"My shepherd stick is better than the crown" The Image of the Shepherd in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Popular Literature in Hungary

~ *Rumen István Csörsz* ~

The shepherd was a very frequent motif in eighteenth century Hungarian popular literature in both anonymous songs and authored works. Compared to the earlier centuries, we can determine that different types of shepherds are present in Hungarian poetry in a higher proportion in this period. This was related to the consolidation of agriculture after the Turkish occupation (1690s) and the rich shepherd culture of the multi-ethnic land, such as a higher awareness of Slovakian and Romanian mountain shepherding. The shepherd motifs were enriched in three fields which were interconnected:

1. ancient Roman, bucolic shepherd figures after the eclogues of Virgil;
2. Rococo pastoral characters of the Christmas dramatic plays and popular songs;
3. genre figures of realistic shepherds in the 18th century.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, Hungarian broadside literature, consisting of very popular chapbooks,[27] helped to spread these motifs,

27 Chapbooks of poetry became rooted in Hungarian popular literature quite late. Religious songs and prayers were published in this format from the beginning of the eighteenth century, while secular texts (love songs, epic poems, mockeries, later best man poems, outlaw ballads etc.) only appeared from the 1750s. Due to the Habsburg educational reforms, the circle of readers significantly widened, thus these publications targeted the rural audience at the beginning of the

especially by genre songs and later by the *puszta* poems of Sándor Petőfi (1823–1849). The protagonists of the early Hungarian outlaw ballads were initially shepherds who were criminalized only later. This paper would like to give a nuanced image of shepherds in early modern Hungarian literature by analysing the motif of the shepherd.

Mythology of the Shepherds

We undoubtedly inherited the idealistic image of shepherds from antiquity. It is not by accident that ancient writers looked up to them as survivors of the golden age – shepherding societies were the most archaic ones throughout the world. The shepherd milieu of the ancient Greek and Roman gods (such as the story of the cattle thief Hermes) still creates the aura of the highest prestige even thousands of years later.

As shepherding did not require significant technological improvements, the occupation could be pursued using its century-old methods also in more structured societies. To put it more simply: instead of animal owners who had to deal with other things, shepherds insured the development and reproduction of animals, thereby maintaining their value throughout history. This role is archaic yet modern, as it means a kind of service. Shepherds lived in nature on the edge of society and formed a sort of micro-society; in order to protect their interest, they often had to cooperate with each other or find allies within other groups, such as robbers, outlaws or runaway rebels. Living outside society formed the shepherds' viewpoint, because although they lived farther from the ever-faster impulses of economy and culture, they still had a lot of information that was useful for the community or its enemy. Some well-known examples include Odysseus, who upon returning to Ithaca, is recognized by his former swineherd, Eumaeus (Homer: *Odysseia,* book 14); the frolicking shepherds finally give good advice to the heroes of

nineteenth century. The heyday of chapbooks was the nineteenth century, and parallel to this the rich manuscript culture slightly suffered. The 'discovery' of Hungarian popular poetry, its canonization into the mainstream national poetry happened at the same time, in the first half of the nineteenth century. In a way, this replaced authentic folklore (orality was mostly unknown to collectors, who mainly concentrated on written sources; Mikos – Csörsz 2019).

medieval French fairy tales, for example to *Aucassin and Nicolette*, who were in search of each other. They know everything; they trust no one, yet people envy them. For those living in towns and cities who control each other and sense each other constantly the lonely shepherds' life could represent an opposite world in its simplicity even in the time of Virgil. The shepherds who appear in the eclogues besides their everyday joys (drinking, eating, music, dance, and moderate love) also have contemplative characters. One example of this is Virgil's Eclogue 4 (an odd poem), in which the shepherds appear as seers predicting the arrival of the Messiah – who is Caesar Augustus according to the contemporary analysis. In his other eclogues (e.g., 1–3) Virgil shows playful competitions of shepherds and nymphs, 'love triangles' and points out how much happier they are in nature than the city dwellers.

This motif hides a parallel with the Jewish-Christian tradition. King David's fate had been sealed by a thousand-year long family custom: as a child, he had to look after sheep, because he was not the oldest child (1 Samuel, 16:11). And yet, it was him who rose to the throne of Israel just like his symbolic descendent, Jesus first bestowed his mercy and blessings upon the shepherds of Bethlehem who gave him gifts (Luke 2:8–20). The destiny of the shepherd is a shared mission in Psalm 23 as well: "The Lord is my shepherd" – and I also live as a shepherd, in hope and bliss. This thought, involved into the often-recalled image of the bucolic shepherds, determined literary art pieces about shepherds for centuries.

We know little about the old centuries of the Central European shepherd culture. The province of Pannonia, according to popular belief, received its name after the god Pan (Faunus) – which may not be true – and this topos was also known in the Modern age. This is when we first see the symbolic interpretation of this form of life throughout Europe. In Hungary, it seldom appears as a motif of Renaissance literature. The greatest Hungarian poet of the Renaissance, Bálint Balassi (1554–1594) mentions the shepherds in love in his translation of *Szép magyar komédia* (Nice Hungarian Comedy)[28] as "vitéz ifjú" (young warrior). Within a Hungarian setting, a Mediterra-

28 The Italian original is Cristoforo Castelletti's Amarilli (published in 1587).

nean shepherd-idyll seems to be related to the lifestyle of the border castles.[29] Only one shepherd character could remain: the comical and obscene goatherd, Dienes, only to make the audience laugh at his rude jokes. Besides the shepherds in Christmas carols and those appearing with their names borrowed from Virgil in the first Hungarian nativity play (1629),[30] we hardly see any traces of shepherds in Hungarian literature until the end of the seventeenth century.

However, there is one exception: the Hungarian cowherds (*hajtós,* or better known as *hajdús,* 'leaders' or 'drivers'), who drove their cattle from Hungary to as far as Nuremberg. These people appear as the representatives of the Hungarian collective soul in the accounts of Western visitors: wild, extremely strong, military-like men who take huge risks to lead their large and dangerous animals for many miles. Their acrobatic *heyduk* dances, which were performed occasionally with weapons and their old-exotic bagpipe music, had a great influence on German musicians of the sixteenth to seventeenth century, who recorded many melodies of the kind. However, the *hajdús* were originally a separate and mobile group of shepherding societies and could also be used as a kind of free soldiers. No sooner than they received the rights of the gentry, did they strengthen the power base of István Bocskai, prince of Transylvania (1557–1606), and later, they became a part of law enforcement, leaving their original occupations behind. The late descendant of the *hajdús*, János Arany (1817–1882), one of the most known Hungarian poets in the nineteenth century, wrote about the valiant soldiers of the olden days in several of his works, but he did not mention their shepherd past.

29 In the words of Géza Szentmártoni Szabó: „At the beginning of 1589, Balassi wrote his Szép magyar komédia on the basis of Cristoforo Castelletti's pastoral play entitled Amarilli. He placed the amorous idyll into a martial context, more adapted to a Hungarian audience. Also, in his poem entitled In laudem confiniorum, he developed the praise of an ideal military life." (Kiss 2022)

30 This fragmented Christmas play might have been written by Péter Dengeleghy Bíró in Alvinc (today Vinţu de Jos, Romania) and survived in the layers of a bookbinding in Nagyvárad (today Oradea, Romania). This copy can be found in Martin (Matica slovenská). Critical edition: Kilián 2017, p 75–114 (*Nagyvárad Bethlehem play*). The shepherds are Menalchas, Tityrus, Daphnis, Meliseus, Dametas, Camillus, and Pan.

In the eighteenth century, significant changes took place. Firstly, the communication between distant parts of Hungary after the Turkish occupation became easier to reach and with the arrival of new nationalities, Hungarians could meet agricultural, industrial and art phenomena that earlier were not typical of the given region.[31] Secondly, the elite culture had been enriched by many elements that were related to shepherds. By this time, the rural and shepherd motifs that were widely spread in Italian and French Rococo had been fixed: in music, fine art and in literature. This always referred to the unspoiled way of life that was free of the intrigues of the city and court life. For example, the ex-Jesuit Ferenc Faludi (1704–1779) had an important impact on the Hungarian popular poetry through his eclogues. Naturally, the influences were mixed. So, the Christmas shepherd masses, the theatrical school and folk traditions (Bethlehem plays in Hungarian) often absorbed such bucolic motifs as the shepherd names from Virgil (Tityrus, Moeris, Menalchas, etc.) and the sound of the *pastorale* that was present in Western Baroque music (the imitation of bagpipe and alpine horn).[32]

The above-mentioned cultural elements all made their effects felt in the popular poetry of the eighteenth to nineteenth century. Here I can only provide a brief overview, but this topic is so rich that it would be well worth comparing Hungarian, Slovakian, Czech or Romanian versions of texts or genres, their differences in content and time and also their reappearance in later popular poetry. It is a fact that the motifs of shepherd life, especially the presence of mountain shepherds is far more frequent in Slovakian and Romanian popular poetry than in Hungarian, where the appearance of cowherds and horseherds (living on the Great Hungarian Plain), is much more typical. Nevertheless, there are still parallels between the literary representations of these distant forms of shepherding.

31 For a general view of the methods of the Hungarian cattle trade, see Kurucz 2001.

32 The two most important Hungarian 'shepherd masses' were composed by the Moravian-Slovakian Jiří (Juraj/György/Georginus) Zrunek in 1766–1767. For the complete critical edition with Slovakian and Hungarian versions, see Kilián 2017, pp. 547–752.

The best-known eighteenth century Hungarian popular shepherd plainsong is titled either *Juhászok éneke* (Song of the Shepherds) or *Pásztorélet* (Shepherd Life).[33] Latin and Hungarian verses alternate within, the incipit reads: "Si quis vivit jucundus" or "Ha gyönyörűségesen él valaki".[34] It came to life as early as around 1740, probably from the protestant colleges of Transylvania. It originally might have been a song in a school play and then spread all over the country as of 1760. It spread from Debrecen through Transdanubia, to as far as Dolný Kubín until around 1840. It also circulated in chapbooks and in calendars around 1810, at that time only with Hungarian verses. The simple Rococo tune of the song can be traced back to folk music, as it also spread in nativity plays. The hero of the verse is the shepherd who lives happily in nature, Tityrus:

Ha gyönyörűségesen
Él valaki, én frissen
Élek, juhász, a mezőben,
Terelvén nyájam erdőben
A hegyek havasira
S a vizek forrásira.[35]

He is cheered up by the songs of the nightingales and the doves, his loyal shepherd dog protects the herd from all kinds of danger. This way the shepherd can endure the hot sun and the hardships of the weather, as he can live happily far from everything. The most important lines in this context are the following:

Királyok koronáját,
Nem kívánom pálcáját,

33 Critical edition with forty-six variants: RMKT XVIII/14, No. 192.
34 "If somebody lives happily."
35 "If somebody lives happily, I live just like that – as a shepherd, on the field, leading my herd into the forest to the snow-peaked mountains, and to spring waters." – RMKT XVIII/14, No. 192/I, stanza 2. The cited text was published in chapbook *Mezei juhász dallok* (Shepherd songs of the fields), before 1790; see MVP II. (2020), No. 6.

Jobb e pásztori bot annál,
Országok birodalmánál!
Már, juhaim, sétáljunk
Az akolba, s ott háljunk![36]

So, the happiness and well-being of the shepherd originates from the fact that he is free from the desire to have power and does not wish to lead others than his sheep.

In Hungarian popular poetry, the majority of the herders are definitely cowherds. The best-known anonymous song was recorded at the end of the eighteenth century and was published in chapbook. Later, Gergely Édes (1763–1847) wrote its paraphrase. A few lines from the song go as follows:

Én vagyok a petri gulyás,
Én őrzöm a gulyát, nem más.
A bojtárom a gulyánál,
Magam vagyok a rózsámnál. […]

Menjünk fel a lapanyakra,
Nézzünk széjjel a gulyába',
Nincsen-e kár a marhába',
Nincsen-e kár a marhába'?

Felmentünk a lapanyakra,
Széjjelnéztünk a gulyába',
Nincs semmi kár a marhába',
Nincs semmi kár a marhába'.[37]

36 "I do not wish for the crowns of kings, nor for their wands. My shepherd stick is better than that, than the empires of countries! C'mon my sheep, let's walk to the pen to sleep there!" – RMKT XVIII/14, No. 192/I, stanza 12.

37 "I am the herdsman of Pócspetri, it is me who looks after the herd and no one else. My herd boy is with the herd and I am with my sweetheart. Let's go up to the small hill and take a good look around to see if there is any harm done to the herd. We

The end of the song is an idyllic image: The herd is grazing at the next hill and the herdsman is still having a good time and drinking wine with his lover. So, he could get out of his duties because the herd boys keep things under control. It is an interesting fact that this motif comes up in connection with herders in almost every piece of popular poetry. *Gulyásnóta* (Cattle-herd Song), written by József Mátyási (1765–1849) in the 1820s, which also became a popular song, carries on many elements of the earlier shepherd bragging.

Nem bánom hogy parasztnak születtem,
Csak azért hogy Gulyássá lehettem,
Eb cserélne cserép palotával,
Vagy életet köszvényes nagy úrral.

Kis királyság így is állapotom,
Igazgató törvény bunkós botom,
Országom az egész baromjárás,
Nagy Potentát egy révbeli Gulyás.

Hat bojtárnak vagyok fejedelme,
Így tisztelnek: Gazduram őkelme [...].[38]

We can see that he supervises the work of the herd boys, but he does not have to pay attention to everything, so even within the world of shepherds, he is considered a free, independent man. The image of the king's wand and the stick comes up again. In a later verse he even says that he would not

went up the small hill and looked around and there is no harm done to the herd." – RMKT XVIII/14, No. 217/I, stanzas 1 and 3–4. The cited text was published on chapbook, which was titled from this song *Leg-is leg-újjabb Petri Gujás nótáji* (The very new songs of the herdsman of Pócspetri), before 1800. See MVP II. (2020), No. 11.

38 "I do not mind that I was born to be a peasant. Just because I could become a herder. I would be a dog to change it for a tiled palace or for a life with a nobleman with gout. / My condition is like being in a small kingdom. The law is my stick. My country is where the cattle roam. A flatland herder is a powerful person. / I am the ruler of six herd boys. They call me master. [...]" – [Fragmented chapbook without title page], 1820s. See MVP II. (2020), No. 13, stanzas 1–3.

change his shepherd fur coat for the elegant clothes of gentleman, nor for a cape made of cloth.

The same tone can be heard through a popular-sounding song by Mihály Vitkovics (1778–1829) *Hej, pajtás, be nevetem világ bolondságát* (Hey, friend, I just laugh at the foolishness of this world). The hero of the chapbook is also a cowherd, who can have a good time with his sweetheart, can eat and drink well and in general does not have a care in the world. The closing stanza reads:

> Egy szóval Paraditsom
> A' Pásztor' tanyája,
> Mert oda el nem hat
> A' Világ' lármája.[39]

In *Hortobágyi dal* (Hortobágy song, 1810s) by Mihály Fazekas (1766–1828) the height of satisfaction is the portrait of the shepherd once again:

> Van húsa, szalonnája,
> Öt őrü bundája,
> Szép zöldellő mezőben
> Legel a' marhája.[40]

In another popular song,[41] the horseherd from the Hungarian *Alföld* (The Great Hungarian Plain) represents the 'real' eastern Hungarians, mocking the 'spoilt' Transdanubians who use foreign words. The author of the poem listens to the mockery teaching from the horseherd at "Rákos, at the time of the Fair of Pest". In other words, in Pest – the centre of the country where

39 "In one word, Paradise is the dwelling of the shepherd. Because the noise of the world does not get in there." – The poem was published without the name of the author in chapbook. The cited detail: MVP II. (2020), No. 12, stanza 18.

40 "He has meat, he has bacon and a nice coat sewn from the skin of five lambs, his cattle are grazing in a nice green field." (Fazekas 1836, pp. 29–30, lines 13–16)

41 Critical edition: RMKT XVIII/4 (2000), No. 117, with twenty-two variants between 1790 and 1840.

the diet used to gather in the Middle Ages. Behold a horseherd with the true spirit, who can give the patriotic message:

Rákos mezőn egykor, Pesti Vásárkor,
Túl a' Tiszán lévő Csikós Bundástúl,
Dudástúl,
Bundástúl,
Három ittze finom borra bé fordúl.

Azt kérdezik az ott valók tréfábúl:
Ha tudnak-é túl a' Tiszán Magyarúl?
Tiszántúl?
Magyarúl?
Felel nékik ezen Csikós tréfábúl:

Túl a' Tiszán iszik Magyar Korsóbúl,
Jó paprikás húst-is eszik Bográcsbúl,
Tiszántúl,
Bográcsbúl,
Ugyan bizony helyessen van Magyarúl![42]

Its English translation by John Bowring (1792–1872), published in 1830, shaped the image of the 'original' Hungarians on the international 'stage':

The Tiszian.
Rákos mezőn egykor, Pesti vásárkor.

From the smiling fields of Rakosh, on the market-day of Pest,
Lo! an Over-Tiszian Chikosh in his snowy bunda drest;
Bunda wearing, bagpipes bearing,

42 This variant is a printed version (Szirmay 1804, p. 19, stanzas 1–3). See RMKT XVIII/4 (2000), No. 117/X.

And he seeks the "Three Cups'" Tavern, where he sell of wine the best.[43]

There they jok'd the sheep-clad Chikosh – asked him if in Tiszian land
People spoke the Magyar language, and could Magyar understand?
Or if Tiszians spoke like Grecians?

So when they had ceased their laughing, thus he answered out of hand:

Our Hungarians out of pitchers drink the overflowing wine;
Spice their food with rich paprika, and from ancient platters dine;
Your Hungarians are Barbarians,
And the manners of our fathers, scouted by such sons, decline. [...][44]

The happy life and the nice clothes of swineherds are also proverbial in songs:

Megismerni a kanászt csak a járásáról,
Cifrán kötött bocskoráról, tarisznyaszíjáról,
Gic, gic gic![45]

In fact, among all the herders, they are the only ones who are depicted as married men – although the swineherd's pretty wife is flirting with the guest when her husband is not at home:

Itthon van-e a kanász vagy a felesége?
Nem kell nekem a kanász, csak a felesége.[46]

43 More precisely: 'He wants to drink three cups of good wine.'

44 This inaccurate English translation follows the German draft translation of Károly György Rumy (which was sent to Bowring). The last cited line was only an ideological addition, it was not included in the original text. See Bowring 1830, pp. 279–280, stanzas 1–3.

45 "You can tell the swineherd apart from the way he walks and the way his shoes are tied with laces and from the straps on his haversack." – Songbook of Fülöp Horowitz (1837), see Csörsz 2001, No. 176, stanza 1.

46 "Is the swineherd or his wife at home? I don't need the swineherd, just his wife." – The song is a "Bagpipe song" and was popular between 1820–1846 in Fejér,

The life of a swineherd still was not easy. They often had to go to dangerous forests where there were robbers and thieves. Losing the animals that they were to look after meant a punishment by death. This was preserved in the text of a manuscript from Dolný Kubín (Alsókubin) from the 1780s, which is one of the oldest recorded Hungarian ballads: *Világi szép ének egy szegény kondásról* (A beautiful secular song about a poor swineherd). Our hero, the swineherd of Gyöngyös lost a pig and he is looking for it everywhere, but he knows very well that he is going to be hanged for it. He has not been a swineherd all his life and he curses the very moment when he came to this faraway land to do this dangerous job:

> Jobb lett volna nékem a Tiszán túl menni,
> bús kenyeret enni, katonának menni,
> Almási Jánosnak konyháját kerülni. […]
> Kár volna még nékem az halálra menni,
> Szép bodor hajamat szélnek elhordani […],
> Mert soha [mintsem egy] disznóért embert akasztani,
> Ily árva legénynek világból kimúlni.[47]

The cowherds and the horseherds were in close relation with the outlaws. What is more, the ballad about Bandi Angyal (Andy Angel, originally András Ónódi) which appeared in chapbook in the 1810s starts with warning words to the hero, the young man with noble ancestors from Northern Hungary to discourage him from mixing with the dangerous company of the herders:

Somogy and Veszprém county. For the scored edition arranged to piano, see Mátray 1854, pp. 80–81, stanza 1.

47 "It would have been better if I had gone over the Tisza river to eat my solemn bread as a soldier, and I should have avoided János Almási's kitchen. […] It would be a waste for me to die, for my nice curly hair to be carried away by the wind […], because it is never fair to hang someone for a pig, so that a young orphan boy should pass from this world this way." – Manuscript from Dolný Kubín (Alsókubin); Čaplovič Library No. 3/117a. Critical edition with Hungarian folk variants: RMKT XVIII/14 (2013), No. 227. The master of the swineherd, János Almási died in 1765.

Lám, megmondtam, Angyal Bandi, ne menj az Alföldre,
Csikósoknak, gulyásoknak közibe, közibe.
Mert megtanulsz lovat lopni ízibe, ízibe,
Majd úgy kerülsz a vármegye kezébe, kezébe.[48]

The occupation of the herder occasionally gets devalued compared to other jobs at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A drinking song that is well known in many regions of the country (Transdanubia, Debrecen, etc.) starts as follows, and paraphrased the earlier song *Si quis vivit jucundus / Ha gyönyörűségesen* (see above): *Ha valaki vígan él, a juhász éppen úgy él* (If somebody lives happily, the shepherd lives just like that).[49] The first stanza depicts the happy life of the shepherd, the other stanzas show other occupations. The last one is always the student who smokes a pipe even while he is studying. The singers were members of this community, so at the end of the round of occupations they always arrived 'home', although they envied the shepherd who "walks, smokes, plays the recorder, sways and strolls and stops every now and again".

The lazy shepherd is mocked in a conversational song, which has folk varieties as well, with the beginning: *Aluszol-é, te juhász?* (Are you sleeping, shepherd?) Every stanza provides another detail about the way the foolish shepherd let wolves prey on his herd.

Ugatták-é a kutyák?
Hej, nem is nevettek.

Vittek-é el sok bárányt?
Jaj, de nem is hoztak.

48 "I told you Bandi Angyal not to go to the Alföld, to mix with cowherds and with horseherds. / Because soon you will learn how to steal a horse / and then you will go to the main county prison." – *Az Alföldre menendő Angyal Bandi nótája* (Song of Bandi Angyal, when he wanted to go to the Great Hungarian Plain; chapbook, 1810s), see Csörsz 2001, No. 21, stanzas 1–2.

49 Critical edition: RMKT XVIII/14 (2013), No. 195.

Szaladtál-e utánok?
Hej, nem is előttök.[50]

The teaching intention, which is frequent in popular poetry, makes this song also didactic, besides the humorous effect. The image of the shepherd or other herder who is away from his love because of his shepherding duties was also a topos in the nineteenth century. In fact, the image of the herdsman which was abandoned because of this love sorrow also emerges, for example in Mihály Vitkovics's *Füredi pásztor dala* (Song of the shepherd of Füred):

Hej juhász bojtár! hol a' juh?
Mért vagy te ollyan szomoru?
Balaton mellett, ott a' juh,
Engemet öldös egy nagy bú.

Nem ettem 's ittam én még ma,
Itt fekszem dűlve, mint a' fa,
Lenyúgszik a' nap az égen,
Engemet itt hágy ínségben.

Megesett rajtam, 's fáj nekem,
Nem szeret engem a' szépem;
Hasztalan fúvom furullyám',
Nem hallja, nem néz ő énrám.

Fris tejet adtam, bárányt is
Én néki, teljes boglárt is,
Tőle nem szántam semmimet,
Odadtam volna lelkemet. [...][51]

50 "Did the dogs bark? Aye, they didn't laugh for sure. Did they take away many sheep? Well, they didn't bring any. Did you run after them? Aye, not in front of them, I did." – 1810s. See RMKT XVIII/14 (2013), No. 219/II.

51 Toldy 1828, p. 125, stanzas 1–4.

The English translation was published in Bowring's anthology from 1830:

Shepherd song of Füredi [!]
Hej juhász bojtár! hol a' juh?
Say, Shepherd! where thy sheep are gone,
And why this discontented frown?
They're wending forth to Balaton,
And heavy sorrows press me down.

I eat not, drink not—but I lie
Like a fell'd trunk upon the plain;
The sun sinks downwards from the sky,
And gives me up to night and pain.

O hopeless doom! She turns away,
Indifference in her eyes I see;
In vain my Shepherd's pipe I play—
She listens not, nor looks on me.

The freshest milk, the whitest lamb,
And wreaths of knots, to her I bore;
And all I have, and all I am—
Life, soul—would give, to win her o'er.[52]

The hierarchy of herder types is mentioned in a song which ranks the horse herder much higher than the walking sheep herder:

A csikósnak jól van dolga,
Egyik lóról a másikra.
De a juhász, mint a kutya,
Egyik dombról a másikra.[53]

52 Bowring 1830, pp. 95–96, stanzas 1–4.
53 "The horseherd has a good life, from one horse to the other. But the shepherd is like a dog, from one hill to the other." – Before 1824; RMKT XVIII/14 (2013), p. 562.

However, looking at the wider aspects of the occupations can have different results. The herders who are truly resourceful look for a new job:

> Voltam csikós, voltam gulyás,
> voltam nádudvari juhász.
> Nem őrzöm már senki juhát,
> Ad nekem a császár ruhát.[54]

– says one of them, who decides to be a soldier after being all kinds of animal herder, and he is proud of it.

János Arany's 'romance-fragment' titled *A betyár* (The Outlaw) is set at the time of the War of Independence in 1848–1849. The hero of the poem, called Pista, is originally a herd boy, who hears about the war, so he quickly says farewell to his lover, 'turns into' an outlaw for a few hours, steals a horse, then becomes a *huszár* (hussar) which you can only be on condition that you have your own horse. Stealing the horse makes the destiny of a patriot more understandable, as it is a break from his original horseherd boy role. These three occupations are depicted in the very same order in Sándor Petőfi's *János Vitéz* (John the Valiant) which is a narrative poem naturally well known to Arany (published in 1845). The poor orphan village boy, Jancsi Kukorica is living his hard knock life as a shepherd, but his master finds him neglecting his duty (which is caused by his lover's stepmother) and fires Jancsi from his shepherd job. He goes to exile, ends up in some robber's place, with whom he does not want to have anything in common, so he sets their house on fire and escapes.

Later, he becomes a *huszár* and gets a new name, the one in the title of the poem, János the Valiant, thus stepping out of his original fate forever. However, he can only find happiness with his dead lover in Fairyland. The path from the shepherd to the criminal and then to the army clearly

54 "I used to be a horseherd, I used to be a cowherd, I used to be a shepherd in Nádudvar. I look after for people's sheep no more, my clothes come from the emperor." – Before 1809; Csörsz 2001, No. 150, stanza 1.

marks the literary tradition. And this is in harmony with the earlier topoi as well.

A shepherd, when satisfied, can turn away from the world, but when his conditions are miserable, he moves towards the busyness of this world. Thus, the former shepherd boy first enters the way of 'sin', and then finally the way of 'virtue', from the criminals' close but chaotic world to the world of the army, which allegorically represents the organized rows of the nation.

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As we can see, the topic of the shepherd's life was constantly part of Hungarian popular culture in the eighteenth to nineteenth century (original folk songs included). Names and idyllic compositions borrowed from the ancient literature created a unique symbiosis with the habits and vocabulary of Early Modern shepherds. Popular poetry was enriched by both traditions blending the sacred and the profane elements specifically – the cult of the shepherds and their description as 'barbarians'. This syncretism was also known to the 'professional' poets of the time and influenced the Hungarian literature until the middle of the nineteenth century linking it to the phenomenon of *betyár*s (outlaw). The topic is extensive and promises a further research for the Central European comparation. This paper aims to provide some viewpoints with the help of the once widely known songs and poems.

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