EUGENIA BÎRLEA[1]

HOMESICKNESS BETWEEN AILMENT AND POETRY: THE ROMANIAN SOLDIERS IN THE HABSBURG ARMY

Abstract: This article approaches an issue situated at the crossroads between the history of medicine, military and folklore history, namely homesickness as an ailment (known as *nostalgia* at that time) and its reflection in the medical literature and the folklore creations that described the spiritual sufferings to which the Romanian soldiers in the army of the Habsburg Empire were exposed because of the rather harsh conditions of military service in the 18th and 19th centuries.
Keywords: Romanian soldiers, Habsburg, ailment, homesickness, soldiers' song

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Throughout time, a relatively large number of studies have been dedicated to the Officers Corps of the Habsburg Army by various specialists, in particular by Austrian and German scholars; by contrast, few studies have focused on the soldiers of the same army and barely anything has been written about the Romanian soldiers. Besides more general works or specialised studies on the Romanian border regiments, which had a specific organisation, different from that of the other regiments, very little has been written about the Romanian soldiers from the frontline regiments.[2] In this short article, we intend to address one of the numerous aspects of the Romanian soldiers' life in the Habsburg Army, an aspect that has been completely ignored in Romanian historiography. More specifically, our study approaches an ailment that was much discussed and written about in the previous centuries, the disease of homesickness, as it was perceived and described by various Austrian physicians.

As a disease, homesickness (called *nostalgia*) has been known since the late 17th century,[3] when it was first described by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer, in his small treatise entitled *Dissertatio medica De Nostalgia oder Heimwehe*, written in 1688, while he was studying medicine at Basel. According to him, this ailment particularly afflicted the Swiss mercenary soldiers employed in the European armies.[4]

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[1] Librarian, PhD, Romanian Academy Library, Cluj-Napoca, email: eugeniabirlea@gmail.com

[2] The few exceptions refer, in general, to the period 1848-1918. An example, in this regard, is Liviu Maior's book *Românii în armata habsburgică. Soldaţi şi ofiţeri uitaţi*, Bucureşti: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004.

[3] However, the notion of homesickness had already been known and talked about at least 100 years before, its first mention dating from 1569, as Simon Bunke shows in his monumental work dedicated to, *Heimweh. Studien zur Kultur-und Literaturgeschichte einer tödlichen Krankheit*, Freiburg i. Br., Berlin, Wien: Rombach Verlag, 2009, p. 35.

[4] For the Swiss, mercenary service was one of their main sources of income, and for those in the poorer areas, it was the sole means of subsistence. Between the 14th century and the beginning of the 19th century, troops of Swiss mercenaries could be encountered on all the battlefields of Europe, sometimes

Hence, it was also called the Swiss disease or the disease of the Swiss (*schweizerische Krankheit*). For a long time, up until the mid-19th century, this malady was a central concern of the military doctors, the senior officers and the supreme commanders of various armies. More rarely, this illness also loomed over the youth who were away from home, studying in diverse academic centres. Towards the end of the 18th century, *nostalgia*[5] was already recognised in all the armies of Europe, the French military physician Louis Jaques Bégin (1793-1859) referring to it as a "triste attribut de la profession des armées."[6]

During the first three decades of the 18th century, Hofer's study was reprinted and triggered the publication of further works, leading to a gradual, albeit slow growth of scientific interest in this topic, a period when the initial medical discourse was enriched.[7] The climax, however, was coeval with the end of the Enlightenment century and the first decades of the next, when there was published the largest number of books and articles in lexicographical collections.[8] After 1850, the subject's importance declined to the level of a symptom of other diseases, such as epilepsy, melancholy (endogenous depression),[9] etc. On the cusp between the 19th and the 20th

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fighting on both sides. The apogee was reached in the 15th-16th centuries, when they were considered effective and loyal. The Pope's Swiss Guard has been in existence since the year 1506.

[5] In French it is known as *mal du pay*s, the English equivalent is *homesickness*, in Italian the word is *nostalgia,* etc.

[6] Apud Klaus Brunnert, *Nostalgie in der Geschichte der Medizin*, Düsseldorf: Triltsch, 1984, p. 7.

[7] Johann Jacob Schleuchzer*,* "Von dem Heimwehe," in *Seltsamer Naturgeschichten des Schweitzer-Land Wöchentliche Erzählung*, no. 15/16, 20/27 May 1705, subsequently re-published in a volume (1706); Theodor Zwinger (ed.), "Dissertatio medica de Pothopatridalgia. Vom Heim-Wehe," in *Fasciculus dissertationum medicarum selectarum* […], Basel, 1710, pp. 87-111; Johannes Hoher, *Dissertatio curioso-medica, De Nostalgia, vulgo: Heimwehe oder Heimsehnsucht* […], Basel, 1745.

[8] We shall present a brief list of selected titles: Albrecht von Haller, the entry "Nostalgie," in *Supplément a l'Encyclopédie [...]*, vol. 4, Amsterdam, 1777; Percy/Laurent, the entry "Nostalgie," in *Dictionnaire des sciences medicales*, Paris, 1819, vol. 36, pp. 265-291; C. Castelnau, *Considérations sur la nostalgie*, Paris 1806; the article "Heimwehe," in *Medicinisches Hand-Lexicon, worinn alle Krankheiten, die verschiedenen, und jeder Krankheit insbesondere eigenthümlichen Kennzeichnen [...] auf eine jedermann faßliche Art vorgetragen werden,* vol. 1, Augsburg, 1782, p. 488; Carl August Diez, the entry "Heimweh," in *Deutsche Encyclopädie oder Allgemeinen Real-Wörterbuch aller Künste und Wissenschaften [...]*, vol. 15, Frankfurt/Main, 1790, p. 104; Robert Hooper, the entry "Nostalgia," in *A Compendious Medical Dictionary [...]*, London, 1799; Joseph Zangerl, *Über das Heimweh*, Wien 1820 (re-published in 1840 under the title *Das Heimweh*); Julius Heinrich Schlegel, *Das Heimweh und ser Selbstmord*, Hildburghausen, 1835.

[9] Over the past few decades, this disease has reawakened the researchers' interest, in the context of the mental health disorders that sometimes afflicted the immigrants (Italian, Turkish, etc.) and the refugees who had settled in various western countries and in America after World War II. See Klaus Brunnert, *op. cit.*; Shirley Fisher, *Homesickness, Cognition and Health*, Bern [s.a.], Huber, 1991; André Bolzinger, *Histoire de la nostalgie*, Paris, Compagne Première, 2006; Helmut Illbruck, *Origins and Ends of an Unenlightened Disease*, Evanston, Ill., Northwestern Univ. Press, 2012; Simon Bunke, *op. cit.* etc. There are, however, few studies that seek to clarify, from the vantage of present-day psychiatry, which type of depression the symptoms described by physicians of previous centuries belong to. The very name of the disease seemed inappropriate to researchers in the 20th century; in its last decades, they spoke of the "nostalgic syndrome" or "nostalgic reactions." See Charles Zwingmann, "Die Heimwehreaktion alias 'potopatridalgia'," in *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*, 201, 1961, pp. 445-464.

centuries, it was no longer related with soldiers, but with certain young maids, who suffered from homesickness and because of this, it was alleged, felt impelled to commit serious crimes, burning down houses and murdering the infants in their care.[10] On the eve of World War I, there were still references to homesickness, especially in the statistics on suicides committed among the military, where it appeared listed as just another cause among others,[11] but was no longer spoken about as a disease in itself.

Johannes Hofer legitimised both disease and its name; in addition to the popular term, *Heimweh*, Hofer also created a specialised term for the new disease: *nostalgia*, from the Greek words *nostos*, the return home, and *algos*, pain.[12] In his short treatise, Hofer explained the homesickness malady as the effect of a diseased imagination, which, unless it was quickly cured, could lead to the subject's death.[13] In 1710, Theodor Zwinger re-edited Hofer's text, along with other medical documents, and added to it a new chapter about the song of the Swiss cowherds from the Appenzell region, entitled *Kuhreihen* or *Ranz de vaches,*[14] a song responsible for triggering homesickness among the Swiss mercenaries in France and the Netherlands.[15] An important role in popularising the impact of this song in causing this disease was played by J. J. Rousseau, who also mentioned the banning of the song by the French military authorities.[16] At a later time, Kant and Goethe made short references to this disease and to the prohibition of the song.[17]

To have a clearer picture of this disease, we will briefly refer to a later writing, authored by Joseph Zangerl,[18] "a classic of the literature on homesickness."[19] The author was a physician in Vienna, but was a native of Tyrol, a region where homesickness was a common disease, too. As he was not a military doctor, he quoted frequently, in his references to sick soldiers, the book on military medicine written by

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[10] The German philosopher and psychiatrist Karl Jaspers wrote his PhD Thesis on offences committed because of homesickness, *Heimweh und Verbrechen*, Heidelberg, 1909.

[11] Ernst Sträußler, "Über Selbstmorde und Selbstmordversuche beim Militär," in *Militärmedizin und ärztliche Kriegswissenschaft. Vorträge, gehalten in der Abteilung XXX "Militärsanitätswesen" auf der 85. Versammlung deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte in Wien in der Zeit vom 21. bis 28. September 1913*, ed. Zdislaus Juchnowicz-Hordyński, Erhard Glaser, Wien und Leipzig: Verlag von Josef Šafář, 1914, pp. 437-455.

[12] Bunke, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

[13] *Ibidem*, pp. 30-30.

[14] This is a song of the cowherds, sung or played on a special horn, through which they summoned, steered or collected animals on the alpine grasslands. The text has a secondary role, as the melody represents the main element.

[15] Bunke, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-255.

[16] *Ibidem*, pp. 266-274.

[17] *Ibidem*, p. 96.

[18] Joseph Zangerl, *Das Heimweh*, Wien, 1820. We have consulted the 1840 edition, also published in Vienna.

[19] Christian Bachhiesl, *Zwischen Indizien paradigma und Pseudowissenschaft; wissenschaftshistorische Überlegungen zum epistemischen Status kriminalwissenschaftlicher Forschung*, Wien [u.a.]: Lit-Verl., 2012, p. 377.

the chief surgeon of Napoleon's army, who accompanied the army in all of the French emperor's campaigns.[20]

Zangerl considered that homesickness was a disease of the nerves, which resembled melancholy (he saw it as a form of melancholy, in fact), but differed from it through the object of the sad passion (the subject's fervent longing for his native place), through its higher frequency and its destructive influence on health.[21] Diagnosing the disease was far from easy, as it could be triggered by somatic or psychological causes. A first sign of the disease was - albeit not necessarily - sleepwalking, from which apparently healthy people began to suffer. During the first phase of the disease, they constantly talked about their native places and began to seek solitude in order to dwell even more on images from back home, all the other activities becoming indifferent to them. In the second phase, their bodies began to feel the consequences of spiritual suffering: their gaze became sad, their faces turned pale, appetite failed and digestion was perturbed, the pulse weakened and the patients acquired a cachectic appearance. In the last phase, a state of fever, accompanied by diarrhoea, set in, bodily powers were exhausted, the patients experienced dropsy, indifference and disgust with life, and the hapless made their exeunt from the sad stage of life, thinking of home until their last breath.[22]

The author states that recruits succumbed to the disease if they were sent to regiments where there was no one to talk to in their language and, especially, if during the first few weeks they received brutal treatment while training, as it happened so often in the past.[23] There were, however, types of people prone to this disease, such as, for instance, those who were introverted. In addition to this, there were other sad circumstances that could trigger the same dreaded disease: severe illnesses that healed slowly (particularly if the patient was not treated with compassion), depressing feelings, digestive disorders, lung or heart diseases, boredom and monotony.[24] Zangerl ventured to assert that the disease was contagious[25] and he recounted the story of the prohibition (on penalty of death) placed on the Swiss shepherd song *Kuhreihen/ranz de vaches* in the armies where the Swiss were enrolled. Incidentally, the songs from back home had the effect of lightning strikes for all the peoples.[26] Another example would be the Scottish bagpipe song that had the same effect as the *Kuhreihen* on the Swiss.[27] This doctor nuanced the opinion of his predecessors, according to whom only the residents of mountainous areas were affected by the disease. In his view, residents from the plains could also get sick if they moved into the mountains or just a few hours away from their native places,

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[20] Dominique Jean Larey, *Mémoires de chirurgie militaire, et campagnes,* Paris: J. Smith, 1812 (4 vol.), a work that was also translated into German.
[21] Zangerl, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.
[22] *Ibidem*, pp. 5-10.
[23] *Ibidem*, p. 31.
[24] *Ibidem*, p. 33.
[25] *Ibidem*, p. 36.
[26] *Ibidem*, p. 40.
[27] *Ibidem*, p. 59.

even within the same country.[28] Love for one's homeland is characteristic of all the European and the non-European peoples, which means that homesickness is as old a disease as mankind itself.[29] Not only the Swiss, but those in Tirol, too, suffered just as much, for they led a very similar life to that of the Swiss,[30] as did the residents of other Austrian provinces, such as Styria and Carinthia.[31] So, too, did the Englishmen, the Irishmen or even the Lapps.[32] As for the recruits from the remote Russian provinces, the author stated that half of them perished from the disease before they could even reach the unit to which they had been sent.[33]

The return home, as the surest cure, still represents one of the commonplaces in specialised studies. Although the disease could last several months or even up to a year, in some cases it could have a happy ending only with the promise of the return home.[34] If there was no possibility for the patient being sent home, the progress of the disease was negative: in many cases a latent fever broke out, bringing the sick man down. Those who were in hospitals, prisons, fortresses under siege or military camps and who could not be sent home became, with few exceptions, victims of death.[35] If the sick man could not be sent home, the physician had to resort to a spiritual therapy, which the author called "psychic": first, the doctor had to endeavour to gain the patient's trust and love and then, gradually, through persuasive talks, he had to steer the sick man's thoughts elsewhere, giving examples of individuals who had gained fame, dignity or wealth abroad. If the desired goal could not be reached in this way, the patient would have to be assured that the return home was certain and impending. Zangerl cited the case of several French soldiers who had suffered from homesickness during the siege of Mainz[36] (1814) and who had been healed solely because the physicians had given them the illusion that the enemy would allow them to go home.[37]

In our attempt to explain the circumstances leading to this disease, we will outline the conditions under which the ordinary soldiers' military service was carried out in the Habsburg Army, focusing especially on the reign of Maria Theresa and the 1848 Revolution.

Charles VI (1711-1740) had neglected the army, which had become understaffed, meagrely paid, with supply services that malfunctioned during the

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[28] *Ibidem*, p. 38.
[29] A famous example is that of Alexander the Great's Macedonian soldiers, who refused to go beyond the Indian River Beas as they were tired of warfare and gripped by homesickness. See J. M. O'Brien, *Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy. A Biography,* London-New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. 158-164.
[30] Zangerl, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
[31] *Ibidem*, p. 57.
[32] *Ibidem*, p. 59.
[33] *Ibidem,* p. 66.
[34] *Ibidem*, p. 70.
[35] *Ibidem*, p. 80.
[36] Conquered and held by the French between 1797 and 1814, the fortress of Mainz was besieged by Russian and German troops (3 January- 4 May 1814). The French troops withstood the siege and surrendered only after Napoleon's defeat in 1814.
[37] Zangerl, *op. cit*., pp. 86-88.

campaigns, so at the time of the wars from the early decades of the 18th century, the soldiers and the officers starved and were poorly dressed and armed, the regiments being decimated by diseases and defections. Upon taking the throne, the empress found a corps of officers in which only half came from the provinces of the Empire, the rest being foreign; the ethnic composition of the soldiers was even more variegated.[38] Because of the many wars she had been forced to wage, Maria Theresa had to envisage profound changes as regards the recruitment manner, the organisation and endowment of her army. Up until then, the recruitment of the Austrians soldiers had been, in general, based on the voluntary participation of their own subjects and those of the neighbouring countries, who were paid for military service. Besides the volunteer soldiers, the authorities also sent in the army, as punishment, a series of youth categories: those who had mutilated themselves to escape recruitment, the politically undesirable, those who had committed lesser offences, participants in riots[39] and former outlaws.[40] In Hungary and Transylvania, the nobles were under the obligation to defend the country until 1741, when the empress demanded them to recruit permanent regiments. Since Austria was almost constantly engaged in military conflicts between 1740 and 1815, it began to demand the recruitment of more and more troops from Transylvania as well. In addition to the lengthy campaigns, diseases and epidemics also caused high losses to the army; so did defections, the 18th century being known in the historiography of recent years as the "century of defections."[41] The official requests for new recruits multiplied, but the voluntary recruitment system yielded unsatisfactory results, as the army failed to have a sufficient number of soldiers even during the peace years. Besides the high costs it incurred, recruitment in the Roman Empire of the German nation and in other countries could rally the participation of dubious elements that would desert shortly thereafter. Another problem was recruitment by trickery and violence.[42] Young men were usually lured with alcohol and loose women, by the next day finding themselves as soldiers under the oath of allegiance. The officers who carried out the recruitment enjoyed a certain leeway, which some abused: they would appropriate the money destined for recruitment and were not averse to using violent means, because there were never

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[38] Gustav von Hubka, *Geschichte des k. und k. Infanterie Regiments Graf von Lacy Nr. 22 von seiner Errichtung bis zur Gegenwart*, Zara: Verlag des Regiments, 1902, pp. 41- 60.

[39] In 1754, 40 inhabitants from Târgu Mureş and Mezőtúr who had participated in the riots were sent as soldiers in the infantry regiment that would subsequently wear the number 51 and that recruited its troops from Transylvania (Cluj and Sibiu were its recruitment centres). See Maximilian Maendl, *Gechichte des k. und k. Infanterie-Regiments nr. 51*, Klausenburg, 1897, vol. I, p. 206.

[40] Nicolae Stoica of Haţeg recounts with unequalled charm how he convinced a group of dangerous outlaws in the Banat Mountains to surrender and join the ranks of the army, taking advantage of the amnesty granted by Maria Theresa. See *Cronica Banatului*, ed. de Damaschin Mioc, Timişoara: Editura Facla, 1981, pp. 220-225.

[41] Michael Sikora, "Das 18. Jahrhundert: Das Zeit der Deserteure," in Ulrich Bröckling, Michael Sikora (eds.), *Armeen und ihre Deserteure. Vernachlässigte Kapitel einer Militärgeschichte der Neuzeit*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck et Ruprecht, 1998, pp. 86-111.

[42] Things were similar in all the armies of the time. Voltaire's work *Candide*, published in 1759, describes such a scam, whereby Candide was forced to join the Prussian army.

enough peasants who desired, in exchange for money, to leave for the battlefields in Spain or France.[43]

After the model of Prussia, Maria Theresa sought to recruit her army from the Austrian provinces, but in order to have enough soldiers, she had to introduce the military conscription system (1771-1880), albeit not in all the provinces. Hungary and Transylvania were among the countries which managed to introduce conscription only with great difficulty and very late. As of that moment, the regiments had clearly defined territories whence they recruited and supplemented their troops. The military conscription system was based on the principle of every citizen's duty to defend his homeland. However, besides the fact that conscripts could redeem themselves by paying a considerable sum or by finding a replacement, many categories were exempted: nobles, priests, officials and their sons, certain categories of peasants who owned a certain tract of land or were the only sons of elderly parents, mine workers, craftsmen, etc.[44] Men aged between 17-18 and 40 years were recruited, military service was for life, and only foreigners, who were not subject to conscription, could be hired for a certain period stipulated in the contract concluded between the parties.[45] In Hungary (and Transylvania), the free recruitment system yielded poor results because the number of categories exempt from military service was even higher, all sorts of vagrants and dubious characters being often recruited. In the period 1802-1811, military service for life was abrogated, being limited to 10-14 years for those subject to conscription, but in Hungary this beneficial change occurred only in 1828.[46] On the eve of the revolution, military service was reduced to 8 years in the German provinces in 1845.[47] Conscription by lot-casting and the eight-year military service were first introduced in Transylvania in 1847.[48] The standardisation of this practice took place only in 1852, when the eight-year military service plus two years in reserve forces became universally enforced.[49]

What was striking, therefore, was the length of military service. Throughout the 18th century (and up until 1828 in Hungary and Transylvania), recruits remained in the army service until they died in battle or became invalids, reasons enough to cast any soul down.

If we refer then to the soldiers' life, it was not serene and carefree, quite the contrary. Let us summarise a few pages written about the soldiers' condition by a former Austrian officer, Daniel Fenner von Fenneberg,[50] in a work imparting a

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[43] Hubka, *op. cit.,* p. 10.
[44] Alphons von Wrede, *Geschichte der K. und K. Wehrmacht. Die Regimenter, Corps, Branchen und Anstalten von 1618 bis Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Wien: Verlag von L. V. Seidel und Sohn, 1898, vol. I, p. 101.
[45] *Ibidem*, p. 102.
[46] *Ibidem*, p. 103.
[47] *Ibidem*, p. 107.
[48] George Bariţ, *Părţi alese din istoria Transilvaniei pe două sute de ani în urmă*, second ed., Braşov: Inspectoratul pentru cultură al judeţului Braşov, 1993, vol. I, pp. 766-767.
[49] Jürgen Angelow, *Von Wien nach Königgrätz. Die Sicherheitspolitik des Deutschen Bundes im europäischen Gleichgewicht (1815 - 1866)*, München: Oldenbourg, 1996, p. 67.
[50] Daniel Fenner von Fenneberg, *Österreich und seine Armee*, Leipzig, 1847.

critical vision, but also evincing the author's sympathy for the soldiers. He believed that the soldiers' fate resembled the life of Helots in Sparta, because soldiers were never right; there was a deep chasm between the officers and the soldiers, the former carefully avoiding any contact with the troops. There were very few officers who came from among the troops, even though, theoretically, every worthy soldier had this chance.[51]

A major problem affecting the Austrian Army was the fact that officers did not know the languages of the soldiers in their suborder. In the Slavic regiments, for instance, only 1/12 officers could make themselves understood in these languages,[52] but this was also the case of other languages spoken by the soldiers in the Austrian Army.

The officers who had close contact with the troops (as they instructed the soldiers and taught military regulations, arithmetic, etc.) did not take the trouble of making themselves understood by the soldiers, even though this would have been very easy for them. They limited themselves to reading passages from the regulations to them, to explain these to them as well as they could, in German, and then to ask the men if they had understood. Although about half of the soldiers did not understand German, they answered, shamefaced, that they had. Those officers who made an effort to get down to their level of understanding were very esteemed and loved by the troops, but they represented a minority. The training field was dominated by swearing, beating and harsh treatments. Even officers who had some level of education and nourished better feelings became accustomed to using this injurious language. The crimes committed by soldiers against their superiors represented an expression of the despair they had accumulated over time, the result of abuses repeatedly committed against them.[53] Suicides had the same causes, but suicide attempts were punishable by a number of truncheon blows, this treatment being considered appropriate for curing serious spiritual suffering.[54]

Besides beating, there were other punishments, too: more frequent guard service, different types of arrest, according to the seriousness of the offence, the penalty of running the gauntlet. Considered by soldiers to be the most dishonourable, shackled arrest forced those incarcerated to crouch for 24 hours or longer, some doctors believing it should be abolished or retained only for those who were drunken and aggressive. Most dangerous for the health was caning with strokes applied to the upper back, since it could cause tears or bruises of the ribs, lung diseases, spinal nerve injury and the paralysis of the lower limbs, etc. It was later replaced by caning on the buttocks, less harmful, even though it could affect the genitals. In the early 19th century, under military criminal law there were allowed up to 50 truncheon strokes across the buttocks, but there were also cases when the offender could receive 50 strokes in two or more consecutive days, which could lead to abscesses and slowly

[51] *Ibidem*, pp. 45-49.
[52] *Ibidem*, pp. 82-83.
[53] *Ibidem*, pp. 61-67.
[54] *Ibidem*, pp. 70-73.

healing wounds, lumbar pain, amputation of the buttocks or even death.[55] Aside from capital punishment, the heaviest penalty was running the gauntlet. A total of 300 soldiers were arranged into two rows, each with a cluster of two or several pliant branchless rods, and the convict had to pass several times (in the harshest version, which was tantamount to a death sentence, they had to pass 10 times), with their bare backs, through these rows. Soldiers would strive to run fast so as to receive fewer strokes or they would drink brandy before running, so as to muster some courage.[56]

In the Hungarian regiments, which included Romanians too, caning was more widely used and soldiers were so familiarised with it that it no longer had any effect.[57] Theoretically, the law protected soldiers in front of the despotic officers, who had to comply with certain rules, breaching these entailing a series of penalties.[58] However, although they were officially banned, the blows sub-officers applied arbitrarily were actually turned a blind eye to and they appear to have been part of the soldiers' everyday life.[59]

In the published sources, there is little information regarding the recruitment of Romanian soldiers in the 18th century. The demands for new recruits reached Transylvania more and more often, the military authorities rallying the efforts of the Romanian clergy, in an attempt to attract the Romanians as volunteer soldiers.[60] On 22 March 1799, the Romanians from Burzenland were put in a position to complain to the local authorities that the Saxon civil servants favored their own co-nationals at recruitment and they urged that the distribution of the number of recruits should be made proportionally, not to the detriment of the Romanians.[61] In the early years of the wars with the French, the Romanian civil servants from the same area complained that they could hardly gather the required number of recruits, as the young lads were away with the sheep in Wallachia,[62] or that had only managed to capture one lad at a wedding.[63] The Saxon chronicles from Burzenland mentioned the seizing by violence of the recruits, "especially in the Romanians' case," and their reaction - fleeing into the woods. The Saxon villages felt seized by insecurity and intervened with the government, which prohibited fleeing army recruitment and summoned the runaways to return.[64] A few years later, there was another record of Romanian recruits being captured at night, the vengeance of those who had managed to escape by bribing the

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[55] Anton Johann Beinl, *Versuch einer militärischen Staatsarzneykunde in Rücksicht auf die kaiserliche königliche Armee*, Wien, 1804, pp. 362-364.
[56] *Ibidem*, pp. 365-367.
[57] Fenner von Fenneberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.
[58] Beinl, *op. cit.*, p. 356.
[59] *Ibidem*, p. 363.
[60] *Catalogul documentelor româneşti din Arhivele Statului de la oraşul Stalin*, Bucureşti: Direcţia Arhivelor Statului, 1955, vol. I, p. 480.
[61] *Ibidem*, p. 582.
[62] *Ibidem*, pp. 539-540.
[63] *Ibidem*, p. 550.
[64] Joseph Teutsch, "Nachlese zu den kurzgefassten Jahrgeschichten von Ungarn und Siebenbürgen," in *Chroniken und Tagebücher*, vol. I, Brasov: Zeidner, 1904, p. 474.

ones who had seized them, and complaint against this abuse, submitted to their Romanian bishop.[65]

To our knowledge, the first physician who spoke about homesickness among the Romanian soldiers was Anton Johann Beinl, in 1804, in the work on medicine and military health police we have already cited, where the Romanians are mentioned among the peoples suffering from this disease: the Poles, the inhabitants of Styria, Carinthia and Krajina, the Croats, or the Tyroleans. Far more important was the record Johann Nepomuk Isfordink made two decades later. Ennobled for his merits (Edler von Kostnitz), he was a military doctor for many years, and in 1804 he became Professor of General Pathology and Pharmacy at the *Josephinum*, the Faculty of Medicine and Military Surgery, founded by Joseph II in 1784. He held this post until 1812, when he was appointed head of the Army's entire medical system and rector of the Faculty of Military Medicine. He was a good practitioner, deeply knowledgeable of military life, with great merits in the reorganisation of the military health system and of military medical education. The most important of his scientific works focuses on public hygiene and military health police, *Militärische Gesundheitspolizei mit besonderer Beziehung auf die k.k. österreichische Armee*, published in two volumes in Vienna (1825) and re-edited a few years later.[66] The work is of great interest to historians because of its rich information about the soldiers' health, their most common diseases and the conditions that favored them, their living conditions (food, clothing and the quarterage space) and proposals for their improvement, the penalties imposed on soldiers, as well as the precise references to the regulations and military laws that structured the soldiers' lives, or the twofold perspective - of the physician and of the conscientious bureaucrat - adopted in the text.

As regards homesickness, Isfordink admitted that despite all the precautionary measures provided by the military regulations, this disease still robbed the army of many of its young soldiers. As a military physician serving in the Tyrolean regiments of *Kaiserjäger,* he had ample opportunity to observe this malady, whose first manifestations included sleepwalking. Therefore, he considered that sleepwalking was a germ of the disease, which manifested itself first in sleep, until it eventually also seized the patient during spells of wakefulness and developed into a full-blown disease. This disease afflicted especially those in mountainous areas, those who had actually led a very simple life, far from the hectic bustle of the world. That was why awakening these soldiers' memories of their previous lives and dispatching them in regiments that spoke a language they were not familiar with had to be avoided.[67] If, however, with all the caution and benevolent attitude, the physician ascertained the presence of the disease, the patient had to be allowed home on leave until he

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[65] Teutsch, "Historische Zugabe [1467-1770]," in *ibidem,* p. 352.

[66] Karl Sommeregger, "Isfordink von Kostnitz, Johann Nepomuk," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, ed. by the Historical Commission of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, vol. 50 (1905), pp. 706–707, online edition: http://de.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=ADB:Isfordink_von_Kostnitz,_Johann_Nepomuk&oldid=169275

[67] Johann Nepomuk Isfordink, *Militärische Gesundheitspolizei mit besonderer Beziehung auf die k. k. österreichische Armee*, vol. I, second ed., Vienna: J. G. Heubner, 1827, pp. 77-79.

recovered and could serve in the army. Isfordink cited, in this regard, a decree issued by Emperor Joseph II on 12 July 1788 and a military regulation of the army in Bavaria, which featured similar provisions.[68] The army leadership was in a delicate situation, because the soldiers could simulate disease, knowing that they could thus be granted a long leave. Hence, the author insisted, in keeping with all the official recommendations, that when the slightest trace of the disease was detected among the recruits severity, even the mere mention of the word *Heimweh* (homesickness) should be prohibited. This disease generally needed to be spoken and written about as little as possible, he said. He reinforced his statement by citing the severe punishments the Swiss mercenaries from the French army could incur for singing songs from back home, given their ability to trigger this disease, with unpleasant effects for the military.[69]

Here are a few lines Isfordink wrote about the Romanian soldiers: "The Wallachian recruit has to wage the hardest battle in transitioning from his previous life to that of a soldier, which often costs him his life, even before reaching the regiment. Parents, relatives and close acquaintances accompany the new soldier for one or more marching stations. On the way, they chant sad songs about the future fate of the recruit; everything that he held dear and is now mentioned is reminisced about, so the young soldier's soul is filled with pain. It is clear that these peaceful funeral convoys should be banned in order to prevent the outbreak of homesickness."[70] There is a striking parallelism with the pastoral songs hummed or sung by the Swiss mercenaries from France: those songs were banned because, in the opinion of physicians of the time, they caused the dreaded disease.

The folklorist Ioan Pop Reteganul (1853-1905) left us a description of the atmosphere that prevailed in the Transylvanian villages during recruitment in the second half of the 19th century, when the period of military service was already much reduced, the cathartic function of songs being mentioned, too. "The minute the mayor of the commune had read out the list of those who would participate in lot-casting, a dark upsurge of woefulness seized the youth, seeing that many of them - especially if there should be any warfare - would not be coming back to their native homes... As for this woefulness, they manifest and express it through appropriate songs, which our lads and lassies sing from the depths of their hearts; they do not sing them for parade's sake, but to quench the embers burning their heart."[71] Romanians did not fear death, but they succumbed to woefulness at becoming separated from their folks, from the places where they had spent their childhood and because they dreaded the

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[68] *Ibidem*, p. 81. We have not yet conducted a systematic research on the legal provisions and regulations dealing with this disease, but even so, we have found that the problem was most topical in 1816, when Emperor Francis I issued, once again, a detailed provision on how how the physicians, the military and political bodies entitled to send soldiers afflicted by this disease on leave would have to proceed. See *Fortsetzung der von Joseph Kropatschek verfaßten Sammlung der Gesetze. Enthält die politischen und Justiz-Gesetze, welche unter der Regierung Sr. Majestät, Kaisers Franz des I. in den sämmtlichen k.k. Erbländen erlassen worden sind, in chronologischer Ordnung*, ed. Wilhelm Gerhard Goutta, Vienna, 1818, vol. 36, pp. 179-181.

[69] Isfordink, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

[70] *Ibidem*, pp. 80-81.

[71] Ioan Pop Reteganul, *Românul în sat şi la oaste*, Gherla, 1913, pp. 27-28.

gloomy spaces abroad."[72] Everyone from the village went to the place of recruitment, led by the mayor. "Then you should see all the weeping and wailing! Parents, brothers, sisters, the friends of those who go to conscription, they are all here." On the way, they drank in all the taverns they came across and mustered up courage by singing, making fun of trouble, joking about the wedding to which the emperor had summoned them, to marry them to their rifles.[73]

The Romanian soldiers' homesickness was expressed most clearly through these "sad songs," as they were called by the chief physician of the Austrian Army, Isfordink. In the specialised language of the Romanian folklore researchers, these songs are known as "songs about soldiers and wars," "recruitment songs" and, less frequently, as "military camp folklore." It is possible that the work of the military physician Isfordink contains one of the first references to these songs, because this was precisely the period when folklore collectors began their recording activity.[74] Researchers in the filed consider that recruitment songs are a relatively recent folklore species, born during the transition from medieval armies to modern armies; in the Romanian territories of the Habsburg Empire, the establishment of the Romanian border regiments (in the middle of the 18th century) and the ever more massive recruitment represented the impulse underlying the crystallisation of such songs.[75] The most important researcher of Romanian folklore, Ovidiu Bîrlea, considers this category to be modest in quantitative terms, amounting to about 5% of all the songs themselves,[76] caused by "an inner disposition, when the luminous focus of attention descends into one's own soul."[77]

The essential characteristic of recruitment songs was an innate aversion to military service, illustrated mainly by curse-songs. Curses were proffered against the Germans who had divorced them from the natural purposes of their peasant lives, against the village officials who had collaborated for their recruitment, against the mothers who had birthed them as sons rather than as daughters, preventing them from staying at home with their loved ones, against the city of Sibiu, the largest military

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[72] *Ibidem*, p. 36. This is the emblematic expression of a category of songs known as the "poetry of alienation." The theme is very well represented in the Romanian folklore, especially with reference to a girl who got married to strangers (far away from her own village) and who complains about the lack of close relatives and their love; this expression has also permeated classical poetry (see, for instance, the poem "Doină" by Mihai Eminescu). See Ovidiu Papadima, "Poezia populară a înstrăinării şi a dorului," in *Limbă şi literatură*, 1963, V, no. 7.

[73] Pop Reteganul, *op. cit.,* pp. 40-41.

[74] Traian Mârza, "Cântecul de cătănie din Bihor, o specie distinctă a liricii ocazionale," in *Lucrări de muzicologie*, vol. 5, Cluj-Napoca, 1969, p. 115.

[75] Ovidiu Bîrlea, *Folclorul românesc*, vol. II, Bucureşti: Editura Minerva, 1983, p. 223. To have an idea of the ancientness of other folklore species, let us compare them, for example, with the ballad *Mioriţa,* the masterpiece of Romanian folklore, whose genesis occurred at a much earlier date, the oldest episodes of the ballad possibly dating from "before the Romanians' dialectal separation." See Adrian Fochi, *Mioriţa. Tipologie, circulaţie, geneză, texte*, Bucureşti: Editura Academiei R. P. R., 1964, p. 534.

[76] Bîrlea, *Folclorul …*, II, p. 223.

[77] *Ibidem*, p.172.

centre of Transylvania, etc.[78] Although they bore the seal of improvisation and loans from older songs and reached more modest levels of artistic performance than other categories structured and polished for hundreds of years, many of these songs are worthy of attention, in whole or in part. One example would be that of the songs about the City (Sibiu and Vienna), which for the gloomy soul of the peasant-soldiers was symbolised solely by the street where soldiers marched, followed by the gloomy convoy of the parents; the latter wailed and lamented that they would be bereft of their sons.[79] Perhaps even more accomplished was the song about the army shirt one recruit asked his mother to make him, a special shirt on which there should be sewn the images of everything he had left behind: the plough with the oxen, the brothers and the sisters, the lover and the mother. It was an extremely discreet manner of expressing one's attachment and love for these beings and the way of life one was now leaving behind.[80] In general, the texts of those songs reveal a sense of compassion and endearment, given that the mother was most frequently invoked, more often than the lover (the "lassie" of the text) or the wife, as unmarried young were preferred for recruitment.[81] Other outstanding examples are the short texts in which the emperor from Vienna appears depicted as the sender of a letter addressed to the girls in villages; in the popular imagination, the high dignitary shares their pain and, hence, writes these girls not to get dressed in joyful, colourful clothes but in mourning attire, because many young lads have died in battle. Perhaps the emperor's most frequent representation is that in which he is requested to make peace, lest he should become the target of the curses proffered by the mothers and the wives or lovers of those who died in battle.

A well-outlined chapter in this repertoire concerns death at war or amongst strangers. Death at war had always been feared and it frightened Romanian peasants more than death itself, as it encapsulated all undesirable situations: it was a sudden death, devoid of psychological and spiritual preparation; it was a death amongst strangers, devoid of the prescribed religious and folk ritual; it was often a death of young men, who, under normal circumstances, should have been "fixed" at a ritualistic level through a death-wedding. Death at war could also accumulate the ancestral fear of the lack of a grave.[82] The peasant creators used the existing repertoire and adapted it to this situation: based on the much older model of pastoral songs, there were created songs about soldiers' dying amongst strangers. These texts convey a deep sadness caused not by death itself, but by the absence of the loved ones and the obligatory rites at my moment of the great transition. They present a picture of the dying soldier, whose grief is exacerbated by the lack of a candle, a coffin and

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[78] General Command Headquarters of the Army in Transylvania and of the 12th Army Corps between 1703 and 1865.

[79] Ioan Urban Jarnik, Andrei Bîrseanu, *Doine şi strigături din Ardeal*, definitive ed. by Adrian Fochi, Bucureşti: Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1968, text DCVIII, pp. 308-309.

[80] Alexandru Dobre, "Folclorul taberei militare. Câteva observaţii în legătură cu motivul liric 'Curuieşte-mi cămeşa'," in *Revista de Etnografie şi Folclor*, tome 17, 1972, no. 6, pp. 491-501.

[81] The age of recruitment generally started at 17 or 18 years.

[82] Eugenia Bîrlea, *Perspectiva lumii rurale asupra primului război mondial*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Argonaut, 2004, p. 168.

all the objects used in a burial (the lack of a cushion under the dead man's head further underlines the loveless atmosphere in which the soldier passes away) and, especially, by the absence of the mother's and the relatives' tears.

In the second half of the 19th century, folklorists captured in their research the fear caused by death among strangers or at war and the necessary reparative gestures: the subsequent wailing[83] and the funeral service *in absentia*,[84] as well as cases of mourning at home for soldiers who died and were buried on the battlefield in Plevna, during the War of Independence.[85] It comes, therefore, as no surprise that the groups of Romanians who went to war appeared to the Austrian physician Isfordink as funeral convoys, for they also had this significance, of funeral convoys. Ovidiu Bîrlea stated that during his research, he encountered women who had mourned in advance for their sons at the time of their departure for the front, in the two world wars, the custom representing a natural continuation of mourning during recruitment from the previous centuries.[86] The memoirs referring to World War I also mention the custom of wailing at the time of the young recruits' going to war, with harrowing scenes that took place in the train stations whence the Romanian soldiers journeyed to the front.[87] In addition to the women's (especially the mothers') wailing at their sons' departure from home, Ovidiu Bîrlea highlighted the role of mourning-in-advance and the disturbing effect of the "soldiers' songs on the station platforms or in the crammed wagons that took them away from their homeland. *Pleno gutture* singing was their only means to relieve their souls from the burden of alienation, [...] for song served as a manly, communal wail."[88]

In these songs, going to war was featured as "a disaster of apocalyptic proportions" and the battlefield was pictured through eschatological images: "For where I proceed/There's no ear of wheat/Only blood, up to my feet..."[89] Alongside the picture of death among strangers, deprived of the customary funeral ceremony, the image of the huge wave of blood provides the most tragic overtones of this repertoire.

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[83] The funeral-related repertoire is divided into two large categories: ritual songs (connected to a particular moment of the funeral ceremony, with a fixed text, a highly polished form, which refers not only to the dead person in question, but to all the dead and which are sung by groups of women who are good connoisseurs of the repertoire, but are unrelated to the deceased) and dirges, which are not related to the ceremonial moments and can also be sung after the funeral, by a single woman, less frequently in a group, but she must be a close relative or a friend of the deceased; the content is customized to the situation of the deceased and has a much freer form, as mourners can improvise new lyrics, dirges being, therefore, much inferior, in artistic terms, to ritual funeral songs. See Ovidiu Bîrlea, "Cântecele rituale funebre din ţinutul Pădurenilor (Hunedoara)," in *Anuarul Muzeului Etnografic al Transilvaniei*, 1968-1970, Cluj-Napoca, 1971, pp. 362-367.

[84] Simeon Florea Marian, *Înmormântarea la români*, Bucureşti: Editura Grai şi Suflet - Cultura Naţională, 1995, pp. 229-230.

[85] T. T. Burada, *Datinele poporului român la înmormântări*, Iaşi, 1882, p. 84.

[86] Ovidiu Bîrlea, "Bocetele şi verşurile funebre din ţinutul Pădurenilor (Hunedoara)," in *Anuarul Muzeului Etnografic al Transilvaniei*, 1971-1973, Cluj-Napoca, 1973, pp. 580-581.

[87] See O. T. Tăslăuanu, *Trei luni pe câmpul de răsboiu. Ziarul unui ofiţer român din armata austro-ungară, care a luat parte cu glotaşii din Ardeal, la luptele din Galiţia*, Bucureşti, 1916, p. 15, p. 46 and Eugen Goga, *Două Siberii*, Bucureşti, 1916, p. 19.

[88] Bîrlea, *Folclorul ...*, II, pp. 173-174.

[89] *Ibidem*, p. 225.

In conclusion, we can say that the disease of homesickness affected the Romanian soldiers with particular intensity, perhaps even more than other soldiers in the multinational army of the Habsburgs, if we take into account the objective conditions of military service: violent and abusive recruitment, the duration of military service, the brutal methods of instruction and, especially, the soldiers' removal from their familiar, native places and their isolation in a multinational army, where they knew no other language than their own. It was the merit of the physician and high official Isfordink to have recorded the suffering of the Romanian soldiers, even though he took a stand against the "funeral convoys," that is, the songs the Romanian soldiers were accompanied by when leaving for their regiments. In these difficult circumstances, the soldiers' songs were, for them and their families, a means of purification, assisting them to relieve their souls of a burden that risked crushing them under its weight, causing the combatants to fall prey to homesickness, a serious ailment, which could often prove fatal at that time.