă, problemă şi mod de tratare"[29] (Oprişan 1943e: 5), as a cultural rip appears between the north of Europe and the Latin world.

Another aspect discussed by Horia Oprişan refers to *Teatrul şi viaţa teatrală în Finlanda* (Theater and Theatrical Life in Interwar Finland). In 1871 the first Finnish theater is founded. Initially called The Finnish Theatre, it will change its name to National Theatre in 1902. Among those who contributed to the establishment of a repertoire of Finnish plays, were Kaarlo Bergbom and Minna Canth. A noteworthy detail is the interest of the Northern countries for women's condition, their relationship with their husbands, their aspirations and centre of interest. In the plays, the woman is always depicted as being "suferindă, neîmplinită afectiv şi spiritual, în permanentă căutare şi ciocnire"[30] (Oprişan 1943f: 2). Molière and Lenormand are among the authors whose plays have been present at the National Theatre. There have also been performances from the German and Slavic repertoire. Kalima, the director of the theater, repeatedly asked Horia Oprişan for Romanian plays, with the intention of promoting Romanian culture on Finnish ground, but also to enrich the Finnish theatre repertoire.

Apart from the National Theatre, Helsinki is also host to the Popular Theatre, whose director is Arvi Kivimaa. This theatre was founded by actress Mia Backman and its initial purpose was to promote new theatre plays. She brought plays from the German culture on to the stage, that were loved and appreciated by the Finnish audience; but also French and Italian plays. Mia Backman facilitated many innovations in the theatrical art by adjusting direction, set, sound and lights.

Horia Oprişan also discussed *Muzica şi viaţa muzicală în Finlanda* (Music and Musical Life in Finland). Similar to all cultural events presented up to this point, elite Finnish music is emerging; its beginnings date from the second half of the 19th century, triggered by the swedophones. Jean Sibelius was the one to pull elite Finnish music out of anonymity. Horia Oprişan mentions that Sibelius' work "domină atât în trecut cât şi´n prezent, fără însă să constitue, lucru foarte de mirare, o atracţie, o vrajă diabolică pentru cei care l-au urmat"[31] (Oprişan 1943g: 4). Just

[28] "[...] if there have been more translations from English and German it is because these literatures have the best translators here, they are closer in atmosphere, subject and mental state to the Finnish soul and because in these moments French literature does not offer anything remarkable".

[29] "[...] foreign in structure, atmosphere, subject and manner of approach".

[30] "[...] afflicted, emotionally and spiritually unfulfilled, in a permanent state of search and conflict".

[31] "[...] dominates both past and present, yet does not constitute a surprise, an attraction, a diabolical spell for those who succeeded him".

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like his predecessors, Sibelius found his inspiration in *Kalevala*. Oprişan mentions his first compositions for choir and orchestra to which topics inspired from Scandinavian mythology could be added. Many of the works written by Sibelius are patriotic in nature, as they were dedicated to Finland and those who gave their lives for it. Among his representative works we can list: *En Saga*, *Finlandia*, *The Swan of Tuonela*, *Tapiola* (poem of the Northern forests). "Toate aceste piese sunt pătrunse de o notă de uşoară melancolie amestecată cu accente de desolare şi tristeţe nemărginită"[32] (Oprişan 1943g: 4).

Sibelius was famous for classical music, for orchestra and a few instruments. He wrote everything from chamber music to symphonies. An analysis of the seven symphonies highlights his artistic evolution, but also the influence of various composers and movements. We could emphasize the passage from the traditionalist style to romanticism and then to impressionism. His best symphony is believed to be the fourth one, as it meets all qualities required by the aesthethic principles of music, and it stands out through its equilibrium (Oprişan 1943g). Despite Sibelius' important role, there can be no discussion about a "school"; his creative genius is not followed by names who had the same impact.

The influence of modern music and new trends starts to be felt once Finland gains its independence and starts to get in contact with the Western world. Weino Raitio and Aarre Mericanto are the ones to bring a modern note to music. The generation of the 20th century comprises Uuno Klami and Luhlo Ranta, starting the studies "sub egida modernismului celui mai ascuţit"[33] (Oprişan 1943g: 4). Klami is mentioned as one of the few Finns to study in France and whose music is influenced by this culture.

Another interesting aspect, connected to the influence of certain cultural motives, to the influence of folklore on high brow music specifically: "Folclorul, lirica şi muzica poporană n´au exercitat absolut nicio influenţă [...]. Singura muzică poporană care s´a desvoltat, este aceea brodată pe motive din mitologia şi legendele fineze. Ea e mai mult un acompaniament monoton la recitarea versurilor din Kalevala sau altă poemă"[34] (Oprişan 1943g: 4). Horia Oprişan adds that Finns "nu au în sânge chemarea nervoasă a ritmului transpus în dans"[35] (Oprişan 1943g: 4).

Regarding *Pictura fineză* (Finnish painting), Horia Oprişan states that "totul în Finlanda, chiar şi arta aşa numită poporană, este de esenţă suedeză"[36] (Oprişan 1943h: 4). Contemporary Finnish art draws its roots from Swedish artists living in Finland during the second half of the 19th century. The desire to gain independence did not manifest itself only politically but also ideologically, artistically. They wanted to show the Finnish spirit through their art. The pioneers of Finnish art were painters Gustaf Wilhelm Finnberg and Alexander Lareus. They were alumni of the

[32] "All these plays have a slight hint of melancholy mixed with accents of desolation and endless sadness".

[33] "[...] under the aegis of the sharpest type of modernism".

[34] "Folklore, lyricism and traditional music have not exercized any kind of influence […]. The only traditional music to emerge is the one embroided onto motives of Finnish mythology and legends. It is more of a monotone accompaniement to the lyrics of *Kalevala* or other poems".

[35] "[...] do not have in their blood, the furious calling of rhythm expressed through dance".

[36] "[...] everything in Finland, even the so-called traditional arts, are essentially Swedish".

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Swedish school, but the first to present Finnish nature in their work, carrying it across borders in exhibitions in Sweden and other countries. Robert Wilhelm Ekmann is considered the father of Finnish painting; he studied in Rome and Paris. His work marks the birth of national painting, with *Kalevala* and rural life as a source of inspiration. However, "adevăratul pictor de talent, începătorul unei picture ce poate fi luată în discuţie, a fost Werner Holmberg (1830–1860)"[37] (Oprişan 1943h: 4). Holmberg was followed by Fanny Churberg, Victor Westerholm and Albert Edelfelt. The latter represented Finland at the 1900 exhibition in Paris. He was also the first Finnish painter who came into contact with French art and life. "Albert Gustav Edelfelt rămâne în galeria picturii fineze drept unul dintre portretiştii de talent"[38] (Oprişan 1943h: 4), one of his most famous paintings is the portrait of Pasteur, considered the most successful portrait of the French scholar. Among his other works there are a number of paintings focused on Finnish rural life, as the artist belongs to those who contributed to the unification of national awareness and to the ethnic awakening of the Finnish people.

Another Finnish painter was Eero Nikolai Järnefelt (1863–1937). Just like Albert Gustav Edelfelt, Järnefelt became known for his portraits; "unul dintre cele mai expresive, dinamice şi reuşite din întreaga pictură fineză"[39] (Oprişan 1943h: 4) was the watercolour portrait of his son. Horia Oprişan states that "de la mediocrul Eckmann, nici unul dintre pictorii finezi n´a mai încercat să se apropie de *Kalevala*, pentru a o lua drept sursă de inspiraţie"[40] (Oprişan 1943h: 4). The Finnish national epic tale seems to have been too great a challenge for Finnish artists; the weight of portraying it was too difficult. Akseli Gallen-Kallela was one of the few artists bold enough to represent the story into painting. He is considered "primul pictor finez în toată accepţiunea cuvântului, atât ca manieră cât şi ca fel de a trata subiectul şi culoarea"[41] (Oprişan 1943h: 4). Along with him, Finnish art enters the modern era.

Horia Oprişan compares the First World War period in Finland with that in Romania and states that, from a creative point of view, Finland was characterized by an „sărăcie aproape generală conjugată cu o mediocritate calitativă a producţiei"[42] (Oprişan 1943h: 4).

5. Conclusions

We have discussed, thus, on the first monographic writings of Finland published in our country (in 1922) by I. Simionescu, presented the writings of an interwar reviewer – Horia Oprişan who published a large number of studies with the purpose of bringing literature, art, music, and other aspects of Northern civilization

[37] "[...] the true talented painter, the founder of an art worthy of discussion was Werner Holmberg (1830–1860)".

[38] "Albert Gustav Edelfelt remains in the gallery of Finnish painting as one of the most talented portrait artists".

[39] "one of the most expressive, dynamic and accomplished of the entire Finnish art".

[40] "[...] ever since mediocre Eckmann, none of the Finnish painters has tried to get close enough to *Kalevala* to take it as a source of inspiration".

[41] "[...] the first Finnish painter in the true sense of the word, both in his manner as in his approach to subject and colour".

[42] "[...] almost general poverty joined by a qualitative mediocrity of production".

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to the attention of the Romanian audience – and brought the figure of diplomat Raoul Bossy to the foreground to show his valuable presence in the interwar period in terms of Finnish culture reception. Undoubtedly, these are not the only names to be credited for valuable contributions in this field, but we deemed their presentation fit, due to the diversity and accuracy they showed in their research. Whether in the form of monographs, journalism or memoirs, the culture and exotic features of Finland were brought closer to the Romanian readers, and these efforts must be recorded and given credit.

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Abstract

Cultural and diplomatic relations between Romania and Finland have not been numerous throughout time; yet, on the basis of obvious similarities from a geopolitical point of view, the two have had the same comparison scale to the spheres of influence of the Second World War. Two "exotic" countries from a cultural point of view, Romania and Finland have become acquainted to each other through a delicate and fractured process at different times in history. Raoul Bossy is the key figure who brought the two cultures together in the interwar period. Apart from Bossy, the present article discusses two other interwar personalities who had an important role in the reception of Finnish culture and literature in Romania: I. Simionescu and Horia Oprişan.

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