

Collected Poems

Attila József

August 9, 2025

Chapter I

1934

I.I Consciousness (*Eszmélet*)

I

Dawn unbinds sky from earth	1
and at 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 s tiszta⁵, lágy⁶ szavára⁷</i>	2
<i>a bogarak,⁸ a gyerekek</i>	3
<i>kipörögnek⁹ a napvilágra¹⁰;</i>	4
<i>a levegőben¹¹ semmi pára¹²,</i>	5
<i>a csilló¹³ könnyűség lebeg.¹⁴</i>	6
<i>Az éjjel¹⁵ rászálltak¹⁶ a fákra,¹⁷</i>	7
<i>mint¹⁸ kis¹⁹ lepkék,²⁰ a levelek.²¹</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”

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

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

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

¹⁶pointed action *rá-* “on” + vb. *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*lepké* “butterfly” + pl. *-k* → *lepkék*

²¹*level* “leaf” + pl. *-(e)k*

II

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

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

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

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

²⁵ *álom* “dream” + 1st pers. sg. poss. -*a* + poss. pl. -*i* + 1st pers. sg. pers. -*m*

+ inessive -*ban* “in” → *álmaimban*

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

²⁷ “order”

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

²⁹ “a speck of dust”

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

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

³² *tag* “member” + 1st pers. sg. poss. -*ja* + poss. pl. -*i* + 1st pers. sg. pers. -*m*

+ inessive -*ban* “in” → *tagjaimban*

³³ “iron”

³⁴ *nap* “day” + instrumental -*val* “with” → *nappal*

³⁵ “moon”

³⁶ vb. “to rise”, 3rd pers. sg. pres. def., arch. alt. *kel*

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

³⁸ “when”

³⁹ “outside”

⁴⁰ “night”

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

⁴² adv. *ide* “here” + *bent* “within”

III

I am thin, at times I only eat bread;	1
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

Metapoetry. 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 creating poetry. J is the cat.

<i>Sóvány</i> ⁴³ vagyok, csak kenyeret ⁴⁴	1
<i>eszem</i> ⁴⁵ néha, ⁴⁶ <i>e</i> ⁴⁷ léha, ⁴⁸ locska ⁴⁹	2
<i>lelkek</i> ⁵⁰ közt ⁵¹ ingyen ⁵² keresek ⁵³	3
<i>bizonyosabbat</i> , ⁵⁴ <i>mint</i> ⁵⁵ a kocska. ⁵⁶	4
<i>Nem dörgölődzik</i> ⁵⁷ sült ⁵⁸ lopcska ⁵⁹	5
<i>számhoz</i> ⁶⁰ s szívemhez ⁶¹ kisgyerek ⁶² —	6
<i>ügyeskedhet</i> , ⁶³ <i>nem fog</i> ⁶⁴ a macska ⁶⁵	7
<i>egyszerre</i> ⁶⁶ <i>kint</i> ⁶⁷ s bent ⁶⁸ egeret. ⁶⁹	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

⁴³“slim”, “thin”, fig. “poor”

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

⁴⁵vb. *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. *keres* “to seek” + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

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

⁵⁵“like”

⁵⁶“a die”

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

⁵⁸vb. *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. *ügyesked* “to be clever” + 3rd pers. sg. pres. potential -het

⁶⁴vb. “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,	1
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 the potentiality of beauty, whereas to-be is the actuality of death.

<i>Akár⁷⁰ egy halom⁷¹ hasított⁷² fa,⁷³</i>	1
<i>hever⁷⁴ egymáson⁷⁵ a világ,⁷⁶</i>	2
<i>szorítja,⁷⁷ nyomja,⁷⁸ összefogja⁷⁹</i>	3
<i>egyik⁸⁰ dolog⁸¹ a másikat⁸²</i>	4
<i>s így⁸³ mindenik⁸⁴ determinált.⁸⁵</i>	5
<i>Csak⁸⁶ ami⁸⁷ nincs, annak⁸⁸ van bokra,⁸⁹</i>	6
<i>csak⁹⁰ ami lesz,⁹¹ az a virág,</i>	7
<i>ami van, szétbull⁹² darabokra.⁹³</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)

⁷⁰conj. literary “just like”

⁷¹“pile/heap”

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

⁷³“tree”

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

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

⁷⁶“world”

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

def. -ja

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

⁷⁹*össze* “together” + vb. *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?)

⁸³“just so”

⁸⁴adv. *minden* “everyone/everything”

⁸⁵Latin *determinare* + vb.-forming -ál “to determine” + past part. -t

⁸⁶adv. “only”

⁸⁷rel. pron. “which/that”

⁸⁸art. *az* “that” + attr. poss. -nak → *annak*

⁸⁹*bokor* “shrub/bush” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. -a

⁹⁰adv. “only”

⁹¹vb. “to become”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. fut. indef.

⁹²vb. “to fall apart”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁹³adv. *darab* “piece/chunk” + pl. -ok + subl. -ra “into”

V

At the freight train station,	1
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 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 near by his home.

<i>A teherpályaudvaron</i> ⁹⁴	1
<i>úgy</i> ⁹⁵ <i>lapultam</i> ⁹⁶ <i>a fa</i> ⁹⁷ <i>tövéhez</i> , ⁹⁸	2
<i>mint</i> ⁹⁹ <i>egy darab</i> ¹⁰⁰ <i>csönd</i> ¹⁰¹ ; <i>szürke</i> ¹⁰² <i>gyom</i> ¹⁰³	3
<i>ért</i> ¹⁰⁴ <i>számhoz</i> , ¹⁰⁵ <i>nyers</i> , ¹⁰⁶ <i>különös-édes</i> .	4
<i>Holtan</i> ¹⁰⁷ <i>lestem</i> ¹⁰⁸ <i>az őrt</i> , ¹⁰⁹ <i>mit</i> ¹¹⁰ <i>érez</i> , ¹¹¹	5
<i>s a hallgató</i> ¹¹² <i>vagónokon</i> ¹¹³	6
<i>árnyát</i> , ¹¹⁴ <i>mely</i> ¹¹⁵ <i>ráugrott</i> ¹¹⁶ <i>a fényes</i> , ¹¹⁷	7
<i>harmatos</i> ¹¹⁸ <i>szénre</i> ¹¹⁹ <i>konokon</i> . ¹²⁰	8

Chiastic structure:

-
- ⁹⁴*teher* “freight” + *pálya* “track” + *udvar* “courtyard” + super. -on “on”
⁹⁵adv. “so (in this/that manner)”
⁹⁶vb. *lapul* “to lie low” + 1st pers. sg. past indef. -*tam*
⁹⁷“tree”
⁹⁸*tő* “base of the stem of a plant” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. -e “of” → *tövé*
+ allative -*hez* “towards” → *tövéhez*
⁹⁹“like”
¹⁰⁰“piece”
¹⁰¹“silence”, alt. *csend*
¹⁰²adj. “grey”
¹⁰³“weed”
¹⁰⁴vb. *ért* “to reach”, arch. “to touch”, fig. “to understand”, 3rd pers. sg. past indef.
¹⁰⁵*száj* “mouth” + 1st pers. sg. single poss. -*m* → *szám* + allative “towards”
-*hoz* → *számhoz*
¹⁰⁶adj. “raw”
¹⁰⁷*holt* “dead” + adv.-forming -*an*
¹⁰⁸vb. *les* “to spy” + 1st pers. sg. past indef. -*tem*
¹⁰⁹*őr* “guard” + acc. -*t*
¹¹⁰inter. “what”
¹¹¹vb. “to feel/to smell/to taste”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.
¹¹²vb. *hallgat* “to remain silent/to listen” + adj.-forming -*ag*
¹¹³*vagón* “wagon” + pl. -*ok* + super. -*on* “on”
¹¹⁴*árny* “shadow/ghost” + acc. -*at* (-*át?*)
¹¹⁵literary, “which/that”
¹¹⁶pointed action *ra-* “at” + vb. *ugrik* “to leap/to jump” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past. indef. -*ott* → *ugrott*
¹¹⁷adj. “bright”
¹¹⁸adj. “dewy”
¹¹⁹*szén* “coal” + subl. -*re* “onto”
¹²⁰adj. *konok* “stubborn” + super. -*on* “on (that manner)”

I-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)

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> ¹²¹ <i>itt a szenvedés</i> ¹²² <i>belül</i> , ¹²³	1
<i>ám</i> ¹²⁴ <i>ott kívül</i> ¹²⁵ <i>a magyarázat</i> . ¹²⁶	2
<i>Sebed</i> ¹²⁷ <i>a világ — ég</i> , ¹²⁸ <i>bevül</i> ¹²⁹	3
<i>s te lelkedet</i> ¹³⁰ <i>érezed</i> , ¹³¹ <i>a lázat</i> . ¹³²	4
<i>Rab</i> ¹³³ <i>vagy, amíg</i> ¹³⁴ <i>a szíved</i> ¹³⁵ <i>lázad</i> ¹³⁶ —	5
<i>úgy</i> ¹³⁷ <i>szabadulsz</i> , ¹³⁸ <i>ha</i> ¹³⁹ <i>kényedül</i> ¹⁴⁰	6
<i>nem raksz</i> ¹⁴¹ <i>magadnak</i> ¹⁴² <i>olyan</i> ¹⁴³ <i>házat</i> , ¹⁴⁴	7
<i>melybe</i> ¹⁴⁵ <i>háziúr</i> ¹⁴⁶ <i>települ</i> . ¹⁴⁷	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)

¹²¹literary, abbrev. *íme* “here is/ behold”

¹²²vb. *szenved* “to suffer” + noun-forming -*és*

¹²³“inside”

¹²⁴poetic, interj. contrad. “but”

¹²⁵adv. “outdoor/outside”

¹²⁶vb. *magyaráz* “to explain” + noun-forming -*at*

¹²⁷*seb* “wound” + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. -*ed*

¹²⁸vb. “to be on fire”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹²⁹vb. “to grow hot”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹³⁰*lélek* “soul” + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. -*ed* → *lelked* + acc. -*et*

¹³¹vb. *érez* “to feel”, 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. def.

¹³²*láz* “fever” + acc. -*at*

¹³³“captive”

¹³⁴adv. “as long as”; “until” if followed by negated verb

¹³⁵*szíved* “heart” + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. -*ed*

¹³⁶vb. *to rebel*, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹³⁷*úgy ... ha ...* “then ... if ...”

¹³⁸*szabad* “free” + vb.-forming -*ul* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. -*sz*

¹³⁹“if”

¹⁴⁰literary, vb. “to indulge”, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹⁴¹vb. *rak* “to set up/to build”, 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. -*sz*

¹⁴²*maga* “oneself” + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. -*d* + dat. -*nak*

¹⁴³pron. “such/that kind of thing”

¹⁴⁴*ház* “house” + acc. -*at*

¹⁴⁵literary, arch. *mely* which” + illative -*be* “into (the inside of)”

¹⁴⁶*ház* “house” + adj.-forming “of the” -*i* + *úr* “master”

¹⁴⁷vb. “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

The second part seems to rely on 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> ¹⁴⁸ <i>az est</i> ¹⁴⁹ <i>alól</i> ¹⁵⁰	1
<i>az eget</i> ¹⁵¹ <i>fogaskerekére</i> ¹⁵² —	2
<i>csilló</i> ¹⁵³ <i>véletlen</i> ¹⁵⁴ <i>szálaiból</i> ¹⁵⁵	3
<i>törvényt</i> ¹⁵⁶ <i>szótt</i> ¹⁵⁷ <i>a mult</i> ¹⁵⁸ <i>szövőszéke</i> ¹⁵⁹	4
<i>és megint</i> ¹⁶⁰ <i>fölnéztem az égre</i> ¹⁶¹	5
<i>álmaim</i> ¹⁶² <i>gőzei</i> ¹⁶³ <i>alól</i>	6
<i>s láttam</i> ¹⁶⁴ <i>a törvény szövédéke</i> ¹⁶⁵	7
<i>mindig</i> ¹⁶⁶ <i>fölfeslik</i> ¹⁶⁷ <i>valahol</i> ¹⁶⁸	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)

-
- ¹⁴⁸vb. pref. *föl-* “upwards” + vb. *néz* “to look” + 1st pers. sg. past. def. *-tem*
- ¹⁴⁹arch. “(in the) evening”
- ¹⁵⁰*al* “lower part” + abl. *-l* “from”
- ¹⁵¹*ég* “sky” + acc. *-(e)t*
- ¹⁵²*fogas* “tooth” + *kerék* “wheel”: “cogwheel” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*
- + subl. *-re* “towards”
- ¹⁵³vb. *csillog* “to glitter” + adj.-forming *-o* → *csilló*; usually *csillogó*
- ¹⁵⁴“chance”
- ¹⁵⁵*szál* “thread” + 3rd pers. sg. poss. *-a* + poss. pl. *-i* + elative *-ból* “from/out of”
- ¹⁵⁶*törvény* “law/principle” + acc. *-t*
- ¹⁵⁷vb. *sző* “to weave”, past part.
- ¹⁵⁸*mult*? rare, past part. “past”, inf. *mulik*
- ¹⁵⁹*szövő* “weaver” + *szék* “chair”: “loom” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*
- ¹⁶⁰*meg* “again” (short action) + adv.-forming *-int*
- ¹⁶¹*ég* “sky” + subl. sg. *-re* “onto”
- ¹⁶²*álom* “dream” + 1st pers. sg. poss. *-a* + poss. pl. *-i* + 1st pers. sg. pers. *-m*
- ¹⁶³*gőz* “steam, vapour” + 3rd pers. sg. poss. *-e* + pl. poss. *-i*
- ¹⁶⁴vb. *lát* “to see” + short base *-t*, 1st pers. sg. past def. *-tam*
- ¹⁶⁵*szövédék* “fabric/cloth/web” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*
- ¹⁶⁶*mind* “always” (repetition) + term. “until” *-ig*
- ¹⁶⁷vb. pref. *föl-* “upwards” + arch., poetic, vb. *feslik* “to come unstitched”, 3rd pers. sg. pres. indef.
- ¹⁶⁸“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 a memory of J's imprisonment in 1931.

<i>Fülett</i> ¹⁶⁹ <i>a csend</i> ¹⁷⁰ — <i>egyet</i> ¹⁷¹ <i>ütött</i> ¹⁷²	1
<i>Fölkereshetnéd</i> ¹⁷³ <i>ifjúságod</i> ¹⁷⁴	2
<i>nyirkos</i> ¹⁷⁵ <i>cementfalak</i> ¹⁷⁶ <i>között</i> ¹⁷⁷	3
<i>képzelhetsz</i> ¹⁷⁸ <i>egy kis szabadságot</i> ¹⁷⁹ —	4
<i>gondoltam</i> . ¹⁸⁰ <i>S bát</i> ¹⁸¹ <i>amint</i> ¹⁸² <i>fölálllok</i> ¹⁸³	5
<i>a csillagok</i> , ¹⁸⁴ <i>a Göncölök</i> ¹⁸⁵	6
<i>úgy fénylenek</i> ¹⁸⁶ <i>fönt</i> , ¹⁸⁷ <i>mint a rácsok</i> ¹⁸⁸	7
<i>a hallgatag</i> ¹⁸⁹ <i>cella</i> ¹⁹⁰ <i>fölött</i> . ¹⁹¹	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)

¹⁶⁹*fül* “ear” + vb.-forming *-el*: “to listen (intently)” + 3rd pers. ind. past indef. *-t*

¹⁷⁰“silence”. alt. *csönd*

¹⁷¹*egy* + acc. *-t*

¹⁷²vb. *üt* “to strike” + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past indef. *-(ö)tt*

¹⁷³*föl*- “upwards” + *keres* “to seek”: “to visit” + pot. “may/might” *het* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. cond. *-ned*, alt. *felkeres*

¹⁷⁴adj. *ifjú* “young” + noun-forming *-ság* (state of being): “youth” + 2nd pers. informal sg. poss. single poss. *-od*: “your childhood” (informal)

¹⁷⁵adj. “humid/damp”

¹⁷⁶*cement* “cement” + *fal* “wall” + pl. *-ak*

¹⁷⁷post. “between/amid”, *köz* “interval” + locative *-ött*

¹⁷⁸*kép* “image” + vb.-forming *-(z)el*: “to imagine” + pot. *-het* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. *-sz*

¹⁷⁹*szabad* “free” + *-ság* (state of being): “freedom” + acc. *-at*

¹⁸⁰vb. *gondol* “to think/plan/guess/worry” + 1st pers. sg. ind. past *-tam*

¹⁸¹“back body”, “well...”, “then/and/but” (questioning back), “surely”

¹⁸²*az* + *mint* “like”: “as soon as”, literary “as”

¹⁸³*föl*- “upwards” + vb. *láll* “to stand” + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-ok*, alt. *felálllok*

¹⁸⁴*csillag* “star” + pl. *-ak*

¹⁸⁵*Göncöl* + pl. *-ök*: “the Great Bear” (constellation)

¹⁸⁶*fény* “light” + freq. vb.-forming *-lik*: “to glitter” + 3rd pers. pl. ind. pres. indef. *-ek*

¹⁸⁷adv. “above/up/awake/upstairs”, alt. *fent*

¹⁸⁸*rács* “grid/grille” + pl. *-ok*

¹⁸⁹vb. *hallgat* “to remain silent/to listen” + adj.-forming *-ag*

¹⁹⁰“cell”

¹⁹¹*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

J is watching a blacksmith working in his workshop. The “iron weeping” (verse 1) and “rain laughing” (verse 2) refer to the sounds of iron being forged and quenched in water. The blacksmith is fixing a crack which evokes in J a past event, possibly a break up. Verses 3-6 form a chiasm: verse 5 is J’s reaction to 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> ¹⁹² <i>sírni</i> ¹⁹³ <i>a vasat</i> , ¹⁹⁴	1
<i>hallottam az esőt</i> ¹⁹⁵ <i>nevetni</i> . ¹⁹⁶	2
<i>Láttam</i> , ¹⁹⁷ <i>hogy</i> ¹⁹⁸ <i>a mult</i> ¹⁹⁹ <i>meghasadt</i> ²⁰⁰	3
<i>s csak</i> ²⁰¹ <i>képzetet</i> ²⁰² <i>lehet</i> ²⁰³ <i>feledni</i> ; ²⁰⁴	4
<i>s hogy</i> ²⁰⁵ <i>nem tudok</i> ²⁰⁶ <i>mást</i> , ²⁰⁷ <i>mint</i> ²⁰⁸ <i>szeretni</i> , ²⁰⁹	5
<i>görnyedve</i> ²¹⁰ <i>terheim</i> ²¹¹ <i>alatt</i> ²¹² —	6
<i>minek</i> ²¹³ <i>is</i> ²¹⁴ <i>kell</i> ²¹⁵ <i>fegyvert</i> ²¹⁶ <i>veretni</i> ²¹⁷	7
<i>belőled</i> , ²¹⁸ <i>arany</i> ²¹⁹ <i>öntudat!</i> ²²⁰	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)

¹⁹²vb. *hall* “to hear” + 1st pers. sg. ind. past def. -*ottam*

¹⁹³vb. *sír* “to cry/weep” + inf. -*ni*

¹⁹⁴*vas* “iron” + acc. -(a)*t*

¹⁹⁵vb. *es*, inf. *esik* + pres. part. -*ó* + acc. -*t*

¹⁹⁶vb. *nevet* “to laugh”, inf. *nevetni*

¹⁹⁷vb. *lát* “to see” + short base -*t*, 1st pers. sg. past def. -*tam*

¹⁹⁸adv. “how”

¹⁹⁹*mult*? rare, past part. “past”, inf. *múlik*

²⁰⁰perfective *meg*- + vb. *hasad* “to crack/split apart” + past part. -*t*

²⁰¹adv. “only”

²⁰²*képzet* “idea/image/notion” + acc. -*t*

²⁰³pot. vb. *van/lesz*: “may be/may become”, 3rd pers. sg. ind.

²⁰⁴lit. vb. *feled* “to forget”, alt. *felejt*

²⁰⁵adv. “how”

²⁰⁶vb. *tud* “to know”/aux. “can + inf.” + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. -*ok*

²⁰⁷adj. *más* “other/different” + acc. -*t*

²⁰⁸comp. different degrees “than”

²⁰⁹inf. vb. *szeret* “to love”

²¹⁰vb. *görnyed* “to bend (under a burden)” + adv.-forming -*ve*

²¹¹*teher* “freight/burden” + 1st pers. sg. poss. mult. poss. -*eim* → *terheim*

²¹²post. *al*- “lower part” + loc. -(a)*tt*

²¹³*mi* + dat. -*nek*: “for what”

²¹⁴doublet of *és* “and”

²¹⁵aux. vb. “must/need to/have to + inf.”

²¹⁶*fegyver* “weapon” + acc. -*t*

²¹⁷inf. vb. “to hammer”, alt. *veretés*

²¹⁸pron. *belőle* “out of him/her/it” + 2nd pers. sg. -*d*

²¹⁹“gold/golden”

²²⁰“self-awareness”