

Collected Poems

Attila József

August 12, 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>Földtől¹ eloldja² az eget³</i>	1
<i>a hajnal⁴ s⁵ tiszta⁶, lágy⁷ szavára⁸</i>	2
<i>a bogarak,⁹ a gyerekek</i>	3
<i>kipörögnek¹⁰ a napvilágra¹¹;</i>	4
<i>a levegőben¹² semmi pára¹³,</i>	5
<i>a csilló¹⁴ könnyűség lebeg!¹⁵</i>	6
<i>Az éjjel¹⁶ rászálltak¹⁷ a fákra,¹⁸</i>	7
<i>mint¹⁹ kis²⁰ lepkék,²¹ a levelek.²²</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)

¹*föld* 'earth' + ablative *-től* 'without/from'

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

³*ég* 'sky' + acc. *-et* → *eget*

⁴'dawn'

⁵poetic abbrev. *es* 'and' (does not count as a syllable)

⁶adj. 'bright'

⁷adj. 'soft'

⁸*szó* 'voice', 'word' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-a* → *szava* + subl. *-ra* 'by' → *szavára*

⁹*bogár* 'beetle' + pl. *-(a)k* → *bogarak*

¹⁰vb. *kipörög* 'to spin' + 3rd pers. pl. ind. pres. indef. *-nek*

¹¹*nap* 'sun/day' + *világ* 'world' + subl. *-ra* 'onto'

¹²*levegő* 'air' + inessive *-ben* 'in'

¹³'moisture', 'mist'

¹⁴vb. *csillog* 'to glitter' + adj.-forming *-o* → *csilló*; usually *csillogó*

¹⁵vb. *lebeg* 'to float (in the air)', 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹⁶*éj* 'night' + instrumental *-vel* 'with' → *éjjel*

¹⁷pointed action *rá-* 'on' + vb. *száll* 'to fly/to land' + 3rd pers. sg. past indef. *-tak*

¹⁸*fa* 'tree' + pl. *-k* + subl. *-ra* 'onto' → *fákra*

¹⁹'like'

²⁰'small'

²¹*lepke* 'butterfly' + pl. *-k* → *lepkék*

²²*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> ²³	1
<i>képeket</i> ²⁴ <i>láttam</i> ²⁵ <i>álmaimban</i> ²⁶	2
<i>és úgy éreztem,</i> ²⁷ <i>ez a rend</i> ²⁸ —	3
<i>egy szálló</i> ²⁹ <i>porszem</i> ³⁰ <i>el nem hibbant.</i> ³¹	4
<i>Most homályként</i> ³² <i>száll tagjaimban</i> ³³	5
<i>álmom s a vas</i> ³⁴ <i>világ a rend.</i>	6
<i>Nappal</i> ³⁵ <i>hold</i> ³⁶ <i>kél</i> ³⁷ <i>bennem</i> ³⁸ <i>s ha</i> ³⁹ <i>kinn</i> ⁴⁰ <i>van</i>	7
<i>az éj</i> ⁴¹ — <i>egy nap sütt</i> ⁴² <i>idebent.</i> ⁴³	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)

²³össze ‘together’ + ken ‘smear’ → összekent + 3rd pers. sg. past indef. -t

²⁴kép ‘picture’ + pl. -(e)k + acc. -et

²⁵vb. lát ‘to see’ + short base -t, 1st pers. sg. past def. -tam

²⁶álom ‘dream’ + 1st pers. sg. poss. -a + poss. pl. -i + 1st pers. sg. pers. -m + inessive -ban ‘in’ → álmaimban

²⁷vb. érez ‘to feel’, 1st pers. sg. past def.

²⁸‘order’

²⁹vb. száll ‘to fly’ + pres. part. -ó

³⁰‘a speck of dust’

³¹vb. hibban ‘to become imbalanced’, arch. + past part. -t

³²homály ‘blur’ + essive formal -ként ‘as’

³³tag ‘member’ + 1st pers. sg. poss. -ja + poss. pl. -i + 1st pers. sg. pers. -m + inessive -ban ‘in’ → tagjaimban

³⁴‘iron’

³⁵nap ‘day’ + instrumental -val ‘with’ → nappal

³⁶‘moon’

³⁷vb. ‘to rise’, 3rd pers. sg. pres. def., arch. alt. kel

³⁸pron. benne ‘inside smth/smb’ + 1st pers. sg. pers. -m

³⁹‘when’

⁴⁰‘outside’

⁴¹‘night’

⁴²vb. ‘to roast/to shine’, 3rd pers. sg. pres. indef.

⁴³adv. 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 remark

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

⁴⁴‘slim’, ‘thin’, fig. ‘poor’

⁴⁵*kenyér* ‘bread’ + acc. -et → *kenyeret*

⁴⁶vb. *esz* ‘to eat’, rare without verbal pref., inf. *enni* + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. def. -em → *eszem*

⁴⁷adv. ‘sometimes’

⁴⁸poetic abbrv. *eme/ez* ‘this’

⁴⁹‘improvident/idler’

⁵⁰adj. ‘blethering’

⁵¹*lélek* ‘soul’ + pl. -(e)k → *lelkek*

⁵²post. ‘between/amid’ from *között*: *köz* ‘interval’ + locative -ött

⁵³fig. arch. ‘in vain’, usually ‘free of charge’

⁵⁴vb. *keres* ‘to seek’ + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁵⁵adj. *bizonyos* ‘certain’ + comp. -abb ‘more’ + acc. -t

⁵⁶‘like’

⁵⁷‘a die’

⁵⁸vb. ‘to press against’, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁵⁹vb. *sül* ‘to roast’ + past part. -t

⁶⁰‘chuck’ (shoulder meat cut, probably pork)

⁶¹*száj* ‘mouth’ + 1st pers. sg. single poss. -m → *szám* + allative -hoz ‘towards’ → *számhoz*

⁶²*szívem* ‘heart’ + allative -hez ‘towards’

⁶³*kis* ‘small’ + *gyerek* ‘child’

⁶⁴vb. *ügyesked* ‘to be clever’ + 3rd pers. sg. pres. potential -het

⁶⁵vb. ‘to hold’, 3rd pers. sg. pers. indef.

⁶⁶‘cat’

⁶⁷adv. *egyszer* ‘at once’ + ablative -re ‘onto’

⁶⁸adv. ‘outside’

⁶⁹adv. ‘inside’

⁷⁰*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 remark

‘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>Akár⁷¹ egy halom⁷² hasított⁷³ fa,⁷⁴</i>	1
<i>hever⁷⁵ egymáson⁷⁶ a világ,⁷⁷</i>	2
<i>szorítja,⁷⁸ nyomja,⁷⁹ összefogja⁸⁰</i>	3
<i>egyik⁸¹ dolog⁸² a másikat⁸³</i>	4
<i>s így⁸⁴ mindenik⁸⁵ determinált.⁸⁶</i>	5
<i>Csak⁸⁷ ami⁸⁸ nincs, annak⁸⁹ van bokra,⁹⁰</i>	6
<i>csak⁹¹ ami lesz,⁹² az a virág,</i>	7
<i>ami van, széthull⁹³ darabokra.⁹⁴</i>	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)

⁷¹conj. literary ‘just like’

⁷²‘pile/heap’

⁷³vb. *hasít* ‘to cleave/to split’ + past. part. *-ott*

⁷⁴‘tree’

⁷⁵vb. ‘to lie’, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁷⁶pron. *egymás* ‘each other/one another’ + super. *-on* ‘on’

⁷⁷‘world’

⁷⁸vb. *szorít* ‘to press/to constrict’, inf. *szorítani* + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

⁷⁹vb. *nyom* ‘to weigh’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

⁸⁰*össze* ‘together’ + vb. *fog* ‘to hold’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

⁸¹*egy* ‘one’ + 3rd pers. pl. poss. *-ik* ‘of’

⁸²‘thing’

⁸³pron. *másik* ‘another’ + acc. *-at* (*-át?*)

⁸⁴‘just so’

⁸⁵adv. *minden* ‘everyone/everything’

⁸⁶Latin *determinare* + vb.-forming *-ál* ‘to determine’ + past part. *-t*

⁸⁷adv. ‘only’

⁸⁸rel. pron. ‘which/that’

⁸⁹art. *az* ‘that’ + attr. poss. *-nak* → *annak*

⁹⁰*bokor* ‘shrub/bush’ + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-a*

⁹¹adv. ‘only’

⁹²vb. ‘to become’, 3rd pers. sg. ind. fut. indef.

⁹³vb. ‘to fall apart’, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁹⁴adv. *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 remark

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

⁹⁵*teher* ‘freight’ + *pálya* ‘track’ + *udvar* ‘courtyard’ + super. -on ‘on’

⁹⁶adv. ‘so (in this/that manner)’

⁹⁷vb. *lapul* ‘to lie low’ + 1st pers. sg. past indef. -tam

⁹⁸‘tree’

⁹⁹*tő* ‘base of the stem of a plant’ + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. -e ‘of’ → *töve* + allative -hez ‘towards’ → *tövéhez*

¹⁰⁰‘like’

¹⁰¹‘piece’

¹⁰²‘silence’, alt. *csend*

¹⁰³adj. ‘grey’

¹⁰⁴‘weed’

¹⁰⁵vb. *ért* ‘to reach’, arch. ‘to touch’, fig. ‘to understand’, 3rd pers. sg. past indef.

¹⁰⁶*száj* ‘mouth’ + 1st pers. sg. single poss. -m → *szám* + allative ‘towards’ -hoz → *számhoz*

¹⁰⁷adj. ‘raw’

¹⁰⁸*holt* ‘dead’ + adv.-forming -an

¹⁰⁹vb. *les* ‘to spy’ + 1st pers. sg. past indef. -tem

¹¹⁰*őr* ‘guard’ + acc. -t

¹¹¹inter. ‘what’

¹¹²vb. ‘to feel/to smell/to taste’, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹¹³vb. *hallgat* ‘to remain silent/to listen’ + adj.-forming -ag

¹¹⁴*vagón* ‘wagon’ + pl. -ok + super. -on ‘on’

¹¹⁵*árny* ‘shadow/ghost’ + acc. -at (-át?)

¹¹⁶literary, ‘which/that’

¹¹⁷pointed action *ra-* ‘at’ + vb. *ugrik* ‘to leap/to jump’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past. indef. -ott → *ugrott*

¹¹⁸adj. ‘bright’

¹¹⁹adj. ‘dewy’

¹²⁰*szén* ‘coal’ + subl. -re ‘onto’

¹²¹adj. *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 remark

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

¹²²literary, abbrev. *íme* ‘here is/ behold’

¹²³vb. *szenved* ‘to suffer’ + noun-forming *-és*

¹²⁴‘inside’

¹²⁵poetic, interj. contrad. ‘but’

¹²⁶adv. ‘outdoor/outside’

¹²⁷vb. *magyaráz* ‘to explain’ + noun-forming *-at*

¹²⁸*seb* ‘wound’ + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-ed*

¹²⁹vb. ‘to be on fire’, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹³⁰vb. ‘to grow hot’, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹³¹*lélek* ‘soul’ + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-ed* → *lelked* + acc. *-et*

¹³²vb. *érez* ‘to feel’, 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. def.

¹³³*láz* ‘fever’ + acc. *-at*

¹³⁴‘captive’

¹³⁵adv. ‘as long as’; ‘until’ if followed by negated verb

¹³⁶*szíved* ‘heart’ + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-ed*

¹³⁷vb. *to rebel*, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹³⁸*úgy ... ha ...* ‘then ... if ...’

¹³⁹*szabad* ‘free’ + vb.-forming *-ul* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-sz*

¹⁴⁰‘if’

¹⁴¹literary, vb. ‘to indulge’, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹⁴²vb. *rak* ‘to set up/to build’, 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-sz*

¹⁴³*maga* ‘oneself’ + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-d* + dat. *-nak*

¹⁴⁴pron. ‘such/that kind of thing’

¹⁴⁵*ház* ‘house’ + acc. *-at*

¹⁴⁶literary, arch. *mely* which’ + illative *-be* ‘into (the inside of)’

¹⁴⁷*ház* ‘house’ + adj.-forming ‘of the’ *-i* + *úr* ‘master’

¹⁴⁸vb. ‘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 remark

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

¹⁴⁹vb. pref. *föl-* 'upwards' + vb. *néz* 'to look' + 1st pers. sg. past. def. *-tem*

¹⁵⁰arch. '(in the) evening'

¹⁵¹*al* 'lower part' + abl. *-l* 'from'

¹⁵²*ég* 'sky' + acc. *-(e)t*

¹⁵³*fogas* 'tooth' + *kerék* 'wheel': 'cogwheel' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e* + subl. *-re* 'towards'

¹⁵⁴vb. *csillog* 'to glitter' + adj.-forming *-o* → *csilló*; usually *csillogó*

¹⁵⁵'chance'

¹⁵⁶*szál* 'thread' + 3rd pers. sg. poss. *-a* + poss. pl. *-i* + elative *-ból* 'from/out of'

¹⁵⁷*törvény* 'law/principle' + acc. *-t*

¹⁵⁸vb. *sző* 'to weave', past part.

¹⁵⁹*múlt?* rare, past part. 'past', inf. *múlik*

¹⁶⁰*szövőő* 'weaver' + *szék* 'chair': 'loom' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

¹⁶¹*meg* 'again' (short action) + adv.-forming *-int*

¹⁶²*ég* 'sky' + subl. sg. *-re* 'onto'

¹⁶³*álom* 'dream' + 1st pers. sg. poss. *-a* + poss. pl. *-i* + 1st pers. sg. pers. *-m*

¹⁶⁴*gőz* 'steam, vapour' + 3rd pers. sg. poss. *-e* + pl. poss. *-i*

¹⁶⁵vb. *lát* 'to see' + short base *-t*, 1st pers. sg. past def. *-tam*

¹⁶⁶*szövédéke* 'fabric/cloth/web' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

¹⁶⁷*mind* 'always' (repetition) + term. 'until' *-ig*

¹⁶⁸vb. pref. *föl-* 'upwards' + arch., poetic, vb. *feslik* 'to come unstitched', 3rd pers. sg. pres. indef.

¹⁶⁹'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 remark

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

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

¹⁷⁰*fül* ‘ear’ + vb.-forming *-el*: ‘to listen (intently)’ + 3rd pers. ind. past indef. *-t*

¹⁷¹‘silence’. alt. *csönd*

¹⁷²*egy* + acc. *-t*

¹⁷³vb. *üt* ‘to strike’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past indef. *-(ö)tt*

¹⁷⁴*föl*- ‘upwards’ + *keres* ‘to seek’: ‘to visit’ + pot. ‘may/might’ *-bet* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. cond. *-ned*, alt. *felkeres*

¹⁷⁵adj. *ifjú* ‘young’ + noun-forming *-ság* (state of being): ‘youth’ + 2nd pers. informal sg. poss. single poss. *-od*: ‘your childhood’ (informal)

¹⁷⁶adj. ‘humid/damp’

¹⁷⁷*cement* ‘cement’ + *fal* ‘wall’ + pl. *-ak*

¹⁷⁸post. ‘between/amid’, *köz* ‘interval’ + locative *-ött*

¹⁷⁹*kép* ‘image’ + vb.-forming *-(z)el*: ‘to imagine’ + pot. *-bet* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. *-sz*

¹⁸⁰*szabad* ‘free’ + *-ság* (state of being): ‘freedom’ + acc. *-at*

¹⁸¹vb. *gondol* ‘to think/plan/guess/worry’ + 1st pers. sg. ind. past *-tam*

¹⁸²‘back body’, well..., ‘then/and/but’ (questioning back), ‘surely’

¹⁸³*az* + *mint* ‘like’: ‘as soon as’, literary ‘as’

¹⁸⁴*föl*- ‘upwards’ + vb. *láll* ‘to stand’ + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-ok*, alt. *felálllok*

¹⁸⁵*csillag* ‘star’ + pl. *-ak*

¹⁸⁶*Göncöl* + pl. *-ök*: ‘the Great Bear’ (constellation)

¹⁸⁷*fény* ‘light’ + freq. vb.-forming *-lik*: ‘to glitter’ + 3rd pers. pl. ind. pres. indef. *-ek*

¹⁸⁸adv. ‘above/up/awake/upstairs’, alt. *fent*

¹⁸⁹*rács* ‘grid/grille’ + pl. *-ok*

¹⁹⁰vb. *hallgat* ‘to remain silent/to listen’ + adj.-forming *-ag*

¹⁹¹‘cell’

¹⁹²*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 also need to forge a weapon	7
out of you, golden self-awareness!	8

Cursory remark

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 painful past 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 the kiln.

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

¹⁹³vb. *hall* ‘to hear’ + 1st pers. sg. ind. past def. -*ottam*

¹⁹⁴vb. *sír* ‘to cry/weep’ + inf. -*ni*

¹⁹⁵*vas* ‘iron’ + acc. -(a)t

¹⁹⁶vb. *es*, inf. *esik* + pres. part. -*ő* + acc. -*t*

¹⁹⁷vb. *nevet* ‘to laugh’, inf. *nevetni*

¹⁹⁸vb. *lát* ‘to see’ + short base -*t*, 1st pers. sg. past def. -*tam*

¹⁹⁹adv. ‘how’

²⁰⁰*mult*? rare, past part. ‘past’, inf. *múlik*

²⁰¹perfective *meg*- + vb. *hasad* ‘to crack/split apart’ + past part. -*t*

²⁰²adv. ‘only’

²⁰³*képzet* ‘idea/image/notion’ + acc. -*t*

²⁰⁴pot. vb. *van/lesz*: ‘may be/may become’, 3rd pers. sg. ind.

²⁰⁵lit. vb. *feled* ‘to forget’, alt. *felejt*

²⁰⁶adv. ‘how’

²⁰⁷vb. *tud* ‘to know’/aux. ‘can + inf.’ + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. -*ok*

²⁰⁸adj. *más* ‘other/different’ + acc. -*t*

²⁰⁹comp. different degrees ‘than’

²¹⁰inf. vb. *szeret* ‘to love’

²¹¹vb. *görnyed* ‘to bend (under a burden)’ + adv.-forming -*ve*

²¹²*teher* ‘freight/burden’ + 1st pers. sg. poss. mult. poss. -*eim* → *terheim*

²¹³post. *al*- ‘lower part’ + loc. -(a)tt

²¹⁴*mi* + dat. -*nek*: ‘for what’

²¹⁵doublet of *és* ‘and’, adv. ‘also’

²¹⁶aux. vb. ‘must/need to/have to + inf.’

²¹⁷*fegyver* ‘weapon’ + acc. -*t*

²¹⁸inf. vb. ‘to hammer’, alt. *veretés*

²¹⁹pron. *belőle* ‘out of him/her/it’ + 2nd pers. sg. -*d*

²²⁰‘gold/golden’

²²¹‘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 receives so much life	3
that it will kill him, and that he returns it	4
any time, like a found object	5
— therefore he treasures it,	6
he who is neither a god nor a priest,	7
neither to himself nor to others.	8

Cursory remark

An integral 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 meglelt²²² ember²²³, akinek²²⁴</i>	<i>I</i>
<i>szívében²²⁵ nincs se anyja,²²⁶ apja,²²⁷</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>ki²²⁸ tudja,²²⁹ hogy²³⁰ az életet²³¹</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>halálra²³² ráadásul²³³ kapja²³⁴</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>s mint²³⁵ talált²³⁶ tárgyat²³⁷ visszaadja²³⁸</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>bármikor²³⁹ — ezért²⁴⁰ őrizi²⁴¹ meg,²⁴²</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>ki²⁴³ nem istene²⁴⁴ és nem papja²⁴⁵</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>se²⁴⁶ magának,²⁴⁷ sem senkinek.²⁴⁸</i>	<i>8</i>

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)

²²² obs. ‘adult’

²²³ ‘person’

²²⁴ pron. *aki* ‘who’ + attr. poss. *-nek*

²²⁵ *szív* ‘heart’ + poss. ‘his’ *-e* + innessive ‘in’ *-ben*

²²⁶ *anya* ‘mother’ + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-ja*

²²⁷ *apa* ‘father’ + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-ja*

²²⁸ pron. rel. arch. ‘he who’, alt. *aki*

²²⁹ vb. *tud* ‘to know’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

²³⁰ conj. ‘so that’

²³¹ *élet* ‘life’ + acc. *-et*

²³² vb. *hal* ‘to die’ + arch. noun-forming *-ál* → ‘death’ + subl. ‘on/for’ *-ra* → ‘to death (by excess)’

²³³ *ráadás* ‘addition/extra’ + essive ‘as/with the intention of’ *-ul*

²³⁴ vb. *kap* ‘to receive’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pers. def. *-ja*

²³⁵ ‘like’

²³⁶ vb. *talált* ‘to find’ + past part.

²³⁷ *tárgy* ‘object/thing/subject’ + acc. *-at*

²³⁸ vb. *visszaad* ‘to give back’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

²³⁹ *bár* ‘any’ + adv. *mikor* ‘when’ → ‘any time’

²⁴⁰ conj. ‘therefore’

²⁴¹ vb. *őriz* ‘to guard’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-i*

²⁴² arch. emph.

²⁴³ ‘he who’

²⁴⁴ *isten* ‘god’ + 3rd pers. sg. sing. poss. *-e*

²⁴⁵ *pap* ‘priest’ + 3rd pers. sg. sing. poss. *-ja*

²⁴⁶ alt. *sem, sem ..., sem ...* ‘neither ... nor ...’

²⁴⁷ pron. refl. 3rd pers. ‘himself’

²⁴⁸ pron. *senki* ‘no one/nobody’

X

I saw happiness; it was soft, bright	I
and one and half quintal.	2
On the coarse grass of the farmyard	3
its curly smile swayed.	4
It plopped into the squishy, tepid puddle,	5
squinted, further grunted once at me —	6
To this day I see how hesitantly	7
the light fiddled amongst its bristles.	8

<i>Láttam</i> ²⁴⁹ <i>a boldogságot</i> ²⁵⁰ <i>én,</i> ²⁵¹	1
<i>lág</i> ²⁵² <i>volt,</i> ²⁵³ <i>szőke</i> ²⁵⁴ <i>és másfél</i> ²⁵⁵ <i>mázsa.</i> ²⁵⁶	2
<i>Az udvar</i> ²⁵⁷ <i>szigorú</i> ²⁵⁸ <i>gyöpen</i> ²⁵⁹	3
<i>imbolygott</i> ²⁶⁰ <i>göndör</i> ²⁶¹ <i>mosolygása.</i> ²⁶²	4
<i>Ledőlt</i> ²⁶³ <i>a puha,</i> ²⁶⁴ <i>langy</i> ²⁶⁵ <i>tócsába,</i> ²⁶⁶	5
<i>hunyorogott,</i> ²⁶⁷ <i>röffen</i> ²⁶⁸ <i>még</i> ²⁶⁹ <i>felém</i> ²⁷⁰ —	6
<i>ma</i> ²⁷¹ <i>is</i> ²⁷² <i>látom,</i> ²⁷³ <i>mily</i> ²⁷⁴ <i>tétovázva</i> ²⁷⁵	7
<i>babrált</i> ²⁷⁶ <i>pihé</i> ²⁷⁷ <i>közt</i> ²⁷⁸ <i>a fény.</i> ²⁷⁹	8

Chiastic structure:

1-4: o-é(8)/á-a(9)/ö-é(8)/á-a(9)

5-8: á-a(9)/e-é(8)/á-a(9)/a-é(8)

²⁴⁹vb. *lát* ‘to see’ + short base *-t*, 1st pers. sg. past def. *-tam*

²⁵⁰adj. *boldog* ‘happy’ + noun-forming *-ság* (state of being) + acc. *-(o)t*

²⁵¹pron. ‘I’

²⁵²adj. ‘soft’

²⁵³vb. *van* ‘to be’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past indef.

²⁵⁴adj. *sző* ‘blonde’ + dim. *-ke*

²⁵⁵*más* ‘other/different’ + *fél* ‘half’ → ‘one and a half’

²⁵⁶‘quintal’

²⁵⁷‘yard’

²⁵⁸adj. ‘severe/strict’

²⁵⁹*gyep* ‘lawn/grass’ + super. *-én*

²⁶⁰vb. *imbolyog* ‘to sway’ + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

²⁶¹adj. ‘curly’

²⁶²*mosolygása* ‘smile’ + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

²⁶³vb. *ledől* ‘to fall down’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past indef. *-t*

²⁶⁴‘soft/squishy’

²⁶⁵arch. poetic *langyos* ‘tepid’

²⁶⁶*tócsa* ‘puddle’ + illative *-ba* ‘into’

²⁶⁷vb. *hunyorog* ‘to squint’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past. indef. *-rogott*

²⁶⁸*röffen* ‘to grunt once (of a pig)’

²⁶⁹adv. ‘still/moreover’

²⁷⁰post. *felé* ‘to/towards’ + 1st pers. sg. poss *-m* → pron. ‘towards me’

²⁷¹adv. ‘today’

²⁷²doublet of *és* ‘and’, adv. ‘also’

²⁷³vb. *lát* ‘to see’ + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. def.

²⁷⁴poetic ‘how ...(!)’

²⁷⁵vb. *tétova* ‘to hesitate’ (inf. *tétovázik*) → adv. part. ‘doing smth hesitantly’

²⁷⁶vb. *babrált* ‘to fiddle’

²⁷⁷*pihe* ‘down, fluff’ + adj.-forming *-i*

²⁷⁸post. ‘between/amid’ from *között*: *köz* ‘interval’ + locative *-ött*

²⁷⁹‘light/glitter’