

Jelige: Nostalgia

The Multiplicity of Nostalgia in Tamási Áron's novel,
Ábel Amerikában (Ábel in America)

I investigate the complexity and multifariousness of nostalgia in Tamási Áron's novel, *Ábel Amerikában*, (*Ábel in America*), which is the third part of the Ábel trilogy. I examine how nostalgia appears in two layers in the novel: it is longing for the homeland, Transylvania, as well as longing for a natural, Rousseauesque way of life. To get a clear understanding on the nature of nostalgia in the novel, I investigate which events of the plot leads to the appearance of longing for home and which type of nostalgia (reflective or restorative) appears in the novel.

Introduction

Tamási Áron's novel, the *Ábel Amerikában* (*Ábel in America* - Tamási) is often termed as the "Sekler Ulysses" (Czigány 1984, 405), because it introduces how the main character, the young Transylvanian boy finds his way back home after many adventures. In contrast to the antic Greece Ulysses' travels, Ábel's wanderings take place not only in the physical dimension but also in his mind, because he seeks for the aim of life, which is, according to the novel, finding a home. But to understand the importance of his notion of home, he should experience what is not home for him.

In the process of the clarification of the meaning of home nostalgia is a crucial indication because it designates what the experiencer wishes for by pointing out what is missing from the present. Nostalgia is longing for the past and as the meaning of the Greek root, 'nostos' ('returning home') indicates yearning for home as well, often in an idealised form. In addition, the feeling of nostalgia also indicates what the subject does not wish for, because it develops when the experiencer is discontented with their life or environment. As a result, the object of nostalgia is also the object of desire, while the situation or place where nostalgia evolves is the cause of discomfort. (Boym 2002, 41)

In the case of Ábel, the protagonist of the *Ábel trilogy*, the object of nostalgia is both Transylvania and the natural, Rousseauesque way of life, which in short means the lifestyle of prehistoric times, which was close to nature and people were equal because of the non-existence of society and private property (Rousseau). As regards Transylvania, Ábel grew up there; all his childhood memories are closely connected with Csíkcsicsó and the Hargita Mountain – as the reader get to know it from the first part of the trilogy, therefore the longing for the place, even though it is idealised, reasonable and easily understandable. As

far as the Rousseauesque lifestyle is concerned, it is less common but more universal object for nostalgia and appears in the deeper layers of the novel.

In order to comprehend the object of longing in the novel, this study investigates the main components of nostalgia. First of all, I have a closer look at the context and scene of the emergence of longing for home and past. Secondly, I look into the situations, circumstances and environment that distract him and result in the reassessment of the past and home. At this point, I also discuss how the novel provides a hidden critique of America from the perspective of an outsider and becomes symbolic. At least I also point out the multiplicity of the ways the characters view their relationship towards the distant home and experience nostalgia.

I Components of Nostalgia

According to Svetlana Boym, nostalgia is the ache of distance, displacement and home's farbeingness. (Boym 2002, 44) This definition raises further questions, such as what home means. In addition, the fact that the leaving of a place causes pain indicates that the destination is not satisfactory for certain reasons. As a result, another question emerges: what makes the distant place called home more appealing than the present location. This chapter aims to suggest answers to these questions in order to get a better understanding of the nature of nostalgia which appears in the novel.

I.1 What is (not) Home?

As regards the first question, home and national identity, which are inextricably interwoven, are constructed notions rather than inherent, clearly definable characteristics and ideas. (Davidson 2007, 89) Besides, identification always means positioning, comparing and contrasting elements, (in this particular case "within the discourse of history and culture") (Hall 1993, 395). The positioning is even more emphatic in the case of home, because it is closely connected to a particular place, and, according to Seamus Heaney, we can fully evaluate and credit places by experiencing and getting to know different ones (Heaney 1985, 152). As a result, to be able to identify home, leaving it is essential, because without knowing 'the other' comparison is impossible. Therefore exhaustive definition of a place, area or a nation cannot take place from within (Higgins

and Kiberd 1997, 9). After leaving home, you can realise the importance of it, then start to experience the pain of loss and nostalgia gradually evolves.

This process unfolds also in the Ábel trilogy: the protagonist has to leave his home to credit it and even be able to define it. In the first part of the trilogy (*Ábel a rengetegben – Ábel in the Jungle*), there is no sign of nostalgia because it is the scene of Ábel's childhood, and as a result, there is no place and time to long back. Besides, there is no attempt to clarify the meaning of home or national identity, because there is no desire to define one's surroundings, the actual scene of life because it is taken for granted. In addition, even if the motivation of definition emerged, delineation of a place and community would be hardly successful from within, without experiencing 'the other'. Consequently, the first novel is rather characterised by curiosity and temporary longing away to get to know as much of the world as it is possible.

The protagonist first experiences nostalgia and urge to define home and national identity in the third part of the trilogy, in *Ábel in America*, after spending some time in the "New World". Ábel has to leave and lose Transylvania at least temporarily, and experience the immigrant life to be able to miss his home, and wish to return as he also points it out at the end of the novel: "we cannot live in this world for other reason than to get to know everything as much as possible [...] and when we become acquainted with everything as much as possible, we go back to the place where we can be at home"¹ (my translation, Tamási 1999, 589) Another key word in understanding is 'getting to know' or 'experience' the world. Ábel realises that his desire to see the world, which emerges in the very beginning of the story, leads to experience 'the other' and fulfil its purpose when the protagonist understands the importance and his notion of home; and likewise he discovers his aim of life.

1.2 The Causes of Nostalgia

Nostalgia does not consist merely from the root 'nostos', which (as it is above mentioned) means 'longing for home', but also from the Greek 'algia', which means pain, ache. (Boym 2002, 41) As a result, to understand nostalgia, it is not enough to comprehend the notion of home, but the source of pain should also be investigated. An obvious cause of

¹ The original: "nem is lehetünk más célra ebben az életben, mint hogy megismerjünk mindent, amennyire lehetséges [...], s amikor mindent megismertünk, amennyire lehetséges, akkor visszamegyünk oda, ahol otthon lehetünk"

pain is the loss of a place that is known as our home. However, to experience nostalgia, it is not enough to wish being somewhere, but you should to long not to be in the place where you are. In other words, the indirect reason for being nostalgic about a place is the disillusionment with another one. This disenchantment appears when the experiencer's expectations do not meet with the actual truth. This problem rises mainly when on the bases of questionable reports human imagination builds up a rather utopian picture of a particular place. Concerning America, "the New World" failing expectation is not a rare issue: millions migrated there in order to reach wealth, success and freedom.

Similarly, Ábel becomes disappointed at the USA, because it is different from his fantastic ideas about the country. He starts to build his utopian picture in the first part of the trilogy, in *Ábel a rengetegben* (*Ábel in the jungle*) where he receives an American flag with the comment that it is the flag of freedom. Later, in the second part of the trilogy (*Ábel az országban – Ábel in the Country*), his picture on America expands with images of wealth, because the American gentleman, whose ship ticket Ábel inherits, appears as the inexhaustible source of money. In addition, his adventure novels and Indian stories read in the long lonely nights in Hargita Mountains make Ábel's image on the USA much more unrealistic. As a result, America becomes a utopian world in the protagonist's imagination: he thinks that there are Indians on the streets, all the houses are flourishing palaces, the women are all beautiful and some people even able to fly. Of course, the protagonist experiences shocking disappointment when he realises that America is not equal to the fairytale-like place created in his mind.

Moreover, Ábel has to face with the disappointing experience of being recognised as stranger. According to Sara Ahmed, strangers are not those who are simply unknown in a community, but those who are recognised as others. These others, who are judged as they do not belong to a particular place, raise suspicion; hence they take place on the margin of the host society. (Ahmed 2000, 22-37) In the novel's America, all the immigrant (and also Afro-Americans) fall into the "other", "less valuable" category, while the white American constitute the "standard" group.

As a result, little after his arrival to America, Ábel has to realise that being a temporary migrant is highly disadvantageous. In addition, his ethnical self-identification renders his thriving in America, because in the hierarchy of the immigrant groups his ethnical identity takes place in a low position, because it is despised as it is considered economically, culturally and educationally backward – for instance, compared to German, which provides

a relatively valuable position: even the language is spoken by quite many Americans. Furthermore, Ábel's national-ethnic group (as he does not distinguish the two notions), Sekler is generally unknown in his new environment; as a result the differentiations between Hungarians or Seklers and the neighbouring nations become unimportant, while the host country recognises them as related or sometimes as the same nations, as the homogenous body called Eastern-Europeans. (Wolff 1994, 356-357) Therefore, Ábel finds himself on the fringe of the previously idealised community and at that point his uncertainty emerges.

Furthermore, the fact that the protagonist hardly can speak and understand English language strengthens his helplessness. He is unable to use language, his most effective 'weapon', to defend himself against verbal attacks and tackle with difficult situations. For instance, he tries to form a witty retort to the offending words of the custom officer targeting Ábel's homeland, but he cannot express his thoughts in a shared language or find someone who interprets his words. In addition, Ábel depends on the mercy of his host, uncle Gáspár, because he cannot find even a job without being familiar with the place, everyday practises and language. As a consequence, the protagonist has to accept uncle Gáspár's decisions, even if they affect him directly. For example, instead of the fact that Ábel considers the foundry similar to hell, he has to agree on working there, because Gáspár found him the job.

All in all, the exaggerated expectations, which are inevitable to fail to be fulfilled, and the uncertainty caused by an unintelligible (at least for Ábel) language and his marginal position disillusion Ábel with the 'New World'. After the dejecting experiences Ábel wishes to be somewhere else, starts to yearn for home, and feels nostalgia. From the distance, home is seen through individual memories, becomes the symbol of the lost certainty hence turns subjective and idealised similarly to the host country before arrival. During the novel, the idealised country, the USA becomes the place of disillusionment, and in contrast, Transylvania, the left homeland becomes idealised.

1.3 The Objects of Nostalgia

As a result of the disillusionment Ábel starts to miss the life he left behind: he longs for his native language first, then he yearns for his family and her valentine, his village and finally his place of birth, Transylvania. All these elements represent and constitute the idea

of home. However, they can become valuable for the protagonist from huge distance, after experiencing the lack of them. Their importance is clearly shown by the fact that they are the only elements of the past that become the object of longing.

The role of language is important not only because witty arguments constitute the base of Ábel's self defence and endurance, but it also the cohesive force of a community which shares it (Gilroy 1996, 229). In the novel, most members of the community speaking the Hungarian language are situated in the far distance (and mainly in the past) and the here and now is surrounded by people using a different language. In the English speaking world there are some characters who also have the same mother tongue with Ábel, which generally creates a close connection between them but the language-formed relationship fails when one of the participants does not accept language or nationality as the base of familiarity or friendship. For instance, nationality defined on the bases of the shared language is a working link between Kelemen Gáspár and Ábel, but not between Ábel and his Hungarian employer, Csapóki, who does not consider nationality as a valid relationship.

In addition, according to Ábel's views the power of language is unquestionable. He embraces the Parmenidesian approach of language, which states that "words must mean something" (Russel 2004, 56). In other words, the existence of a signifier verifies the existence of the signified. For example, he argues for the being of justice and welfare with the fact that people have words for them. Similarly, after experiencing that his ethnic community, Sekler is unknown for Americans, he tries to prove its existence by defining it, filling the word with meaning for all those who are unfamiliar with it and even for himself to gain back his certainty that he belongs to a community. Moreover, to make his new environment familiar, he calls a dog Jakab, while it is originally named in the English version, Jack.

In addition, Ábel misses a home which is 'the familiar place, the place that is comfortable and comforting'. Home is a consolation because it provides the "security of destination" but it is also the place where the security of family is left (Ahmed 2000, 77). Likewise, for Ábel his previous life with his father becomes equal to comfort. Simultaneously with Ábel's disappointment in America, the yearning for the consolation of the well know home rises; and the protagonist starts to think about his left-behind life more and more idealistic and sentimental way: everything he wishes for is the letter received

from his father and it symbolises for him good health, living in peace and all the love he receives.

Ábel misses not only his relatives and exact place of birth, childhood and his village, Csíkcsicsó, but the constructed homeland, the distant Transylvania as well. Transylvania is a collective home, because Ábel knows only a small part of it, a village and some forest in the Hargita Mountains, but still longs for the whole, since it connects him to an imagined community, his ethnic group. Besides home and past, an imagined community, an ethnic group or nation, are often objects of nostalgia (Boym 2000, 41) According to Jan Davidson, ethnic and national identity (similarly to gender and sexuality) “are constructed [...] rather than inherent characteristics” (Davidson 2007, 89). During the building of collective identity the “I” transforms to “we”. The selection of “we”-s occurs on the bases of differences. Between the members of a community there are smaller differences for instance, in language, rituals and memory, than between the non-members. (Gilroy 1996, 223-231) On the bases of the same reasons (less difference in language, lifestyle, traditions and memories) Ábel positions himself as Sekler.

All in all, belonging to a group provides comfort and stability, but most of the groups Ábel belongs to (family, ethnic or national community) are over the ocean. In his new environment the protagonist owns bigger differences compared to the others. He does not speak the common language, does not understand the social system and routine and he lacks the collective memory (for instance, he do not know who is George Washington, the outstanding figure of the American history). As a result, he is recognised as non-member, therefore his position is unstable and starts to wish back to the comforting home with all its familiarities.

II Distracting America

Ábel is disappointed not only in America, but in all the ideas that the place symbolise for him. After the experiences gained in the new world, the previous, utopian images of the country become distorted. In the protagonist’s mental eye, America degrades from the icon of wealth to a money centred society; similarly, the land of freedom metamorphoses into a hierarchical, unequal system. After a while, he remembers his previous life with nostalgia and fills it with all the values he misses from the disillusioning present.

II.1 Money

In the novel, America is depicted as money centred world, which distracts the protagonist and induce him to re-evaluate his past and home. However, it is only the final step of a long process which begins with great expectations. As I have already mentioned in point I.2, on the bases of his few experiences, Ábel connects America with wealth until he set sail towards it. This image appeals him and awakens his curiosity; therefore he takes advantage of the unexpected opportunity and visits America. After his arrival, he soon realises that not everybody is reach in America but almost everybody is mesmerised by money. He becomes disillusioned with the USA and the fight for being wealthy and feels nostalgia for his previous life.

At first, both America and wealth appeals Ábel and their image are linked before the novel start (in the previous parts of the trilogy). For instance, the first word that Ábel says in English is ‘money’. In his first days in the USA Ábel realises the poverty also exist here as well when he starts to work in a foundry where the only man who seems to mean in prosperity is the employer. Soon, the whole country appears to be dollar governed, and all the protagonist’s employers and most of the people he meets turn out to be money centred. For instance, his chief in the ‘Fenyő Bankház’ often recites a short rhyme about currencies with crazy happiness: “lira, Czech crown, French franc, Swiss franc [...] but the dollar is the king!”² (my translation, Tamási 1999, 526). Besides, even his Hungarian migrant host expects him to praise the too expensive lights of New York, which rather distract Ábel because they are evidently artificial.

When Ábel realises that how many people become strange during the struggle for prosperity, he considers money as evil: when uncle Gáspár introduces the Wall Street as the home of money, he concludes that the building is beautiful from outside, but “there must be huge sins inside, because devils hum instead of flies where a lot of money can be found.”³ (my translation, Tamási 1999, 466-467) In addition, when he receives his first salary after a week hard working he feels only a mere moment of happiness and after that he formulates a critical and philosophical question: is money really the source of any kind of happiness. His answer is obviously no, because when he starts to seek for the aim of life he does not even count prosperity as a possibility.

² original: “lira, cheh korona, francia frank, svájci frank [...], de a dollár a király!”

³ original: „nagy bűnök lehetnek belül, mert ahol sok a pénz, ott legyenek helyett ördögök duruzsolnak”

In spite of being disenchanted with America, Ábel still approves something in the country: the huge parks. In the artificial world, these are the most noticeable signs of nature which Ábel desperately wishes for. He remembers to his days spent in Nature's bosom in Hargita Mountain with nostalgia. Besides, he fills his memories of the past with Rousseauesque views: he commemorates the beloved forests as "shelter for every species of animal" and even for him, where money bears with no importance; similarly to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's image of the prehistoric times (Rousseau).

II.2 Society

The idea that America is the land of freedom vanishes immediately when Ábel takes foot in "the New World" because of the rather humiliating experiences of the arrival. Ábel finds out that his motherland, similarly to him, is despised and considered as, at least economically, backward. After some days spent in the country, a strictly hierarchical society takes shape in which the protagonist learns where to position himself thanks to many unpleasant events.

The appearing hierarchical differentiation within the society mainly organised by origin or race, which can mainly be traced in the form of skin-colour, but sometimes a particular living place or social class also indicates a kind of superiority. One of the most conspicuous inequalities is the situation of Afro-Americans. For instance, Ábel, who is also in the fringe of the society (as it is pointed out in chapter I.2), is asked by his employer not to meet with a black doctor because it ruins the reputation of the company. As far as the living place based differentiation is concerned, the above mentioned employer, Mr. Swan is termed as "real American" opposed to those who live in New York.

All in all, one's position in the hierarchy does not depend on skills or human values but based on convention, as a result it is "political" or "moral" inequality. This kind of inequality leads to "different privileges, which some men enjoy to the prejudice of others; such as that of being more rich, more honoured, more powerful" (Rousseau). In the novel's America, prosperity is not only privilege, but a significant aspect in the organisation of society, which can be easily seen in the employer-employee opposition as Ábel experiences it many times from the employee side. Most of his chiefs conduct

strangely, mostly because they are mesmerised by money, such as Mr. Fenyő⁴. After all, the protagonist concludes that the members take their positions in the society not according to their deserts but on the bases of non-natural aspects like money.

Similarly, Rousseau claims that property is merely a “convention of human institution” (opposed to the “gifts of nature”, such as life and freedom) and as a result it is an arbitrary differentiation between people. Furthermore, he argues that property gave birth to modern society: “The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying *This is mine*, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society.” He adds that with civil society crime and devastating wars also came to life. As a result, property-constituted society violates the law of nature, which would never allow such kind of inequality. (Rousseau)

After months spent in America, Ábel comes to a similar conclusion. He gets disillusioned with the society because of its strange members and arbitrary differentiations and starts to long out of it. He yearns for a simpler, more close-to-nature and equal way of life. He connects these ideas with his memories of home and past transforming them to the object of a Rousseau-like sentimentalist nostalgia. As a result, he returns to Hargita Mountain, where he starts to work not for money but for land. He needs the lands to be able to separate himself from the society and live in harmony with nature, similarly to the lifestyle experienced in the beginning of his story, in *Ábel a rengetegben* (*Ábel in the Jungle*).

III Ways of Remembrance: Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia

Similarly to the object of nostalgia, the way how the characters relate to the missed past and home shows multiplicity in the novel because it bears the characteristic features of both restorative and reflective nostalgia. According to Boym, restorative nostalgia aims “to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps”. (Boym 2002, 41) This kind of nostalgia is strongly connected with national and collective remembrance and thus it generally takes shape with the help of exaggerated traditions, myth making and national symbols (same, 41-45). In contrast, reflective nostalgia focuses on “the mediation on history and passage of time” as well as on “individual and cultural memory (same, 49). It also uses symbols, but connects them with individual memories. As opposed to restorative

⁴ see also in page 8

nostalgia, reflective one does not take itself seriously, but often uses irony and humour instead.

III.1 Restorative Symbols

In the novel, restorative nostalgia is demonstrated by a packet of Transylvanian land and the figure of Toldi Miklós. The piece of motherland is filled with symbolic meaning: it stands for the whole Transylvania with all its population, history and culture. Toldi Miklós figure bears with double significance: he is a mythical-historical hero of Hungarians and it also has cultural reference, because it is Arany János's masterpiece. Both symbols are shared by a community.

Almost all the members of the same community, the Hungarians such as Toldi, Ábel and priest Kelemen, fill the piece of motherland with emotional value: it symbolises the beloved home. The priest gives it to Ábel to resemble him to his home; later the protagonist shares it with Toldi who is deeply touched by the present. He sentimentally promises that he will not sell it, opposed to American land on which he actually makes a living. This rather sentimental promise suggests that American land bears with much less emotional value for the character than the Hungarian one (in addition, it also strengthens the image that America is inseparably linked with the concept of money).

Because of its shared interpretation the handful of land metamorphoses into an almost national symbol. The little piece of homeland represents not only a country or area, but the community which inhabits it. It is proved by Ábel's statement about the homeland when he claims that it yields both wheat and thought. That is the reason why he is severely offended when the American custom officer disparages the quality of the handful land. In the protagonist's view, not only the land but his nationality was cruelly decried.

As far as the mythical figure is concerned, one of the characters identifies himself with Toldi Miklós. He recites Arany János's narrative poem about the hero as if it was the story of his life. This identification with the mythical hero is a radical method to fill the memory gaps which have developed since he left his homeland and fill the symbolic figure of a nation with individual emotions. At this point individual and collective, national memory become blurred. As a result, Toldi's way of remembrance and longing brings together restorative and reflective nostalgia.

All in all, the two symbols, the handful of motherland and the figure of the national hero, prove that the shared, national longing for past is present in the whole novel. However even these, clearest signs of national remembrance and restorative nostalgia cannot be freed from individual memories and emotions. Therefore, the cultural and individual connectedness, the clear features of reflective nostalgia, gets mixed with national, collective longing.

III.2 Language

In Ábel's yearning for his mother tongue, the features of individual and national longing intermingle still more than in the case of the above mentioned national symbols. First of all, it is one of the most obvious connecting features of nationality. Secondly, Ábel misses the specific language use shared by him and his father because it creates the intimacy of family. Thirdly, when he cannot use his mother tongue, Ábel loses one of his most prominent characteristic, the witty responses.

As far as national longing is concerned, language "have been shown to be important identity-producing mechanisms in the formation and reproduction of imagined community" (Gilroy 1996, 49). This general, identity forming role is strengthened by Sekler traditions, where the anecdotic, witty and laconic usage of language works as device of humour, irony and self-defence. (Czigány 1984, 405) In addition, when Ábel defines Seklers as "the oldest and the brightest Hungarians, but the most orphaned as well, because now they cannot sit by the same table with the Hungarians"⁵ (my translation, Tamási 1999, 42), he interweaves Sekler and Hungarian national identity. As a result, language gains more emphasis as it is the main cementing force of the Hungarian identity since the Enlightenment (Czigány 1984, 95-108).

The longing for language as an element of family intimacy crystallises when the protagonist receives a letter from his father and during reading the parent's words he finds all the love and peace he wished for in the unstable new environment. In addition, he acknowledges the fact, that he cannot speak Hungarian in the USA as personal loss, because he realises that he cannot play with words in the way to gain privileges as he did at home.

⁵ Original: "*a legrégibb és a legesebb magyarok, de egyben a legárvábbak, mert jelenleg sem ülhetnek egyazon asztalnál a magyarokkal*"

All in all, Ábel's emotions towards the fact that almost no-one understands his mother tongue in America bear the characteristics of restorative nostalgia. In other words the longing for Hungarian language equal not only to the yearning for the community which speaks it, but the missing of individual memories about witty word plays which connects him to his father and symbolises their intimate relationship. In addition, the "loss of langue" is also the loss of a part from Ábel's identity. As a result, the longing for language not only links the two types of nostalgia, but appears in a large scale of individual to collective memories and remembrance.

Similarly to his attitude towards language, the protagonist's emotions and principles shows gradualism in other areas of life as well: the most important thoughts and feelings appear in the scale which starts with individual ideas and ends with universal ones. For instance, human relationships show this pattern as well, as it appears during a quarrel between uncle Gáspár and Ábel: Gáspár is not part of the first form of connections, the family of Ábel, but it does not matter, because he is part of a bigger category, the nationality (Sekler) and the universal category of humanity which ensures a permanent link between the two characters. Similarly, the appearance of nostalgia is demonstrable in this broad scale: Ábel is longing for his personal memories gained in the Hargita Mountain, his relatives and his valentine, Blanka, the village where he was born, Csíkcsicsó, the whole Transylvania, his idealised homeland and a nature close lifestyle which is far from society and the new world.

III.3 Pine and Stars as Symbols

Similarly to restorative nostalgia, reflective one also takes shape in the novel with the help of two, constantly returning signs: the pine and the stars. Even though, the symbols are mainly the privilege of restorative nostalgia, these signs are not the manifestations of collective remembrance but rather devices of individual longing, because they are filled up with private interpretations. The star and the pine symbolises for Ábel not only his individual memories, which we get to know in the *Ábel a rengetegben* (*Ábel in the Jungle*), but the Hargita Mountain and Transylvania with its natural scenery and the simple, natural and Rousseauesque way of living.

Both pine and star appears from the beginning to the end of the trilogy, but they mainly gain their symbolic meaning in the third part, when nostalgia evolves. However star

generally appears in the decisive moments of Ábel's life even in the first two parts of the trilogy, (for instance, Ábel watches the stars before set on towards Mountain Borzas in *Ábel a rengetegben* and with her beloved Blanka in *Ábel az országban*) similarly to pine it is only the part of the natural scenery. Only in the third part, where they cannot be seen in the same natural context, does the protagonist derive them to symbols. He starts to seek for these signs in a sentimental way and expects them to guide him through the adventures of life and to help him acting in an honest way.

The most characteristic appearance of the pine in the *Ábel Amerikában* is when Ábel chooses to work for the 'Fenyő Bankház' (Pine Bank) because of its name. It reminds him to "the enormous pines of Hargita, which I [Ábel] watched with great admiration and what I [Ábel] desire to watch again"⁶ (my translation, Tamási 1999, 515-516). But the 'American version of pine', the 'Fenyő Bankház' makes Ábel disappointed, because he realises soon, that it is full of strange people who are merely interested in money.⁷ He concludes that even pine is connected with money in America, and later returns he returns back to his homeland, Transylvania, in order to find his real pines. He hopes that surrounded by the beloved pine forests he can live a purer, close to nature life.

Likewise pine, star also a guide of Ábel's acts and similarly, there is an opposition between the American and Transylvanian stars. First of all, when the protagonist wants to prove his bravery and honesty he makes a star instead of door handle in the foundry and got dismissed. In addition, he compares the lights of New York to the stars, but he regards them as artificial ones, which cost too much money and oppress the real ones, God's stars. This image strengthens the picture of America as an artificial, money governed world. Ábel longs back "under the stars", which means not only Transylvania, but the times he spent in Hargita Mountain and the Rousseauesque lifestyle.

All in all, pine and star shows not only Ábel's value judgement on the two countries, but the broadness of his object of nostalgia as well. Similarly to the USA, Ábel connects the American appearances of pine and star to strange and artificial images and to the dominance of money, while his memories on left behind pines, stars and home become the ideals of honesty, nature-closeness and purity. In addition, they become the symbols of Ábel's individual memories, which are depicted in the first part of the trilogy; hence they also stand for Transylvania, the homeland, where Ábel last seen them in the form he wants

⁶ original: " [...] a Hargita óriási nagy fenyői, amelyeket olyan nagy csodálattal néztem mindig, s amelyeket olyan nagy vágyakozással szerettem volna nézni ismét"

⁷ see also page 8

to remember them. At least, their meaning broadens further when they become the symbols of the Rousseauesque lifestyle, which Ábel wants to follow after his experiences gained in America.

Conclusion

In *Ábel Amerikában*, the reader can clearly trace the process, steps and results of the emergence of nostalgia. For a start, it is observable how the great expectations about a distant place fail to be fulfilled by the actual truth, and how the disillusionment in a place that is the present scene of one's life leads to the rise of nostalgia. Then, all the elements that are missing from the present are linked with the memories of past and the notion of home, which, as a result, becomes idealistic.

First of all, Ábel arrives to America with great expectations: he thinks that he set foot on the land of wealth and liberty. Soon after his arrival, he gets disappointed with America. During his "Ulysses travel" from one place of employment to another, he experiences the hierarchy of society (in which he has a disadvantageous position). He also realises that America is the land of money not in the way he hoped: not everybody is wealthy but almost everyone struggles for prosperity and mesmerised by money.

At the same time when he is disillusioned with America he starts to long away: nostalgia emerges in all its multiplicity. He feels both type of nostalgia, restorative and reflective as well, often in a mixed form. He longs for the place where his imagined community and his father live. He misses language as a link between the members of his community, as a source of intimacy between him and his father and his individual characteristics. He yearns for everything that is opposite of what he found in the USA: he desires comfort and intimacy, collective and individual memories, nature, home and a Rousseauesque lifestyle.

To conclude, after experiencing the disillusioning "other" the protagonist could clarify what kind of home does he long for and accepts that "we are in the world to find a home in it"⁸ (my translation Tamási, 1999: 589). The year spent in America makes him able to find his home because he becomes able to define the notion: his home is Transylvania where his ethnic group lives, Hargita Mountain and Csíkcsicsó to which his memories and family connect him and nature where he can leave in purity, without money, out of society.

⁸ Original: „Azért vagyunk a világon, hogy valahol otthon legyünk benne”

The List of Works Cited

- Ahmed, Sara (2000) *Strange encounters: embodied others in post-coloniality*, New York: Routledge
- Boym, Svetlana (2002) *The Future of Nostalgia*, Basic Books
- Czigány, Lóránt (1984) *The Oxford History of Hungarian Literature – From the Earliest Times to the Present*, Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Davidson, Ian. (2007) “*Space, Place and Identity*,” in *The Idea of Space in Contemporary Poetry*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 89-107
- Gilroy, Paul (1996) “*British Cultural Studies and the Pitfalls of Identity*,” in Ed. Houston A. Baker, Jr., Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg, *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*. Chicago: U of Chicago P., 223-39
- Hall, Stuart (1994) “*Cultural Identity and Diaspora*,” in Ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 392-403.
- Heaney, Seamus (1985) *PLACE AND DISPLACEMENT: Recent Poetry of Northern Ireland*. England: Dove College
- Higgins, Michael D. and Declan Kiberd (1997) “Culture and Exile. The Global Irish,” *New Hibernia Review* 1(3): 9-22
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (<http://www.constitution.org/jjr/ineq.htm>)
- Russel, Bertrand (2004) *The Pre-Socratics* in Russel, Bertrand *History of Western Philosophy*, London: Routledge
- Tamási, Áron (1999) *Ábel trilógia*, Budapest: Ciceró Kiadó
- Wolff, Larry (1994) *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford: Stanford University Press

Contents:

Introduction	1
I Components of Nostalgia.....	2
I.1 What is (not) Home?	2
I.2 The Causes of Nostalgia	3
I.3 The Objects of Nostalgia	5
II Distracting America.....	7
II.1 Money	8
II.2 Society	9
III Ways of Remembrance: Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia	10
III.1 Restorative Symbols.....	11
III.2 Language	12
III.3 Pine and Stars as Symbols.....	13
Conclusion.....	15
The List of Works Cited.....	16