

Collected Poems

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Chapter I

1934

I.I Consciousness (*Eszmélet*)

I

Dawn unbinds sky from earth
and at its clear, soft word
beetles and children
spin forth into the daylight;
there is no moisture in the air,
the bright levity floats!
Overnight they alighted on the trees
like small butterflies, the leaves.

*Földtől¹ eloldja² az eget³
 a hajnal⁴ s tiszta⁵, lágy⁶ szavára⁷
 a bogarak,⁸ a gyerekek
 kipörögnek⁹ a napvilágra¹⁰;
 a levegőben¹¹ semmi pára¹²,
 a csilló¹³ könnyűség lebeg¹⁴.
 Az éjjel¹⁵ rászálltak¹⁶ a fákra,¹⁷
 mint¹⁸ kis¹⁹ lepkek,²⁰ a levelek.²¹*

¹*föld* “earth” + ablative *-től* “without/from”

²*el-* “away” + vb. stem *old* “to unbind” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

³*ég* “sky” + acc. *-et* → *eget*

⁴“dawn”

⁵adj. “bright”

⁶adj. “soft”

⁷*szó* “voice”, “word” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-a* → *szava* + subl. *-ra*

“onto/by” → *szavára*

⁸*bogár* “beetle” + pl. *-(a)k* → *bogarak*

⁹vb. stem *kipörög* “to spin” + 3rd pers. pl. ind. pres. indef. *-nek*

¹⁰*nap* “sun/day” + *világ* “world” + subl. *-ra* “onto/by”

¹¹*levegő* “air” + inessive *-ben* “in”

¹²“moisture”, “mist”

¹³vb. stem *csillog* “to glitter” + adj.-forming *-o* → *csilló*; usually *csillogó*

¹⁴vb. stem *lebeg* “to float (in the air)”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹⁵*éj* “night” + instrumental *-vel* “with” → *éjjel*

¹⁶pointed action *rá-* “on” + vb. stem *száll* “to fly/to land” + 3rd pers. sg. past indef. *-tak*

¹⁷*fa* “tree” + pl. *-k* + subl. *-ra* “onto/by” → *fákra*

¹⁸“like”

¹⁹“small”

²⁰*lepke* “butterfly” + pl. *-k* → *lepkek*

²¹*level* “leaf” + pl. *-(e)k*

II

I saw paintings daubed with blue,
red, yellow in my dreams
and felt that everything was just so —
not one speck of dust flying madly about.
Now a blur, my dream reaches my members
and the iron world is in order.
During the day a moon rises inwardly and,
when the night is out, a sun shines within.

*Kék, piros, sárga, összekent²²
képeket²³ láttam²⁴ álmaimban²⁵
és úgy éreztem,²⁶ ez a rend²⁷ —
egy szalló²⁸ porszem²⁹ el nem hibbant.³⁰
Most homályként³¹ száll tagjaimban³²
álmom s a vas³³ világ a rend.
Nappal³⁴ hold³⁵ kel³⁶ bennem³⁷ s ha³⁸ kinn³⁹ van
az éj⁴⁰ — egy nap süt⁴¹ idebent.⁴²*

²²össze “together” + ken “smear” → összekent + 3rd pers. sg. past indef. -t

²³kép “picture” + pl. -(e)k + acc. -et

²⁴vb. stem lát “to see” + short base -t, 1st pers. sg. past def. -tam

²⁵álom “dream” + 1st pers. sg. poss. -a + poss. pl. -i + 1st pers. sg. pers. -m
+ inessive -ban “in” → álmaimban

²⁶vb. stem érez “to feel”, 1st pers. sg. past def.

²⁷“order”

²⁸vb. stem száll “to fly” + pres. part. -ó

²⁹“a speck of dust”

³⁰vb. stem hibban “to become imbalanced”, arch. + past part. -t

³¹homály “blur” + essive formal -ként “as”

³²tag “member” + 1st pers. sg. poss. -ja + poss. pl. -i + 1st pers. sg. pers. -m
+ inessive -ban “in” → tagjaimban

³³“iron”

³⁴nap “day” + instrumental -val “with”

³⁵“moon”

³⁶arch. var. of kel, vb. stem “to rise”, 3rd pers. sg. pres. def.

³⁷pron. benne “inside smth/smb” + 1st pers. sg. pers. -m

³⁸“when”

³⁹“outside”

⁴⁰“night”

⁴¹vb. stem “to roast/to shine”, 3rd pers. sg. pres. indef.

⁴²adv. ide “here” + bent “within”

III

I am thin, at times I only eat bread;
amidst those idle and blithering souls,
I seek in vain more certainty, like the die.
No chuck roast reaches my mouth
while I cuddle a small child to my heart —
however clever, the cat cannot catch at once
the mouse outdoors and the one indoors.

*Sóvány⁴³ vagyok, csak kenyeret⁴⁴
 eszem⁴⁵ néha,⁴⁶ e⁴⁷ léha,⁴⁸ locska⁴⁹
 lelkek⁵⁰ közt⁵¹ ingyen⁵² keresek⁵³
 bizonyosabbat,⁵⁴ mint⁵⁵ a kocska.⁵⁶
 Nem dörgölődzik⁵⁷ sült⁵⁸ lopcska⁵⁹
 számhoz⁶⁰ s szívemhez⁶¹ kisgyerek⁶² —
 ügyeskedhet,⁶³ nem fog⁶⁴ a macska⁶⁵
 egyszerre⁶⁶ kint⁶⁷ s bent⁶⁸ egeret.⁶⁹*

⁴³“slim”, “thin”, fig. “poor”

⁴⁴*kenyér* “bread” + acc. *-et* → *kenyeret*

⁴⁵vb. stem *esz* “to eat”, rare without verbal pref., inf. *enni* + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-em* → *eszem*

⁴⁶adv. “sometimes”

⁴⁷poetic abbrv. *eme/ez* “this”

⁴⁸“improvident/idler”

⁴⁹adj. “blethering”

⁵⁰*lélek* “soul” + pl. *-(e)k* → *lelkek*

⁵¹post. “between/amid” from *között*: *köz* “interval” + locative *-ött*

⁵²fig. arch. “in vain”, usually “free of charge”

⁵³vb. stem *keres* “to seek” + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁵⁴adj. *bizonyos* “certain” + comp. *-abb* “more” + acc. *-t*

⁵⁵“like”

⁵⁶“a die”

⁵⁷vb. stem “to press against”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁵⁸vb. stem *sül* “to roast” + past part. *-t*

⁵⁹“chuck” (shoulder meat cut, probably pork)

⁶⁰*száj* “mouth” + 1st pers. sg. single poss. *-m* → *szám* + allative *-hoz* “towards” → *számhoz*

⁶¹*szívem* “heart” + allative *-hez* “towards”

⁶²*kis* “small” + *gyerek* “child”

⁶³vb. stem *ügyesked* “to be clever” + 3rd pers. sg. pres. potential *-het*

⁶⁴vb. stem “to hold”, 3rd pers. sg. pers. indef.

⁶⁵“cat”

⁶⁶adv. *egyszer* “at once” + ablative *-re* “onto”

⁶⁷adv. “outside”

⁶⁸adv. “inside”

⁶⁹*egér* “mouse” + acc. *-t* → *egeret*

IV

Just like a pile of logs,
the world lies in a jumble;
each thing presses, weighs on,
holds fast to another,
and so everything is determined.
Only what is not has a shrub,
only that will be that flower;
what is falls to pieces.

*Akár⁷⁰ egy halom⁷¹ hasított⁷² fa,⁷³
 hever⁷⁴ egymáson⁷⁵ a világ,⁷⁶
 szorítja,⁷⁷ nyomja,⁷⁸ összefogja⁷⁹
 egyik⁸⁰ dolog⁸¹ a másikat⁸²
 s így⁸³ “just so” mindenik⁸³ determinált.⁸⁴
 Csak⁸⁵ ami⁸⁶ nincs, annak⁸⁷ van bokra,⁸⁸
 csak ami lesz,⁸⁹ az a virág,
 ami van, szétbull⁹⁰ darabokra.⁹¹*

⁷⁰conj. literary “just like”

⁷¹“pile/heap”

⁷²vb. stem *hasít* “to cleave/to split” + past. part. *-ott*

⁷³“tree”

⁷⁴vb. stem “to lie”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁷⁵pron. *egymás* “each other/one another” + superessive *-on* “on”

⁷⁶“world”

⁷⁷vb. stem *szorít* “to press/to constrict”, inf. *szorítani* + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

⁷⁸vb. stem *nyom* “to weigh” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

⁷⁹*össze* “together” + vb. stem *fog* “to hold” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

⁸⁰*egy* “one” + 3rd pers. pl. poss. *-ik* “of”

⁸¹“thing”

⁸²pron. *másik* “another” + acc. *-at (-át?)*

⁸³adv. *minden* “everyone/everything”

⁸⁴Latin *determinare* + vb.-forming *-ál* “to determine” + past part. *-t*

⁸⁵“only”

⁸⁶rel. pron. “which/that”

⁸⁷art. *az* “that” + attr. poss. *-nak* → *annak*

⁸⁸*bokor* “shrub/bush” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-a*

⁸⁹vb. stem “to become”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. fut. indef.

⁹⁰vb. stem “to fall apart”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁹¹adv. *darab* “piece/chunk” + pl. *-ok* + subl. *-ra* “into”

V

At the freight train station,
I lay down just so behind the tree's butt,
like a piece of silence;
a grey weed reached my mouth,
raw, strange-sweet.
Playing dead, I watched the guard, sensing what,
and the shadow on the quiet wagons
stubbornly leaping at the bright, dewy coal.

*A teherpályudvaron*⁹²
*úgy*⁹³ *lapultam*⁹⁴ *a fa*⁹⁵ *tövéhez*,⁹⁶
*mint*⁹⁷ *egy darab*⁹⁸ *csönd*⁹⁹; *szürke*¹⁰⁰ *gyom*¹⁰¹
*ért*¹⁰² *számhoz*,¹⁰³ *nyers*,¹⁰⁴ *különös-édes*.
*Holtan*¹⁰⁵ *lestem*¹⁰⁶ *az őrt*,¹⁰⁷ *mit*¹⁰⁸ *érez*,¹⁰⁹
*s a hallgató*¹¹⁰ *vagónokon*¹¹¹
árnyát,¹¹² *mely*¹¹³ *ráugrott*¹¹⁴ *a fényes*,¹¹⁵
*harmatos*¹¹⁶ *szénre*¹¹⁷ *konokon*.¹¹⁸

⁹² *teher* “freight” + *pálya* “track” + *udvar* “courtyard” (*pályaudvar* “train station”) + superessive *-on* “on”

⁹³ adv. “so (in this/that manner)”

⁹⁴ vb. stem *lapul* “to lie low” + 1st pers. sg. past indef. *-tam*

⁹⁵ “tree”

⁹⁶ *tő* “base of the stem of a plant” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e* “of” → *tövé* + allative *-hez* “towards” → *tövéhez*

⁹⁷ “like”

⁹⁸ “piece”

⁹⁹ “silence”, alt. *csend*

¹⁰⁰ adj. “grey”

¹⁰¹ “weed”

¹⁰² vb. stem *ért* “to reach/to understand”, arch. “to touch”, 3rd pers. sg. past indef.

¹⁰³ *száj* “mouth” + 1st pers. sg. single poss. *-m* → *szám* + allative “towards” *-hoz* → *számhoz*

¹⁰⁴ adj. “raw”

¹⁰⁵ *holt* “dead” + adv.-forming *-an*

¹⁰⁶ vb. stem *les* “to spy” + 1st pers. sg. past indef. *-tem*

¹⁰⁷ *őr* “guard” + acc. *-t*

¹⁰⁸ inter. “what”

¹⁰⁹ vb. stem “to feel/to smell/to taste”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹¹⁰ vb. stem *hallgat* “to remain silent/to listen” + adj.-forming *-ag*

¹¹¹ *vagón* “wagon” + pl. *-ok* + superessive *-on* “on”

¹¹² *árny* “shadow/ghost” + acc. *-at* (*-át?*)

¹¹³ literary, “which/that”

¹¹⁴ pointed action *ra-* “at” + vb. stem *ugrik* “to leap/to jump” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past. indef. *-ott* → *ugrott*

¹¹⁵ adj. “bright”

¹¹⁶ adj. “dewy”

¹¹⁷ *szén* “coal” + subl. *-re* “onto”

¹¹⁸ adj. *konok* “stubborn” + superessive *-on* “on (that manner)”

VI

Behold the anguish inside,
yet the explanation lies outside.
Your wound is the world — on fire, burning up —
and *you* feel your soul, the fever.
You are captive as long as your heart rebels —
then you are free if it indulges
not building for yourself a house
where a landlord settles in.

*Im*¹¹⁹ *itt a szenvedés*¹²⁰ *belül,*¹²¹
*ám*¹²² *ott kívül*¹²³ *a magyarázat.*¹²⁴
*Sebed*¹²⁵ *a világ — ég,*¹²⁶ *bevül*¹²⁷
*s te lelkedet*¹²⁸ *érezed,*¹²⁹ *a lázat.*¹³⁰
*Rab*¹³¹ *vagy, amíg*¹³² *a szíved*¹³³ *lázad*¹³⁴ —
*úgy*¹³⁵ *szabadulsz,*¹³⁶ *ha*¹³⁷ *kényedül*¹³⁸
*nem raksz*¹³⁹ *magadnak*¹⁴⁰ *olyan*¹⁴¹ *házat,*¹⁴²
*melybe*¹⁴³ *háziúr*¹⁴⁴ *települ.*¹⁴⁵

¹¹⁹literary, abbrv. *íme* “here is/ behold”

¹²⁰vb. stem *szenved* “to suffer” + noun-forming *-és*

¹²¹“inside”

¹²²poetic, interj. contrad. “but”

¹²³adv. “outdoor/outside”

¹²⁴vb. stem *magyaráz* “to explain” + noun-forming *-at*

¹²⁵*seb* “wound” + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-ed*

¹²⁶vb. stem “to be on fire”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹²⁷vb. stem “to grow hot”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹²⁸*lélek* “soul” + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-ed* → *lelked* + acc. *-et*

¹²⁹vb. stem *érez* “to feel”, 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. def.

¹³⁰*láz* “fever” + acc. *-at*

¹³¹“captive”

¹³²adv. “as long as”; “until” if followed by negated verb

¹³³*szíved* “heart” + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-ed*

¹³⁴vb. stem *to rebel*, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹³⁵*úgy ... ha ...* “then ... if ...”

¹³⁶*szabad* “free” + vb.-forming *-ul* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-sz*

¹³⁷“if”

¹³⁸literary, vb. stem “to indulge”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹³⁹vb. stem *rak* “to set up/to build”, 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-sz*

¹⁴⁰*maga* “oneself” + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-d* + dat. *-nak*

¹⁴¹pron. “such/that kind of thing”

¹⁴²*ház* “house” + acc. *-at*

¹⁴³literary, arch. *mely* which” + illative *-be* “into (the inside of)”

¹⁴⁴*ház* “house” + adj.-forming “of the” *-i* + *úr* “master”

¹⁴⁵vb. stem “to settle (somewhere)”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

VII

I looked up from beneath the evening
to the cogwheels of the heavens —
from the glittering threads of chance
the loom of the past wove the law,
and I looked up again onto the sky
from beneath the steam of my dreams,
and I saw the fabric of the law
always tearing up somewhere.

*Én fölnéztem¹⁴⁶ az est¹⁴⁷ alól¹⁴⁸
 az eget¹⁴⁹ fogaskerekére¹⁵⁰ —
 csilló¹⁵¹ véletlen¹⁵² szálaiból¹⁵³
 törvényt¹⁵⁴ szőtt¹⁵⁵ a mult¹⁵⁶ szövőszéke¹⁵⁷
 és megint¹⁵⁸ fölnéztem az égre¹⁵⁹
 álmaim¹⁶⁰ gőzei¹⁶¹ alól
 s láttam,¹⁶² a törvény szövédéke¹⁶³
 mindig¹⁶⁴ fölfeslik¹⁶⁵ valahol.¹⁶⁶*

¹⁴⁶vb. pref. *föl-* “up/upwards” + vb. stem *néz* “to look” + 1st pers. sg. past. def. *-tem*

¹⁴⁷arch. “(in the) evening”

¹⁴⁸*al* “lower part” + abl. *-l* “from”

¹⁴⁹*ég* “sky” + acc. *-(e)t*

¹⁵⁰*fogas* “tooth” + *kerék* “wheel”: “cogwheel” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e* + subl. *-re* “towards”

¹⁵¹vb. stem *csillog* “to glitter” + adj.-forming *-o* → *csilló*; usually *csillogó*

¹⁵²“chance”

¹⁵³*szál* “thread” + 3rd pers. sg. poss. *-a* + poss. pl. *-i* + elative *-ból* “from/out of”

¹⁵⁴*törvény* “law/principle” + acc. *-t*

¹⁵⁵vb. stem *sző* “to weave”, past part.

¹⁵⁶*mult*? rare. past part. “past”, inf. *mulik*

¹⁵⁷*szövő* “weaver” + *szék* “chair”: “loom” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

¹⁵⁸*meg* “again” (short action) + adv.-forming *-int*

¹⁵⁹*ég* “sky” + subl. sg. *-re* “onto”

¹⁶⁰*álom* “dream” + 1st pers. sg. poss. *-a* + poss. pl. *-i* + 1st pers. sg. pers. *-m*

¹⁶¹*gőz* “steam, vapour” + 3rd pers. sg. poss. *-e* + pl. poss. *-i*

¹⁶²vb. stem *lát* “to see” + short base *-t*, 1st pers. sg. past def. *-tam*

¹⁶³*szövedék* “fabric/cloth/web” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

¹⁶⁴*mind* “always” (repetition) + term. “until” *-ig*

¹⁶⁵vb. pref. *föl-* “up/upwards” + arch., poetic, vb. stem *feslik* “to come unstitched”, 3rd pers. sg. pres. indef.

¹⁶⁶“somewhere”

VIII

The silence listened intently — One struck.
You could visit your childhood;
between the damp cement walls
you could imagine a bit of freedom —
I thought. And as soon as I stood up,
the stars, the Great Bear
indeed were glittering above,
like bars above the silent cell.

*Fülelt a csend — egyet ütött
Fölkereshetnéd ifjúságod;
nyirkos cementfalak között
képzelhetsz egy kis szabadságot —
gondoltam. S hát hát amint fölállok
a csillagok, a Göncölök
úgy fénylenek fönt, mint a rácsok
a hallgatag cella fölött.*

IX

I heard the iron cry,
I heard the rain laugh.
I saw that the past was cracked
and only a memory can be forgotten;