

# Collected Poems

Attila József

August 11, 2025



# Chapter I

1934

## I.I Consciousness (*Eszmélet*)

### I

Dawn unbinds sky from earth	1
and upon its clear, soft word	2
beetles and children	3
spin forth into the daylight;	4
there is no moisture in the air,	5
the bright levity floats!	6
Overnight they alighted on the trees	7
like small butterflies, the leaves.	8

<i>Földtől<sup>1</sup> eloldja<sup>2</sup> az eget<sup>3</sup></i>	1
<i>a hajnal<sup>4</sup> s<sup>5</sup> tiszta<sup>6</sup>, lágy<sup>7</sup> szavára<sup>8</sup></i>	2
<i>a bogarak,<sup>9</sup> a gyerekek</i>	3
<i>kipörögnek<sup>10</sup> a napvilágra<sup>11</sup>;</i>	4
<i>a levegőben<sup>12</sup> semmi pára<sup>13</sup>,</i>	5
<i>a csilló<sup>14</sup> könnyűség lebeg!<sup>15</sup></i>	6
<i>Az éjjel<sup>16</sup> rászálltak<sup>17</sup> a fákra,<sup>18</sup></i>	7
<i>mint<sup>19</sup> kis<sup>20</sup> lepkek,<sup>21</sup> a levelek.<sup>22</sup></i>	8

Chiastic structure:

1-4: e-e(8)/á-[r]a(9)/e-e(8)/á-[r]a(9)

5-8: á-[r]a(9)/e-e(8)/á-[r]a(9)/e-e(8)

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

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

<sup>3</sup>*ég* “sky” + acc. *-et* → *eget*

<sup>4</sup>“dawn”

<sup>5</sup>poetic abbrev. *es* “and” (does not count as a syllable)

<sup>6</sup>adj. “bright”

<sup>7</sup>adj. “soft”

<sup>8</sup>*szó* “voice”, “word” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-a* → *szava* + subl. *-ra* “by” → *szavára*

<sup>9</sup>*bogár* “beetle” + pl. *-(a)k* → *bogarak*

<sup>10</sup>vb. *kipörög* “to spin” + 3rd pers. pl. ind. pres. indef. *-nek*

<sup>11</sup>*nap* “sun/day” + *világ* “world” + subl. *-ra* “onto”

<sup>12</sup>*levegő* “air” + inessive *-ben* “in”

<sup>13</sup>“moisture”, “mist”

<sup>14</sup>vb. *csillog* “to glitter” + adj.-forming *-o* → *csilló*; usually *csillogó*

<sup>15</sup>vb. *lebeg* “to float (in the air)”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

<sup>16</sup>*éj* “night” + instrumental *-vel* “with” → *éjjel*

<sup>17</sup>pointed action *rá-* “on” + vb. *száll* “to fly/to land” + 3rd pers. sg. past indef. *-tak*

<sup>18</sup>*fa* “tree” + pl. *-k* + subl. *-ra* “onto” → *fákra*

<sup>19</sup>“like”

<sup>20</sup>“small”

<sup>21</sup>*lepke* “butterfly” + pl. *-k* → *lepkek*

<sup>22</sup>*level* “leaf” + pl. *-(e)k*

**II**

I saw paintings daubed with blue,	I
red, yellow in my dreams	2
and felt that everything was just so —	3
not one speck of dust flying madly about.	4
Now a blur, my dream reaches my members	5
and the iron world is in order.	6
During the day a moon rises inwardly and,	7
when the night is out, a sun shines within.	8

<i>Kék, piros, sárga, összekent</i> <sup>23</sup>	1
<i>képeket</i> <sup>24</sup> <i>láttam</i> <sup>25</sup> <i>álmaimban</i> <sup>26</sup>	2
<i>és úgy éreztem,</i> <sup>27</sup> <i>ez a rend</i> <sup>28</sup> —	3
<i>egy szálló</i> <sup>29</sup> <i>porszem</i> <sup>30</sup> <i>el nem hobbant.</i> <sup>31</sup>	4
<i>Most homályként</i> <sup>32</sup> <i>száll tagjaimban</i> <sup>33</sup>	5
<i>álmom s a vas</i> <sup>34</sup> <i>világ a rend.</i>	6
<i>Nappal</i> <sup>35</sup> <i>hold</i> <sup>36</sup> <i>kél</i> <sup>37</sup> <i>bennem</i> <sup>38</sup> <i>s ha</i> <sup>39</sup> <i>kin</i> <sup>40</sup> <i>van</i>	7
<i>az éj</i> <sup>41</sup> — <i>egy nap sütt</i> <sup>42</sup> <i>idebent.</i> <sup>43</sup>	8

Chiastic structure:

1-4: e-ent(8)/ai-an(9)/a-rend(8)/i-an(9)

5-8: i-an(9)/a-rend(8)/ai-an(9)/e-ent(8)

<sup>23</sup>össze “together” + ken “smear” → összekent + 3rd pers. sg. past indef. -t

<sup>24</sup>kép “picture” + pl. -(e)k + acc. -et

<sup>25</sup>vb. lát “to see” + short base -t, 1st pers. sg. past def. -tam

<sup>26</sup>álom “dream” + 1st pers. sg. poss. -a + poss. pl. -i + 1st pers. sg. pers. -m + inessive -ban “in” → álmaimban

<sup>27</sup>vb. érez “to feel”, 1st pers. sg. past def.

<sup>28</sup>“order”

<sup>29</sup>vb. száll “to fly” + pres. part. -ó

<sup>30</sup>“a speck of dust”

<sup>31</sup>vb. hobbant “to become imbalanced”, arch. + past part. -t

<sup>32</sup>homály “blur” + essive formal -ként “as”

<sup>33</sup>tag “member” + 1st pers. sg. poss. -ja + poss. pl. -i + 1st pers. sg. pers. -m + inessive -ban “in” → tagjaimban

<sup>34</sup>“iron”

<sup>35</sup>nap “day” + instrumental -val “with” → nappal

<sup>36</sup>“moon”

<sup>37</sup>vb. “to rise”, 3rd pers. sg. pres. def., arch. alt. kel

<sup>38</sup>pron. benne “inside smth/smb” + 1st pers. sg. pers. -m

<sup>39</sup>“when”

<sup>40</sup>“outside”

<sup>41</sup>“night”

<sup>42</sup>vb. “to roast/to shine”, 3rd pers. sg. pres. indef.

<sup>43</sup>adv. ide “here” + bent “within”

### III

I am thin, at times I only eat bread;	I
amidst those idle and blithering souls,	2
I seek in vain more certainty, like the die.	3
No chuck roast reaches my mouth	4
while I cuddle a small child to my heart —	5
however clever, the cat cannot catch at once	6
the mouse outdoors and the one indoors.	7

#### **Cursory commentary**

J cannot pursue his art and, at the same time, keep a job that would put real food on his table. Cuddling a small child to his heart is his metaphor for the creation of poetry. J is the cat in verses 6-7.

<i>Sóvány</i> <sup>44</sup> <i>vagyok, csak kenyeret</i> <sup>45</sup>	1
<i>eszem</i> <sup>46</sup> <i>néha</i> , <sup>47</sup> <i>e</i> <sup>48</sup> <i>léha</i> , <sup>49</sup> <i>locska</i> <sup>50</sup>	2
<i>lelkek</i> <sup>51</sup> <i>közt</i> <sup>52</sup> <i>ingyen</i> <sup>53</sup> <i>keresek</i> <sup>54</sup>	3
<i>bizonyosabbat</i> , <sup>55</sup> <i>mint</i> <sup>56</sup> <i>a kocska</i> . <sup>57</sup>	4
<i>Nem dörgölődzik</i> <sup>58</sup> <i>sült</i> <sup>59</sup> <i>lopcska</i> <sup>60</sup>	5
<i>számhoz</i> <sup>61</sup> <i>s szívemhez</i> <sup>62</sup> <i>kisgyerek</i> <sup>63</sup> —	6
<i>ügyeskedhet</i> , <sup>64</sup> <i>nem fog</i> <sup>65</sup> <i>a macska</i> <sup>66</sup>	7
<i>egyszerre</i> <sup>67</sup> <i>kint</i> <sup>68</sup> <i>s bent</i> <sup>69</sup> <i>egeret</i> . <sup>70</sup>	8

Chiastic structure:

1-4: e-ret(8)/o-cska(9)/e-ek(8)/o-cska(9)

5-8: o-cska(8)/e-ek(8)/a-cska(8)/e-ret(8) — same length

<sup>44</sup>“slim”, “thin”, fig. “poor”

<sup>45</sup>*kenyér* “bread” + acc. -et → *kenyeret*

<sup>46</sup>vb. *esz* “to eat”, rare without verbal pref., inf. *enni* + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. def. -em → *eszem*

<sup>47</sup>adv. “sometimes”

<sup>48</sup>poetic abbrv. *eme/ez* “this”

<sup>49</sup>“improvident/idler”

<sup>50</sup>adj. “blethering”

<sup>51</sup>*lélek* “soul” + pl. -(e)k → *lelkek*

<sup>52</sup>post. “between/amid” from *között*: *köz* “interval” + locative -ött

<sup>53</sup>fig. arch. “in vain”, usually “free of charge”

<sup>54</sup>vb. *keres* “to seek” + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

<sup>55</sup>adj. *bizonyos* “certain” + comp. -abb “more” + acc. -t

<sup>56</sup>“like”

<sup>57</sup>“a die”

<sup>58</sup>vb. “to press against”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

<sup>59</sup>vb. *sül* “to roast” + past part. -t

<sup>60</sup>“chuck” (shoulder meat cut, probably pork)

<sup>61</sup>*száj* “mouth” + 1st pers. sg. single poss. -m → *szám* + allative -hoz “towards” → *számhoz*

<sup>62</sup>*szívem* “heart” + allative -hez “towards”

<sup>63</sup>*kis* “small” + *gyerek* “child”

<sup>64</sup>vb. *ügyesked* “to be clever” + 3rd pers. sg. pres. potential -het

<sup>65</sup>vb. “to hold”, 3rd pers. sg. pers. indef.

<sup>66</sup>“cat”

<sup>67</sup>adv. *egyszer* “at once” + ablative -re “onto”

<sup>68</sup>adv. “outside”

<sup>69</sup>adv. “inside”

<sup>70</sup>*egér* “mouse” + acc. -t → *egeret*



## IV

Just like a pile of logs,	I
the world lies in a jumble;	2
each thing presses, weighs on,	3
holds fast to another,	4
and so everything is determined.	5
Only what is not has a shrub,	6
only that will be that flower;	7
what is falls to pieces.	8

### Cursory commentary

“To be or not to be” is usually construed as the dichotomy between life and death. J tells us that not-to-be is potential beauty, whereas to-be is actual death.

<i>Akár</i> <sup>71</sup> <i>egy halom</i> <sup>72</sup> <i>hasított</i> <sup>73</sup> <i>fa</i> , <sup>74</sup>	1
<i>hever</i> <sup>75</sup> <i>egymáson</i> <sup>76</sup> <i>a világ</i> , <sup>77</sup>	2
<i>szorítja</i> , <sup>78</sup> <i>nyomja</i> , <sup>79</sup> <i>összefogja</i> <sup>80</sup>	3
<i>egyik</i> <sup>81</sup> <i>dolog</i> <sup>82</sup> <i>a másikat</i> <sup>83</sup>	4
<i>s így</i> <sup>84</sup> <i>mindenik</i> <sup>85</sup> <i>determinált</i> . <sup>86</sup>	5
<i>Csak</i> <sup>87</sup> <i>ami</i> <sup>88</sup> <i>nincs, annak</i> <sup>89</sup> <i>van bokra</i> , <sup>90</sup>	6
<i>csak</i> <sup>91</sup> <i>ami lesz</i> , <sup>92</sup> <i>az a virág</i> ,	7
<i>ami van, széthull</i> <sup>93</sup> <i>darabokra</i> . <sup>94</sup>	8

Chiastic structure:

1-4: o-a(9)/i-á(8)/o-a(9)/i-á(8)

5-8: i-á(8)/o-a(9)/i-á(8)/o-a(9)

<sup>71</sup>conj. literary “just like”

<sup>72</sup>“pile/heap”

<sup>73</sup>vb. *hasít* “to cleave/to split” + past. part. *-ott*

<sup>74</sup>“tree”

<sup>75</sup>vb. “to lie”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

<sup>76</sup>pron. *egymás* “each other/one another” + super. *-on* “on”

<sup>77</sup>“world”

<sup>78</sup>vb. *szorít* “to press/to constrict”, inf. *szorítani* + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

<sup>79</sup>vb. *nyom* “to weigh” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

<sup>80</sup>*össze* “together” + vb. *fog* “to hold” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

<sup>81</sup>*egy* “one” + 3rd pers. pl. poss. *-ik* “of”

<sup>82</sup>“thing”

<sup>83</sup>pron. *másik* “another” + acc. *-at* (*-át?*)

<sup>84</sup>“just so”

<sup>85</sup>adv. *minden* “everyone/everything”

<sup>86</sup>Latin *determinare* + vb.-forming *-ál* “to determine” + past part. *-t*

<sup>87</sup>adv. “only”

<sup>88</sup>rel. pron. “which/that”

<sup>89</sup>art. *az* “that” + attr. poss. *-nak* → *annak*

<sup>90</sup>*bokor* “shrub/bush” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-a*

<sup>91</sup>adv. “only”

<sup>92</sup>vb. “to become”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. fut. indef.

<sup>93</sup>vb. “to fall apart”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

<sup>94</sup>adv. *darab* “piece/chunk” + pl. *-ok* + subl. *-ra* “into”

V

At the freight train station,	I
I lay down just so behind the tree's butt,	2
like a piece of silence;	3
a grey weed reached my mouth,	4
raw, strange-sweet.	5
Playing dead, I watched the guard, sensing what,	6
and the shadow on the quiet wagons	7
stubbornly leaping at the bright, dewy coal.	8

**Cursory commentary**

This is likely a memory from J's childhood, when his family was so poor that he would occasionally steal lumps of coal from the wagons at the freight train station nearby his home.

<i>A teherpályaudvaron</i> <sup>95</sup>	1
<i>úgy</i> <sup>96</sup> <i>lapultam</i> <sup>97</sup> <i>a fa</i> <sup>98</sup> <i>tövéhez</i> , <sup>99</sup>	2
<i>mint</i> <sup>100</sup> <i>egy darab</i> <sup>101</sup> <i>csend</i> <sup>102</sup> ; <i>szürke</i> <sup>103</sup> <i>gyom</i> <sup>104</sup>	3
<i>ért</i> <sup>105</sup> <i>számhoz</i> , <sup>106</sup> <i>nyers</i> , <sup>107</sup> <i>különös-édes</i> .	4
<i>Holtan</i> <sup>108</sup> <i>lestem</i> <sup>109</sup> <i>az őrt</i> , <sup>110</sup> <i>mit</i> <sup>111</sup> <i>érez</i> , <sup>112</sup>	5
<i>s a hallgató</i> <sup>113</sup> <i>vagónokon</i> <sup>114</sup>	6
<i>árnyát</i> , <sup>115</sup> <i>mely</i> <sup>116</sup> <i>ráugrott</i> <sup>117</sup> <i>a fényes</i> , <sup>118</sup>	7
<i>harmatos</i> <sup>119</sup> <i>szénre</i> <sup>120</sup> <i>konokon</i> . <sup>121</sup>	8

Chiastic structure:

1-4: a-o(8)/é-e(9)/e-o(8)/é-e(9)

5-8: é-e(9)/o-o(8)/é-e(9)/o-o(8)

<sup>95</sup> *teher* “freight” + *pálya* “track” + *udvar* “courtyard” + super. -on “on”

<sup>96</sup> adv. “so (in this/that manner)”

<sup>97</sup> vb. *lapul* “to lie low” + 1st pers. sg. past indef. -tam

<sup>98</sup> “tree”

<sup>99</sup> *tő* “base of the stem of a plant” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. -e “of” → *töve* + allative -hez “towards” → *tövéhez*

<sup>100</sup> “like”

<sup>101</sup> “piece”

<sup>102</sup> “silence”, alt. *csend*

<sup>103</sup> adj. “grey”

<sup>104</sup> “weed”

<sup>105</sup> vb. *ért* “to reach”, arch. “to touch”, fig. “to understand”, 3rd pers. sg. past indef.

<sup>106</sup> *száj* “mouth” + 1st pers. sg. single poss. -m → *szám* + allative “towards” -hoz → *számhoz*

<sup>107</sup> adj. “raw”

<sup>108</sup> *holt* “dead” + adv.-forming -an

<sup>109</sup> vb. *les* “to spy” + 1st pers. sg. past indef. -tem

<sup>110</sup> *őr* “guard” + acc. -t

<sup>111</sup> inter. “what”

<sup>112</sup> vb. “to feel/to smell/to taste”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

<sup>113</sup> vb. *hallgat* “to remain silent/to listen” + adj.-forming -ag

<sup>114</sup> *vagón* “wagon” + pl. -ok + super. -on “on”

<sup>115</sup> *árny* “shadow/ghost” + acc. -at (-át?)

<sup>116</sup> literary, “which/that”

<sup>117</sup> pointed action *ra-* “at” + vb. *ugrik* “to leap/to jump” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past. indef. -ott → *ugrott*

<sup>118</sup> adj. “bright”

<sup>119</sup> adj. “dewy”

<sup>120</sup> *szén* “coal” + sublt. -re “onto”

<sup>121</sup> adj. *konok* “stubborn” + super. -on “on (that manner)”

## VI

Behold the anguish inside,	1
yet the explanation lies outside.	2
Your wound is the world — on fire, burning up —	3
and <i>you</i> feel your soul, the fever.	4
You are captive as long as your heart rebels —	5
then you are free if it indulges	6
not building for yourself a house	7
where a landlord settles in.	8

### Cursory commentary

We are not captives of the world, but of our own heart, which invited the world (the landlord) in for us to contend with. The inner struggle is felt as anguish and yields a feverish soul.

<i>Im</i> <sup>122</sup> <i>itt a szenvedés</i> <sup>123</sup> <i>belül</i> , <sup>124</sup>	1
<i>ám</i> <sup>125</sup> <i>ott kívül</i> <sup>126</sup> <i>a magyarázat</i> . <sup>127</sup>	2
<i>Sebed</i> <sup>128</sup> <i>a világ — ég</i> , <sup>129</sup> <i>bevül</i> <sup>130</sup>	3
<i>s te lelkedet</i> <sup>131</sup> <i>érezed</i> , <sup>132</sup> <i>a lázat</i> . <sup>133</sup>	4
<i>Rab</i> <sup>134</sup> <i>vagy, amíg</i> <sup>135</sup> <i>a szíved</i> <sup>136</sup> <i>lázad</i> <sup>137</sup> —	5
<i>úgy</i> <sup>138</sup> <i>szabadulsz</i> , <sup>139</sup> <i>ha</i> <sup>140</sup> <i>kényedül</i> <sup>141</sup>	6
<i>nem raksz</i> <sup>142</sup> <i>magadnak</i> <sup>143</sup> <i>olyan</i> <sup>144</sup> <i>házat</i> , <sup>145</sup>	7
<i>melybe</i> <sup>146</sup> <i>háziúr</i> <sup>147</sup> <i>települ</i> . <sup>148</sup>	8

Chiastic structure:

1-4: e-ül(8)/á-at(9)/e-ül(8)/á-at(9)

5-8: á-ad(9)/e-ül(8)/á-at(9)/e-ül(8)

<sup>122</sup>literary, abbrev. *íme* “here is/ behold”

<sup>123</sup>vb. *szenved* “to suffer” + noun-forming -és

<sup>124</sup>“inside”

<sup>125</sup>poetic, interj. contrad. “but”

<sup>126</sup>adv. “outdoor/outside”

<sup>127</sup>vb. *magyaráz* “to explain” + noun-forming -at

<sup>128</sup>*seb* “wound” + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. -ed

<sup>129</sup>vb. “to be on fire”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

<sup>130</sup>vb. “to grow hot”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

<sup>131</sup>*lélek* “soul” + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. -ed → *lelked* + acc. -et

<sup>132</sup>vb. *érez* “to feel”, 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. def.

<sup>133</sup>*láz* “fever” + acc. -at

<sup>134</sup>“captive”

<sup>135</sup>adv. “as long as”; “until” if followed by negated verb

<sup>136</sup>*szíved* “heart” + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. -ed

<sup>137</sup>vb. *to rebel*, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

<sup>138</sup>*úgy ... ha ...* “then ... if ...”

<sup>139</sup>*szabad* “free” + vb.-forming -ul + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. -sz

<sup>140</sup>“if”

<sup>141</sup>literary, vb. “to indulge”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

<sup>142</sup>vb. *rak* “to set up/to build”, 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. -sz

<sup>143</sup>*maga* “oneself” + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. -d + dat. -nak

<sup>144</sup>pron. “such/that kind of thing”

<sup>145</sup>*ház* “house” + acc. -at

<sup>146</sup>literary, arch. *mely* which” + illative -be “into (the inside of)”

<sup>147</sup>*ház* “house” + adj.-forming “of the” -i + *úr* “master”

<sup>148</sup>vb. “to settle (somewhere)”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

**VII**

I looked up from beneath the evening	1
to the cogwheels of the heavens —	2
from the glittering threads of chance	3
the loom of the past wove the law;	4
and I looked up again onto the sky	5
from beneath the steam of my dreams,	6
and I saw the fabric of the law	7
always tearing up somewhere.	8

**Cursory commentary**

Whereas verses 1-2 echo the ancient mechanical understanding of the firmament as concentric spheres, and verses 2-4 hearken back at the mythological Fates (*Parcæ*), verses 5-8 evoke the image of an aerostat, whose aeronaut is J, where J's dreams are the steam that tries to lift him up, and the law is the envelope, whose tears are J's constant misfortune.

<i>Én fölnéztem</i> <sup>149</sup> <i>az est</i> <sup>150</sup> <i>alól</i> <sup>151</sup>	1
<i>az eget</i> <sup>152</sup> <i>fogaskerekére</i> <sup>153</sup> —	2
<i>csilló</i> <sup>154</sup> <i>véletlen</i> <sup>155</sup> <i>szálaiból</i> <sup>156</sup>	3
<i>törvényt</i> <sup>157</sup> <i>szőtt</i> <sup>158</sup> <i>a mult</i> <sup>159</sup> <i>szövőszéke</i> <sup>160</sup>	4
<i>és megint</i> <sup>161</sup> <i>fölnéztem az égre</i> <sup>162</sup>	5
<i>álmaim</i> <sup>163</sup> <i>gőzét</i> <sup>164</sup> <i>alól</i>	6
<i>s láttam</i> <sup>165</sup> <i>a törvény szövédéke</i> <sup>166</sup>	7
<i>mindig</i> <sup>167</sup> <i>fölfeslik</i> <sup>168</sup> <i>valahol</i> <sup>169</sup>	8

Chiastic structure:

1-4: a-ól(8)/é-e(9)/a[i]-ól(9)/é-e(9)

5-8: é-e(9)/[i]a-ól(8)/é-e(9)/a-ol(8)

<sup>149</sup>vb. pref. *föl-* “upwards” + vb. *néz* “to look” + 1st pers. sg. past. def. *-tem*

<sup>150</sup>arch. “(in the) evening”

<sup>151</sup>*al* “lower part” + abl. *-l* “from”

<sup>152</sup>*ég* “sky” + acc. *-(e)t*

<sup>153</sup>*fogas* “tooth” + *kerék* “wheel”: “cogwheel” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e* + subl. *-re* “towards”

<sup>154</sup>vb. *csillog* “to glitter” + adj.-forming *-o* → *csilló*; usually *csillogó*

<sup>155</sup>“chance”

<sup>156</sup>*szál* “thread” + 3rd pers. sg. poss. *-a* + poss. pl. *-i* + relative *-ból* “from/out of”

<sup>157</sup>*törvény* “law/principle” + acc. *-t*

<sup>158</sup>vb. *sző* “to weave”, past part.

<sup>159</sup>*múlt*? rare, past part. “past”, inf. *múlik*

<sup>160</sup>*szövő* “weaver” + *szék* “chair”: “loom” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

<sup>161</sup>*meg* “again” (short action) + adv.-forming *-int*

<sup>162</sup>*ég* “sky” + subl. sg. *-re* “onto”

<sup>163</sup>*álom* “dream” + 1st pers. sg. poss. *-a* + poss. pl. *-i* + 1st pers. sg. pers. *-m*

<sup>164</sup>*gőz* “steam, vapour” + 3rd pers. sg. poss. *-e* + pl. poss. *-i*

<sup>165</sup>vb. *lát* “to see” + short base *-t*, 1st pers. sg. past def. *-tam*

<sup>166</sup>*szövédék* “fabric/cloth/web” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

<sup>167</sup>*mind* “always” (repetition) + term. “until” *-ig*

<sup>168</sup>vb. pref. *föl-* “upwards” + arch., poetic, vb. *feslik* “to come unstitched”, 3rd pers. sg. pres. indef.

<sup>169</sup>“somewhere”



VIII

The silence listened intently — One struck.	1
You could visit your childhood;	2
between the damp cement walls	3
you could imagine a bit of freedom —	4
I thought. And as soon as I stood up,	5
the stars, the Great Bear	6
indeed were glittering above,	7
like the grilles up in the silent cell.	8

**Cursory commentary**

This is likely a memory of J's imprisonment in 1931.

<i>Fülett</i> <sup>170</sup> <i>a csend</i> <sup>171</sup> — <i>egyet</i> <sup>172</sup> <i>ütött</i> <sup>173</sup>	1
<i>Fölkereshetnéd</i> <sup>174</sup> <i>ifjúságod</i> ; <sup>175</sup>	2
<i>nyirkos</i> <sup>176</sup> <i>cementfalak</i> <sup>177</sup> <i>között</i> <sup>178</sup>	3
<i>képzelhetsz</i> <sup>179</sup> <i>egy kis szabadságot</i> <sup>180</sup> —	4
<i>gondoltam</i> . <sup>181</sup> <i>S hát</i> <sup>182</sup> <i>amint</i> <sup>183</sup> <i>fölálllok</i> <sup>184</sup>	5
<i>a csillagok</i> , <sup>185</sup> <i>a Göncölök</i> <sup>186</sup>	6
<i>úgy fénylenek</i> <sup>187</sup> <i>fönt</i> , <sup>188</sup> <i>mint a rácsok</i> <sup>189</sup>	7
<i>a hallgatat</i> <sup>190</sup> <i>cella</i> <sup>191</sup> <i>fölött</i> . <sup>192</sup>	8

Chiastic structure:

1-4: ü-ö[tt](8)/á-o(9)/ö-ö[tt](8)/á-o(9)

5-8: á-o[k](9)/ö-ö(8)/á-o[k](9)/ö-ö[tt](8)

<sup>170</sup>*fül* “ear” + vb.-forming *-el*: “to listen (intently)” + 3rd pers. ind. past indef. *-t*

<sup>171</sup>“silence”. alt. *csönd*

<sup>172</sup>*egy* + acc. *-t*

<sup>173</sup>vb. *üt* “to strike” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past indef. *-(ö)tt*

<sup>174</sup>*föl-* “upwards” + *keres* “to seek”: “to visit” + pot. “may/might” *-het* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. cond. *-ned*, alt. *felkeres*

<sup>175</sup>adj. *ifjú* “young” + noun-forming *-ság* (state of being): “youth” + 2nd pers. informal sg. poss. single poss. *-od*: “your childhood” (informal)

<sup>176</sup>adj. “humid/damp”

<sup>177</sup>*cement* “cement” + *fal* “wall” + pl. *-ak*

<sup>178</sup>post. “between/amid”, *köz* “interval” + locative *-ött*

<sup>179</sup>*kép* “image” + vb.-forming *-(z)el*: “to imagine” + pot. *-het* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. *-sz*

<sup>180</sup>*szabad* “free” + *-ság* (state of being): “freedom” + acc. *-at*

<sup>181</sup>vb. *gondol* “to think/plan/guess/worry” + 1st pers. sg. ind. past *-tam*

<sup>182</sup>“back body”, “well...”, “then/and/but” (questioning back), “surely”

<sup>183</sup>*az* + *mint* “like”: “as soon as”, literary “as”

<sup>184</sup>*föl-* “upwards” + vb. *láll* “to stand” + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-ok*, alt. *felálllok*

<sup>185</sup>*csillag* “star” + pl. *-ak*

<sup>186</sup>*Göncöl* + pl. *-ök*: “the Great Bear” (constellation)

<sup>187</sup>*fény* “light” + freq. vb.-forming *-lik*: “to glitter” + 3rd pers. pl. ind. pres. indef. *-ek*

<sup>188</sup>adv. “above/up/awake/upstairs”, alt. *fent*

<sup>189</sup>*rács* “grid/grille” + pl. *-ok*

<sup>190</sup>vb. *hallgat* “to remain silent/to listen” + adj.-forming *-ag*

<sup>191</sup>“cell”

<sup>192</sup>*föl-* “up/upwards” + loc. *-ött*: “above”, alt. *elett*

## IX

I heard iron weeping,	1
I heard rain laughing.	2
I saw that the past was cracked	3
and that only memories may be forgotten,	4
and how I cannot but love,	5
bending under my burdens —	6
why would I need to forge a weapon	7
out of you, golden self-awareness!	8

**Cursory commentary**

Verses 1-2 refer to the sounds of iron being forged and quenched in water. The blacksmith is fixing a crack, which reminds J of a past painful event, possibly a break-up. Verses 3-6 form a chiasm: verse 5 echoes verse 4: to avoid his love fading away, he will keep loving; verse 6 answers verse 3: instead of hammering the crack to make it disappear, J bends under it. Then there is no need to forge a sword blade to become strong. J's self-consciousness is golden, like the glow that illuminates all the interior of a kiln.

<i>Hallottam</i> <sup>193</sup> <i>sírni</i> <sup>194</sup> <i>a vasat</i> , <sup>195</sup>	1
<i>hallottam az esőt</i> <sup>196</sup> <i>nevetni</i> . <sup>197</sup>	2
<i>Láttam</i> , <sup>198</sup> <i>hogy</i> <sup>199</sup> <i>a mult</i> <sup>200</sup> <i>meghasadt</i> <sup>201</sup>	3
<i>s csak</i> <sup>202</sup> <i>képzetet</i> <sup>203</sup> <i>lehet</i> <sup>204</sup> <i>feledni</i> ; <sup>205</sup>	4
<i>s hogy</i> <sup>206</sup> <i>nem tudok</i> <sup>207</sup> <i>mást</i> , <sup>208</sup> <i>mint</i> <sup>209</sup> <i>szeretni</i> , <sup>210</sup>	5
<i>görnyedve</i> <sup>211</sup> <i>terheim</i> <sup>212</sup> <i>alatt</i> <sup>213</sup> —	6
<i>minek</i> <sup>214</sup> <i>is</i> <sup>215</sup> <i>kell</i> <sup>216</sup> <i>fegyvert</i> <sup>217</sup> <i>veretni</i> <sup>218</sup>	7
<i>belőled</i> , <sup>219</sup> <i>arany</i> <sup>220</sup> <i>öntudat!</i> <sup>221</sup>	8

Chiastic structure:

1-4: a-a[t](8)/e[t]-[n]i(9)/a-a[dt](8)/e[d]-[n]i(9)

5-8: e[t]-[n]i(9)/a-a[tt](8)/e[t]-[n]i(9)/u-a[t](8)

<sup>193</sup>vb. *hall* “to hear” + 1st pers. sg. ind. past def. -*ottam*

<sup>194</sup>vb. *sír* “to cry/weep” + inf. -*ni*

<sup>195</sup>*vas* “iron” + acc. -(a)t

<sup>196</sup>vb. *es*, inf. *esik* + pres. part. -*ő* + acc. -t

<sup>197</sup>vb. *nevet* “to laugh”, inf. *nevetni*

<sup>198</sup>vb. *lát* “to see” + short base -t, 1st pers. sg. past def. -*tam*

<sup>199</sup>adv. “how”

<sup>200</sup>*mult*? rare, past part. “past”, inf. *múlik*

<sup>201</sup>perfective *meg-* + vb. *hasad* “to crack/split apart” + past part. -t

<sup>202</sup>adv. “only”

<sup>203</sup>*képzet* “idea/image/notion” + acc. -t

<sup>204</sup>pot. vb. *van/lesz*: “may be/may become”, 3rd pers. sg. ind.

<sup>205</sup>lit. vb. *feled* “to forget”, alt. *felejt*

<sup>206</sup>adv. “how”

<sup>207</sup>vb. *tud* “to know”/aux. “can + inf.” + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. -*ok*

<sup>208</sup>adj. *más* “other/different” + acc. -t

<sup>209</sup>comp. different degrees “than”

<sup>210</sup>inf. vb. *szeret* “to love”

<sup>211</sup>vb. *görnyed* “to bend (under a burden)” + adv.-forming -*ve*

<sup>212</sup>*teher* “freight/burden” + 1st pers. sg. poss. mult. poss. -*eim* → *terheim*

<sup>213</sup>post. *al-* “lower part” + loc. -(a)tt

<sup>214</sup>*mi* + dat. -*nek*: “for what”

<sup>215</sup>doublet of *és* “and”

<sup>216</sup>aux. vb. “must/need to/have to + inf.”

<sup>217</sup>*fegyver* “weapon” + acc. -t

<sup>218</sup>inf. vb. “to hammer”, alt. *veretés*

<sup>219</sup>pron. *belőle* “out of him/her/it” + 2nd pers. sg. -*d*

<sup>220</sup>“gold/golden”

<sup>221</sup>“self-awareness”

**X**

He is a grown man he who has	1
neither mother nor father in his heart,	2
he who knows that he gets so much life	3
that it will kill him,	4
and that, like a found object, he returns it any time	5
— therefore he treasures it,	6
he who is neither a god nor a priest,	7
neither to himself nor to others.	8

**Cursory commentary**

A mature man (the Hungarian language is actually gender neutral) knows that his parents cannot protect him anymore from the truth of mortality. This truth is not treasured by gods, as they are immortal, nor Christian priests, who preach eternal life.

<i>Az meglett<sup>222</sup> ember<sup>223</sup>, akinek<sup>224</sup></i>	1
<i>szívében<sup>225</sup> nincs se anyja,<sup>226</sup> apja,<sup>227</sup></i>	2
<i>ki<sup>228</sup> tudja,<sup>229</sup> hogy<sup>230</sup> az életet<sup>231</sup></i>	3
<i>halálra<sup>232</sup> ráadásul<sup>233</sup> kapja<sup>234</sup></i>	4
<i>s mint<sup>235</sup> talált<sup>236</sup> tárgyat<sup>237</sup> visszaadja<sup>238</sup></i>	5
<i>bármikor<sup>239</sup> — ezért<sup>240</sup> őrizi<sup>241</sup> meg,<sup>242</sup></i>	6
<i>ki<sup>243</sup> nem istene<sup>244</sup> és nem papja<sup>245</sup></i>	7
<i>se<sup>246</sup> magának,<sup>247</sup> sem senkinek.<sup>248</sup></i>	8

Chiastic structure:

1-4: [k]i-[n]e[k](8)/a[p]-[j]a(9)/e-e(8)/a[p]-[j]a(9)

5-8: a[d]-[j]a(9)/i-e(8)/a[p]-[j]a(9)/[k]i-[n]e[k](8)

<sup>222</sup> obs. “adult”

<sup>223</sup> “person”

<sup>224</sup> pron. *aki* “who” + attr. poss. *-nek*

<sup>225</sup> *szív* “heart” + poss. “his” *-e* + inessive “in” *-ben*

<sup>226</sup> *anya* “mother” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-ja*

<sup>227</sup> *apa* “father” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-ja*

<sup>228</sup> pron. rel. arch. “he who”, alt. *aki*

<sup>229</sup> vb. *tud* “to know” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

<sup>230</sup> conj. “so that”

<sup>231</sup> *élet* “life” + acc. *-et*

<sup>232</sup> vb. *hal* “to die” + arch. noun-forming *-ál* → “death” + subl. “on/for” *-ra* → “to death (by excess)”

<sup>233</sup> *ráadás* “addition/extra” + essive “as/with the intention of” *-ul*

<sup>234</sup> vb. *kap* “to receive” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pers. def. *-ja*

<sup>235</sup> “like”

<sup>236</sup> vb. *talált* “to find” + past part.

<sup>237</sup> *tárgy* “object/thing/subject” + acc. *-at*

<sup>238</sup> vb. *visszaad* “to give back” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

<sup>239</sup> *bár* “any” + adv. *mikor* “when” → “any time”

<sup>240</sup> conj. “therefore”

<sup>241</sup> vb. *őriz* “to guard” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-i*

<sup>242</sup> arch. emph.

<sup>243</sup> “he who”

<sup>244</sup> *isten* “god” + 3rd pers. sg. sing. poss. *-e*

<sup>245</sup> *pap* “priest” + 3rd pers. sg. sing. poss. *-ja*

<sup>246</sup> alt. *sem, sem ..., sem ...* “neither ... nor ...”

<sup>247</sup> pron. refl. 3rd pers. “himself”

<sup>248</sup> pron. *senki* “no one/nobody”