



# Authorial Self and Modernity as Reflected in Diaries and Memoirs. Three 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Hungarian Case Studies<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** The role of the diaries and memoirs in the process of the conscious self-reflection and their contribution to the emergence of modern individual personalities are well-known facts of the intellectual history. The present paper intends to analyze a special form of the creation of modern individual character; it is the self-creation of the writer as a conscious personality, often with a clearly formulated opinion about her/his own social role. There will be offered several examples from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century history of the Hungarian intelligentsia. This period is more or less identical with the modernization of the “cultural industry” in Hungary, dominated by the periodicals with their deadlines, fixed lengths of the articles, and professional editing houses on the one hand and the cultural nation building on the other. Concerning the possible social and cultural role of the intelligentsia, it is the moment of the birth of a new type, so-called public intellectual. I will focus on three written sources, a diary of a Calvinist student of theology, Péter (Litkei) Tóth, the memoirs of an influential public intellectual, Gusztáv Szontagh, and a belletristic printed diary of a young intellectual, János Asbóth.

**Keywords:** authorial self, modern culture, nation building, public intellectual

## Introduction

The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is the epoch of the cultural nation building in East-Central Europe. Within this period, in the Hungarian case, the Reform Era (1825–1848) was crucial in the development in the fields of the politics, literature, humanities, and philosophy. A speciality of both the Polish and Hungarian cases is the transition of the models of the activity in the public sphere from

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the behavioral patterns of the representatives of the nobility to the modernized norms of a new intelligentsia of mixed, noble, and common origin. The increased significance of the intellectuals is connected with the changed structure of the public sphere. The most visible element of this communicational turn was the language shift from Latin (and partly from German) to Hungarian, but the new works of this renewed Hungarian culture appeared in a modernized media which was based on a network of new types of institutions such as literary, cultural, and scientific periodicals in Hungarian, saloons of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, and the Hungarian Scholarly Society (today: Hungarian Academy of Sciences). In this new environment of cultural communication, a critical mass of public intellectuals has emerged and has transformed the public opinion. The symbols of this new world were the coffee shops of *Váci Street* in Pest and *Senatorska Street* in Warsaw, both with their cultural significance and revolutionary potential. (It is an accidental but also symbolic fact that the first owner of the most famous Hungarian café, called *Pilwax*, was a Polish immigrant.) From the point of view of his Hegelian triad of the narrative of the Hungarian philosophy, János Erdélyi formulated the significance of the establishment of the Academy as a symbolic milestone in the following words:

I distinguish three periods of philosophy. The *first one* is *prehistory*, acculturation in the European thinking, from the beginning of the national history till János Apáczai Csere. (...) At the end of this period, philosophy has been explained in Hungarian. The *second period* is until the establishment of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which is the institute of the self-reflective thinking of the Hungarian intelligentsia; or, marked by a name, until the appearance of its generous founder, Count István Széchenyi. In the end, the *third one* must be the present, which has begun with the Academy, and it writes itself its own history (Erdélyi 1981: 200).<sup>2</sup>

The transition from the noble role models to the intellectual ones in this period is linked to the traditions of the historiography in the Hungarian case. Such transition has remained unnoticed because of the noble origin of the majority of these new-type intellectuals. Historiographers focused mainly on the language shift from Latin to Hungarian. They did it in the narrative framework of the development of the Hungarian literature, terminology, and education. From this perspective, the questions of the changed and modernized institutional background of the intellectual life and the “history of mentality” of the active participants of Hungarian culture were underestimated. Under the conditions of the above outlined circumstances of the researches in this field, I intend to analyze the birth of the Hungarian public intellectual. This endeavor is based

2 Translation of the study's author (from Hungarian).

on the documents of the creation of the authorial self and builds on my earlier research and recent philological results about the *œuvre* of my heroes.

Firstly, I will outline the structure of the scholar public sphere (focusing on philosophy) in the period of my heroes' intellectual socialization. The emergence of the figure of the professional public intellectual as a new role model in their active life will be the topic of the second section. In the methodology of the international and Hungarian research of this field, several genres of self-reflective texts have been considered as having crucial significance. In my present study, I will offer an overview of diaries, memoirs, and portraits of three typical 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian intellectuals together with an analysis of their theoretical reflections on their new role model. Within the length limits of my writing, I tried to choose representative texts – by the term of the Cambridge school of the history of ideas. They represent three different social strata, three generations, three different religious and cultural backgrounds, and three regions of the Hungarian Kingdom. In the final part of my paper, I will touch upon the mental conditions for the creation of the authorial self of the public intellectuals within the machinery of the modern cultural industry. I will also outline several consequences of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century history of intelligentsia for the 20<sup>th</sup>-century history of ideas.

## **Changes in the Structure of the Scholars' Public Sphere**

The changes in the structure of the public sphere of the Hungarian intellectual life has begun at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the history of Hungarian philosophy, it is the time of the Kantian Controversy (1792–1822). It is symptomatic that this debate began with a polemic brochure published as a separate volume, written in Latin, for the European professional philosophers as a target audience and was completed with a normal study written in Hungarian and published in a new scholarly periodical. The author of these writings was the same person but in different periods, i.e. at the beginning and at the end of his career (Rozgonyi 1792/2017, 1822). The significance of this turn has remained unnoticed in terms of both the language shift of the discourse and the transformation of the institutional background of the scholar public sphere. The language shift from Latin to Hungarian meant a segregation from the international discourse and also contributed to the extension of the inland target audience of philosophy. This shift also enlarged the new type of institutional networks such as saloons and periodicals. In the field of literature, this is the period of the foundation of the first Hungarian periodicals of belles-lettres; the establishment of the first modern literary groups and networks which were engaged in a concrete movement, style, or trend of the literature of that age, showing a large literary correspondence within the members of these groups. (The most important writer groups in this

period were the classicists and romanticists.) Thus, there occurred a seemingly modernized and developed system of cultural institutional networks; however, the figure of *professional public intellectual*, especially its theoretical species, e.g. the *public philosopher*, was still absent. For the appearance of this type of intellectual, there would have been needed a much larger educated audience and a much larger production of “serious” books which could contribute to the genre of *theoretical criticism*. In the Hungarian case, this qualitative change took place by the support of the new type of institutions: e.g. the foundation of different awards and, first of all, the Hungarian Scholarly Society (today: Hungarian Academy of Sciences) with its publication policy.

Under the above outlined conditions, the significance of self-identification, self-creation, and self-education has increased on two levels at the same time. On the individual level, the central question was the creation of an *autonomous authorial self*, which was connected with the modern machinery of the cultural production but preserved its individual independence. On the public level, the new public sphere has been interpreted as a tool for producing a well-structured *nation* from an amorphous *ethnic group*. (Concerning this issue, for the term *ethnologia*, see Hetényi 1841: 238–239, Mester 2018). Another issue of this period is the function of the autonomous individual author within the autonomous national culture. The figures discussed here produced in their memoirs conscious reflections on the important elements of the changing public sphere and connected them with the self-creation of their individual authorial selves. In the following sections, I will offer several examples for this.

## First Example for the Authorial Self: Péter (Litkei) Tóth

My first hero is Péter (Litkei) Tóth (1814–1878). He was not the eldest one amongst the examples presented here, but his diary written during his youth is the earliest example of this genre. He was a first-generation intellectual, a son of a rural craftsman, who spent all his movable financial means for the education of his sons. Péter Tóth, who used the pen name Litkei after his native village (Fényes) Litke (near the town of Kisvárdá in Szabolcs County), showed his affinity for theatre, literature, and philosophy during his student years in the Calvinist College of Sárospatak. His philosophical background resembled the ideas of the Hungarian circles of the Schellingian philosophy, first of all that of his professor, István Nyíri. Later, during the years of *peregrinatio academica*, Péter Tóth became a radical follower of the revolutionary ideas of the Young Hegelian movement. He did not run a great intellectual career. In fact, he remained a Calvinist pastor in his homeland and the author of several radical, scandalous publications, under protection of his elder brother József, who was the dean of the same diocese.

During the 1848–1849 revolution, Péter Tóth served in the revolutionary army as an army-chaplain.

Péter Tóth's significance in the Hungarian history of ideas is not based solely on his writings but also on his friendship and intellectual connection with an important figure of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian literature and intellectual life, Mihály Tompa (1817–1868), who was his fellow student, his colleague as a Calvinist pastor, his comrade as an army-chaplain of the revolutionary army, and godfather of Péter's daughters, as well. In their correspondence, they have sketched an intellectual role-play with the ideal typical characters of a *poet* (incarnated by Tompa) and a *philosopher* (incarnated by Litkei Tóth). Litkei Tóth showed the vision of a revolutionary progress of world history, and his articles and brochures can be easily considered a Young Hegelian philosophy of history (Tóth 1847–1848, 1871). The only couple portrait which remained after him from his elderly years shows him with his brother and does not mirror any elements of his revolutionary youth; it is a twin image of two brothers with conspicuous signs of pride of the achieved prestige and social rank as pastors in their native land (Tóth 1984, frontispiece).

Another point of Litkei Tóth's importance is his diary itself. The manuscript remained for years on the desk of the major representative of the classic 20<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian literature, Zsigmond Móricz, and has inspired several characters of his novels (mainly Calvinist pastors). Later, in the 1980s when the genre of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century diary became important for the Hungarian intellectual history, the modern edition of this manuscript was considered a model for the intellectual self-creation of an *average intellectual*. Litkei Tóth's diary was written in the crucial period of the author's career, i.e. after his student years and before his final decision about his vocation. It was written, in fact, for a fraternity of his college *alumni*, who read the diaries of each other and used them as a reference for personal, intellectual, ethical, and spiritual self-development. Physiological phenomena, including sexual aspects, have a significant importance in the diary, and they are interpreted in connection with the achieved self-control. The symptoms of illness are interpreted as indicators of a bad way of life, as a consequence of the misinterpretation of the outside world, and the construction of a pseudo-world under the circumstances of modern civilization. In this respect, his line of thought prefigures the modern cultural criticism. In Litkei Tóth's writings, especially his own Calvinist Church is considered an institution which is strongly inclined to create a virtual world and to be blind to see the trends and phenomena of the process of social modernization.

## Second Example for the Authorial Self: Gusztáv Szontagh

In the following, I will offer an example for the analysis of a later phenomenon, using the narratives of the career of a typical public intellectual of the Hungarian Reform Era in the field of philosophy, namely Gusztáv Szontagh. I will interpret his work in the mirror of his memoirs, which have remained in the form of a manuscript and were published recently in my edition (Szontagh 2017). At first, I will outline the emergence of the figure of the *professional public intellectual as a new role model* in his active life, and then I will give an analysis of his theoretical reflections to the new role model. I will touch upon the questions of multilingualism of his social environment, the military service and the Napoleonic wars as social and cultural experiences, and the mental and somatic conditions of the public intellectuals during the emergence of the machinery of modern cultural industry.

The intellectual socialization of Szontagh had been completed before the Hungarian Reform Era (1825–1848), but the period of his own intellectual activity was almost identical with this era. By the evidence of his publications and memoirs, he was in contact with Ferenc Kazinczy, the father of the modern Hungarian literature. (This period corresponds to Kazinczy's last and Szontagh's first active literary years.) However, the old master could not offer a role model for Szontagh. In the chapter of his memoirs entitled *Hungarian Literature*, Szontagh formulates the different positions of their subsequent generations by the comparison of their financial connections to the literary life. Kazinczy had almost been bankrupted because of the costs of his extremely extended correspondence; Szontagh's generation was the first whose representatives could live on their pens. These financial circumstances of the Hungarian culture were new phenomena for Szontagh's generation *without role models* for creating, describing, and representing their intellectual identities or authorial selves. For the generation after Szontagh, a developed literary market was a taken-for-granted phenomena, and their authorial identity was often developed by their editors as a *trademark*, or they defined their identities *against* the oligarchy of the licensed editing houses. (The best example for both phenomena is Petőfi in his different periods.) For the generation before Szontagh, the creation of the same modern public sphere represented the first point of the agenda. For Szontagh's contemporaries, the main problem was the theoretical reflection to the structure and function of the new public sphere and to their position in it. Szontagh, in his memories, had conscious reflections to the main elements of the changing public sphere and connected them with the creation of his individual authorial self. In the followings, I will offer several examples for this.

One of the most characteristic elements of the public sphere was the *language*. Szontagh's father was a Lutheran, ethnically a German-Hungarian nobleman; his

mother's first language was Slovakian, but she identified herself as a Hungarian noble. The family lived in a Slovak settlement, Csetnek (Štítnik, near the town of Rozsnyó/Rožňava), but at home they spoke exclusively in German in order to support the German language command of Gusztáv and his younger brother. (A Slovakian and Hungarian bilingual memorial tablet was dedicated for him on the wall of the local parish hall on 28 November 2018.) He went to traditional Latin schools, but during his childhood his father provided him Hungarian language education. During his presence in the Austrian army as well as in the course of and following the Napoleonic wars, Szontagh learnt and used the French and Italian languages as well; later, he learnt English for his autodidactic studies of philosophy. This linguistic mixture functioned by the model of the *functional multilingualism*, i.e. when people with the same origins speak different languages according to different social situations. A symptomatic description of these conditions can be found in his records on the Austrian army in France, in his *Memoirs*. His German language regiment had purely Slovak troops and almost purely Hungarian officers. Amongst the latter, Szontagh, the youngest one, was the only one who could speak to the soldiers in their mother tongue. Consequently, his task was to deliver encouraging speeches before the battles. Having been educated under the conditions of functional multilingualism, Szontagh encountered an uncomfortable experience: he was able to use only the Latin language for the purpose of creating serious writings. Thus, the first point of his autodidactic project was to learn to explain his thoughts in a written form in other languages as well, i.e. in German and in Hungarian. Because of his multiple experiences, he developed a reflective theory both in connection with the individual use of the language and the role of language as a communication tool of the political community called *nation*. In this conception, the language is not a natural or divine gift but a *consciously chosen tool*, a product of the institutionally planned *linguistic reforms* managed by the Hungarian Scholarly Society (later: Hungarian Academy of Sciences).

A special experience of Szontagh's generation was the Napoleonic wars. A significant part of the Hungarian intelligentsia were soldiers in this time, and so this situation was a common reference for several generations; Szontagh was amongst these soldiers a representative of the youngest age-group. The main experience of his military service was that he could form a vision on the mass society and on the automatization of the functions of a society, which later became the topics of thought of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Szontagh voluntarily joined the army in the last years of the Napoleonic wars after his student years at the faculty of arts and the academy of law. He remained in the army as a professional officer until 1836; consequently, he witnessed the modernization of the Austrian army based on the experiences of the Napoleonic wars but for a reactionary political end of the Holy Alliance. His theoretical reactions to the military service as a social experience

can be epitomized in three points. Firstly, military experience provided him a window for reality and made him give up the image of the war characterized by a sentimental heroism. The army represents a mechanic instrument, made up of men rather than a community of heroes; a war is much more a chain of long, boring, and tiring marches and logistical calculations than a series of opportunities for the demonstration of the personal courage and heroism. According to the words of his memoirs, he was lucky to have a great schoolmaster such as Napoleon, and the army was a great chance in order to change his previous sentimental ideas about the army and the war. These shifts in his worldview impacted his general ideas about the society and the nature of the reality in general. His ideas about the army and the war can be regarded as a philosophical consideration of the role of the modern, professional army in the European history. According to Szontagh, the establishment of the professional armies under the absolutist governments demilitarized the societies of these countries and offered a solid basis for the development of the civilization and the worldwide extension of the European culture. The next step form here is the *domestication* of the professional army; the demilitarization of the society remained a historical task, but the development of the civilization was accompanied with individual and national liberty both in Europe and in the colonies. His notes on the historical necessity of liberty of the non-European nations based on European ideas seem to be prophetic words in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Surprisingly, the method of the analysis of the social role of the army and the structure of the modern machinery of cultural production is analogous. On the surface, it is the epoch of the cult of geniuses and the rise of a developed, self-determined authorial identity in literature. Considering the institutional and financial background of the intellectual life, the contrast of the individual geniality and the mechanic machinery was so clear as it was in the case of the army. This ambiguity is well mirrored by the portrait of Szontagh, which is on the frontispiece of the modern edition of his memoirs as well (Szontagh 2017). By the first glance, we can see a realistically designed man with expressive face, curiosity in his eyes, and irony on his lips. It is a well-done graphic of a typical 19<sup>th</sup>-century public intellectual, a critic with an individualistic personality drawn by one of the best Hungarian graphic artists of his age, Miklós Barabás. In its context, it is a commercial gift for the (mainly female) subscribers of an influential periodical of this age. Thus, the autonomous person and author became an object for the commercial machinery, a consciously built modern media star.

This twofold nature of modern culture appears in the theoretical reflections of Szontagh as the *revealed pseudo-world made of mere words* in literature, the speculative systems of humanities, philosophy, and politics alike. He describes the intellectuals living in this pseudo-world by the metaphors of illness; their alienation from the reality is incarnated in somatic and psychical symptoms, mainly piles,

nervous problems, and hypochondria (see Mester 2012). By the evidence of his memoirs, this description is not a bias of a veteran of the Napoleonic wars towards the sybarite citizens of the downtown of Pest but the conclusion of his auto-introspection in the first years of his career as a professional public philosopher. The above listed symptoms were his personal illnesses as well. He cured himself by a popular method of his epoch: cold water bath; ironically, he recommends similar methods for his colleagues and, metaphorically, for the whole nation.

In his critique of the lifestyle and opinions of the urban intellectuals, Szontagh refers to concrete illnesses as metaphors of a worldview. He explained his theoretical social critique based on this background in different spheres of the intellectual life. At first, in his literary criticisms, the *psychological reality* of the *fictive female figures* was the crucial point. From this point of view, a non-realistic writer lives in a *male* paper world created by the machinery of the cultural industry and his own imagination, and he cannot formulate in his art the *female face* of the reality. (All the writers criticized by him were males. The rare female figures of intellectual life of his age were supported by him.) He considered that in the case of sciences and humanities empirical data are neglected and instead of them speculation is used, which leads to creating pseudo-worlds. The clearest example for this is his debate on the questions of the early Hungarian history in the early 1850s; this debate touched upon the general problems of the nature of the *historical facts*. In his opinion, Hungarian historians of his age live in a paper world, built from their speculations based on several well-formed narrative elements of the written sources. The *real* counterpart of this pseudo-world is represented by the geography and climate of the former settlements of the nomadic Hungarian tribes, by the ethnographic data of the contemporary Eurasian nomads, and by the archeological findings. In the field of philosophy, the German idealism and its Hungarian followers were the best examples of this pseudo-world (e.g. the Hegelians). The *autopoiesis* of the Hegelian terminology and Hegel's enthusiastic attacks against every form of the philosophies based on the concept of the *common sense* were clear evidence for Szontagh that Hegel's ideas, and especially the ideas of Hegel's Hungarian epigones, represent the same alienation from reality as the above mentioned cases. In the field of contemporary politics, a typical Hungarian political speaker is a figure that lives, usually, in the imagined world of his own spoken rather than in the real universe of real political possibilities including the economic conditions and the international relationship of Hungary.

These typical figures living in pseudo-worlds are not connected solely in my interpretation. In a satire written by Szontagh, his fellow-travelers take part in an imagined (dreamed) journey: a romantic poet, a political speaker, and an armchair scholar are representatives of false intellectual role models. In the end of the story, they remain in the world of dreams, i.e. in their "natural" contexts; but

Szontagh wakes up and reconnects to his activities from the real world (Szontagh 1845). The elements of Szontagh's critique of the culture of his age appear usually sporadically, in different contexts of his œuvre; the clearest evidence for the unity of his systems of ideas is represented by his retrospective overview of his career in his memoirs. This synthesis is a sketch of a praxis-oriented philosophy based on the long *common sense* tradition embedded in the society. From this point of view, we can interpret the 19<sup>th</sup>-century concept of the *national philosophy*, which is nothing else than a *public philosophy* in Hungarian with examples from the Hungarian politics (in the case of political philosophy) and with an aesthetics applied for the inland art.

In the end of this section, by marking several milestones, I must outline the context of Szontagh's memoirs in his œuvre and in the intellectual history of his age. The active part of Gusztáv Szontagh's career (1793–1858) as an author is almost identical with the Hungarian Reform Era (1825–1848), and it continues a decade after the revolution, i.e. in a crucial period for the formation of the modern Hungarian national identity. His memoirs were written from the autumn of 1849 (after the defeat of the revolutionary independence war) until the early spring of 1851; consequently, the memoirs contain a set of statements and references on the actual events of the age. This era was the darkest, first period of neo-absolutism, when Hungary as a political community was destroyed, and the already structured Hungarian public sphere (the *respublica literaria Hungarica*) seemed to be dead, as well. This dark situation after the lost struggle for independence was a suitable means for contemplation on the history of a crucial period of a nation and on the role of an individual career in it. It is an extraordinary moment for a soliloquy offered for a *common sense* philosopher. Szontagh finished the contemplation in solitude, when a possibility of a new national public sphere emerged with the establishment of a new periodical titled *Uj Magyar Muzeum* [New Hungarian Museum], with Szontagh in the editorial board.

### Third Example for the Authorial Self: János Asbóth

My third figure is János Asbóth (1845–1911), who was born in Lugoskisfalu (today: Victor Vlad Delamarina; in the period of Asbóth's childhood, Szatmik in Temes/Timiș County, now in Romania) into a Catholic noble family with significant lands and important positions in the public administration from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Asbóth was educated at the universities of technology in Pest and Zurich, but he showed inclination to the fields of literature, political philosophy, and politics. He mixed the roles of the novelist, public philosopher, civil servant, and politician during all his life. His zigzagging political career path started on the platform of the radical revolutionary resistance whether we refer to the student

movements of his youth or to the Hungarian political and military emigration in Western Europe. Later, he described himself as a liberal, after which he became a conservative political philosopher of his generation, and then he returned to the Hungarian Liberal Party. He was a Member of Parliament for long periods, sometimes in the liberal, sometimes in the conservative parliamentary groups, or as an independent Member of Parliament.

Asbóth's ambition was to offer a description of the mentalities of the generations of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian liberal and conservative elites. In order to do this, he made an analysis of the creation and modification of *his own personality* in novels, works of political philosophy and political pamphlets, or parliamentary speeches. His widespread photograph mirrors an honored gentleman with the pride of both a political leader and an intellectual. His known caricature was drawn in the political moment of his hidden conservative turn. (The *Borsszem Jankó* periodical, 1874, frontispiece. Almost the entire content of this issue refers to Asbóth's political turn.) The caricature satirizes his work as well: one of his writings, titled *Hungarian Conservative Politics*, i.e. the ideological foundation for the Conservative Party (Asbóth 1875) – written just after his liberal writings on the cultural history of the idea of liberty (Asbóth 1872) –, is in his hands. An influential satirical-political periodical with this caricature on its frontispiece ironically refers to Asbóth's mixed roles as a novelist, public intellectual, and politician.

Asbóth's political opinions were always connected to his aesthetical views and were expressed by literary tools. Consequently, by the irony of this periodical, Asbóth's political turn is *equal* with the turn of his *moustache style and clothing*, i.e. his political career is interpreted as something superficial, non-serious.

My example from his œuvre is his notes in two volumes about his travels in Western Europe, titled *Egy bolyongó tárcájából* [Letters from the Wallet of a Traveler] (Asbóth 1866). This work is a preparation both for his novel and his writings in political philosophy, but its most important element is the description of the creation of a modern authorial self under the conditions of modernity. In this work, the description of the bodily symptoms and the references made to virtual worlds described by the symbol of *dreams* are significant elements such as the case of Szontagh's memoirs and (in a more hidden form) in Litkei Tóth's diary. The description of the changing position of the self under the conditions of the modernized social time is more relevant here: Asbóth described it by the metaphor of the mechanized travel on the railway network, which can untie the travelers from the context of local existence.

## Conclusions

In my review, I tried to offer an overview of the examples of the auto-creation of the authorial self in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian culture based on the personal writings, diaries, and memoirs of three public figures. The authors were Calvinist, Lutheran, and Catholic figures; one of them was a commoner and two of them were nobles from three significant generations. The common elements of their self-understanding reveals a tension between the personality of the new-type individual author and the machineries of modernity as described in the metaphors of bodily symptoms or by the metaphor of the mechanized travel.

These tensions are rooted in the changing nature of the scholars' public sphere, which started to emerge in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The early steps in the directions of the development of the (machinery of the) cultural industry were fundamental experiences of these three generations of the Hungarian intelligentsia. Consequently, their self-identification and individualization were rooted in a modernized cultural environment. They showed both admiration for and a critique of modernity, and their writings are always based on personal experiences, including the illnesses caused by the lifestyle of modern intellectuals. The same elements, namely, the alienation from the real world, the creation of a *world made of mere words*, and the usage of the *metaphors of illness* are typical elements of the writings of the three analyzed authors. Such elements will appear later in the *cultural criticism* of the following century, but the *personal experiences* which were typical for each of the three authors will disappear in the writings of the new epoch (20<sup>th</sup> century). What was an autobiographical element in the description of the illnesses of the intellectuals in Litkei Tóth's and Szontagh's writings or the personal experiencing of the changed structure of the social time in the description of Asbóth's travels slowly lost their initial contexts. Thus, the changing cultural environment, described in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century self-reflecting writings, has transformed into a caricature (of a sinful city of foreigners and newcomers) in several forms of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century aggressive cultural criticism.

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