

Collected Poems

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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

French

L'aube détache le ciel de la terre	1
et, à sa voix claire et douce,	2
scarabées et enfants virevoltent	3
en entrant sur la scène du jour;	4
l'air n'est pas humide,	5
la brillante légèreté flotte!	6
Avec la nuit, elles se posèrent sur les arbres	7
comme de petits papillons, les feuilles.	8

Original Hungarian

<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 könnyűség¹⁵ lebeg!¹⁶</i>	6
<i>Az éjjel¹⁷ rászálltak¹⁸ a fákra,¹⁹</i>	7
<i>mint²⁰ kis²¹ lepkék,²² a levelek.²³</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*

⁴dawn'

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*

¹⁵*könnyű* simplicity/easiness' + noun-forming *-ség* (state of being)

¹⁶vb. *lebeg* to float (in the air)', 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹⁷*éj* night' + instrumental *-vel* 'with' → *éjjel*

¹⁸pointed action *rá-* 'on' + vb. *száll* to fly/to land' + 3rd pers. sg. past indef. *-tak*

¹⁹*fa* tree' + pl. *-k* + subl. *-ra* 'onto' → *fákra*

²⁰like'

²¹small'

²²*lepke* 'butterfly' + pl. *-k* → *lepkék*

²³*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 my dream comes down as a blur into my members	5
and the iron world is the order.	6
During the day a moon rises inwardly and,	7
when the night is out, a sun shines within.	8

Cursory remark

Verses 1-4 are about the night, verses 5-7 transition to the day, and verse 8 brings us back to the night — this cyclic structure supporting the mismatched, recurring alternance of days and nights.

French

J'ai vu des tableaux barbouillés de bleu,	1
rouge et jaune dans mes rêves	2
et je sentis que tout était en ordre —	3
pas un seul grain de poussière qui vole agité.	4
Maintenant mon rêve se pose, estompé, dans mes membres	5
et le monde de fer est l'ordre.	6
Avec le jour, une lune point en moi et,	7
à la nuit tombée, un soleil brille dedans.	8

Original Hungarian

<i>Kék, piros, sárga, összekent</i> ²⁴	1
<i>képeket</i> ²⁵ <i>láttam</i> ²⁶ <i>álmaimban</i> ²⁷	2
<i>és úgy éreztem,</i> ²⁸ <i>ez a rend</i> ²⁹ —	3
<i>egy szallo</i> ³⁰ <i>porszem</i> ³¹ <i>el</i> ³² <i>nem hobbant.</i> ³³	4
<i>Most homályként</i> ³⁴ <i>száll tagjaimban</i> ³⁵	5
<i>álmom s a vas</i> ³⁶ <i>világ a rend.</i>	6
<i>Nappal</i> ³⁷ <i>hold</i> ³⁸ <i>kél</i> ³⁹ <i>bennem</i> ⁴⁰ <i>s ha</i> ⁴¹ <i>kin</i> ⁴² <i>van</i>	7
<i>az éj</i> ⁴³ — <i>egy nap sütt</i> ⁴⁴ <i>idebent.</i> ⁴⁵	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)

²⁴össze together' + ken smear' → összekent + 3rd pers. sg. past indef. -t

²⁵kép 'picture' + pl. -(e)k + acc. -et

²⁶vb. lát to see' + short base -t, 1st pers. sg. past def. -tam

²⁷álom dream' + 1st pers. sg. poss. -a + poss. pl. -i + 1st pers. sg. pers. -m + inessive -ban 'in' → álmaimban

²⁸vb. érez to feel', 1st pers. sg. past def.

²⁹'order'

³⁰vb. száll to fly' + pres. part. -ó

³¹'a speck of dust'

³²el nem + past. part.; the verbal prefix el emphasises the completion of the action

³³vb. hobbant to become imbalanced', arch. + past part. -t

³⁴homály 'blur' + essive formal -ként 'as'

³⁵tag 'member' + 1st pers. sg. poss. -(j)a + poss. pl. -i + 1st pers. sg. pers. -m + inessive -ban 'in' → tagjaimban

³⁶'iron'

³⁷nap day' + instrumental -val 'with' → nappal

³⁸'moon'

³⁹vb. to rise', 3rd pers. sg. pres. def., arch. alt. kel

⁴⁰pron. benne 'inside smth/smb' + 1st pers. sg. pers. -m

⁴¹'when'

⁴²'outside'

⁴³'night'

⁴⁴vb. to roast/to shine', 3rd pers. sg. pres. indef.

⁴⁵adv. 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 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.

French

Je suis maigre, parfois je ne mange que du pain ;	1
entouré par ces âmes oisives et bavardes,	2
je cherche en vain plus de certitude, comme le dé.	3
Aucun rôti de palette ne trouve ma bouche	4
quand j'étreins un enfant sur mon cœur —	5
aussi fûté soit-il, le chat ne peut attrapper d'un coup	6
la souris dehors et celle dedans.	7

Original Hungarian

<i>Sóvány</i> ⁴⁶ <i>vagyok, csak kenyeret</i> ⁴⁷	1
<i>eszem</i> ⁴⁸ <i>néha</i> , ⁴⁹ <i>e</i> ⁵⁰ <i>léha</i> , ⁵¹ <i>locska</i> ⁵²	2
<i>lelkek</i> ⁵³ <i>közt</i> ⁵⁴ <i>ingyen</i> ⁵⁵ <i>keresek</i> ⁵⁶	3
<i>bizonyosabbat</i> , ⁵⁷ <i>mint</i> ⁵⁸ <i>a kocska</i> . ⁵⁹	4
<i>Nem dörgölődzik</i> ⁶⁰ <i>sült</i> ⁶¹ <i>lopcska</i> ⁶²	5
<i>számhoz</i> ⁶³ <i>s szivemhez</i> ⁶⁴ <i>kisgyerek</i> ⁶⁵ —	6
<i>ügyeskedhet</i> , ⁶⁶ <i>nem fog</i> ⁶⁷ <i>a macska</i> ⁶⁸	7
<i>egyszerre</i> ⁶⁹ <i>kint</i> ⁷⁰ <i>s bent</i> ⁷¹ <i>egeret</i> . ⁷²	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

⁴⁶‘slim’, ‘thin’, fig. ‘poor’

⁴⁷*kenyér* ‘bread’ + acc. -et → *kenyeret*

⁴⁸vb. *esz* ‘to eat’, rare without verbal pref., inf. *enni* + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. def. -em → *eszem*

⁴⁹adv. ‘sometimes’

⁵⁰poetic abbrv. *eme/ez* ‘this’

⁵¹‘improvident/idler’

⁵²adj. ‘blethering’

⁵³*lélek* ‘soul’ + pl. -(e)k → *lelkek*

⁵⁴post. ‘between/amid’ from *között*: *köz* ‘interval’ + locative -ött

⁵⁵fig. arch. ‘in vain’, usually ‘free of charge’

⁵⁶vb. *keres* ‘to seek’ + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁵⁷adj. *bizonyos* ‘certain’ + comp. -abb ‘more’ + acc. -t

⁵⁸‘like’

⁵⁹‘a die’

⁶⁰vb. ‘to press against’, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁶¹vb. *sül* ‘to roast’ + past part. -t

⁶²‘chuck’ (shoulder meat cut, probably pork)

⁶³*száj* ‘mouth’ + 1st pers. sg. single poss. -m → *szám* + allative -hoz ‘towards’ → *számhoz*

⁶⁴*szívem* ‘heart’ + allative -hez ‘towards’

⁶⁵*kis* ‘small’ + *gyerek* ‘child’

⁶⁶vb. *ügyesked* ‘to be clever’ + 3rd pers. sg. pres. potential -het

⁶⁷vb. ‘to hold’, 3rd pers. sg. pers. indef.

⁶⁸‘cat’

⁶⁹adv. *egyszer* ‘at once’ + ablative -re ‘onto’

⁷⁰adv. ‘outside’

⁷¹adv. ‘inside’

⁷²*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 its neighbour,	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.

French

Tout comme un tas de bûches,	1
le monde gît en vrac;	2
chaque chose appuie, pèse,	3
s’arrime à sa voisine	4
et ainsi tout est déterminé.	5
Seul ce qui n’est pas relève de l’arbuste,	6
seul cela sera cette fleur;	7
ce qui est tombera en pièces.	8

Original Hungarian

<i>Akár</i> ⁷³ <i>egy halom</i> ⁷⁴ <i>hasított</i> ⁷⁵ <i>fa</i> , ⁷⁶	1
<i>hever</i> ⁷⁷ <i>egymáson</i> ⁷⁸ <i>a világ</i> , ⁷⁹	2
<i>szorítja</i> , ⁸⁰ <i>nyomja</i> , ⁸¹ <i>összefogja</i> ⁸²	3
<i>egyik</i> ⁸³ <i>dolog</i> ⁸⁴ <i>a másikat</i> ⁸⁵	4
<i>s így</i> ⁸⁶ <i>mindenik</i> ⁸⁷ <i>determinált</i> . ⁸⁸	5
<i>Csak</i> ⁸⁹ <i>ami</i> ⁹⁰ <i>nincs, annak</i> ⁹¹ <i>van bokra</i> , ⁹²	6
<i>csak</i> ⁹³ <i>ami lesz</i> , ⁹⁴ <i>az a virág</i> ,	7
<i>ami van, széthull</i> ⁹⁵ <i>darabokra</i> . ⁹⁶	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)

⁷³conj. literary 'just like'

⁷⁴'pile/heap'

⁷⁵vb. *hasít* to cleave/to split' + past. part. *-ott*

⁷⁶'tree'

⁷⁷vb. to lie', 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁷⁸pron. *egymás* 'each other/one another' + super. *-on* 'on'

⁷⁹'world'

⁸⁰vb. *szorít* to press/to constrict', inf. *szorítani* + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

⁸¹vb. *nyom* to weigh' + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

⁸²*össze* together' + vb. *fog* to hold' + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

⁸³*egy* 'one' + 3rd pers. pl. poss. *-ik* 'of'

⁸⁴'thing'

⁸⁵adj. *más* 'other' + noun-forming *-ik* → 'another' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-a* + acc. *-t* → *-át*

⁸⁶'just so'

⁸⁷adv. *minden* 'everyone/everything'

⁸⁸Latin *determinare* + vb.-forming *-ál* to determine' + past part. *-t*

⁸⁹adv. 'only'

⁹⁰rel. pron. 'which/that'

⁹¹art. *az* that' + attr. poss. *-nak* → *annak*

⁹²*bokor* shrub/bush' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-a*

⁹³adv. 'only'

⁹⁴vb. to become', 3rd pers. sg. ind. fut. indef.

⁹⁵vb. to fall apart', 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁹⁶adv. *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 his 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.

French

À la gare de fret,	I
je m'étais ainsi derrière le pied de l'arbre,	2
comme un morceau de silence;	3
une herbe grise atteignit ma bouche,	4
crue, étrange-sucrée.	5
Faisant le mort, je regardais le garde, suspectant quoi,	6
et son ombre qui, sur les wagons silencieux,	7
s'entêtait à bondir sur les charbons reluisants,	8
couverts de rosée.	9

Original Hungarian

<i>A teberpályaudvaron</i> ⁹⁷	1
<i>úgy</i> ⁹⁸ <i>lapultam</i> ⁹⁹ <i>a fa</i> ¹⁰⁰ <i>tövéhez</i> , ¹⁰¹	2
<i>mint</i> ¹⁰² <i>egy darab</i> ¹⁰³ <i>csönd</i> ¹⁰⁴ ; <i>szürke</i> ¹⁰⁵ <i>gyom</i> ¹⁰⁶	3
<i>ért</i> ¹⁰⁷ <i>számhoz</i> , ¹⁰⁸ <i>nyers</i> , ¹⁰⁹ <i>különös-édes</i> .	4
<i>Holtan</i> ¹¹⁰ <i>lestem</i> ¹¹¹ <i>az őrt</i> , ¹¹² <i>mit</i> ¹¹³ <i>érez</i> , ¹¹⁴	5
<i>s a hallgatag</i> ¹¹⁵ <i>vagónokon</i> ¹¹⁶	6
<i>árnyát</i> , ¹¹⁷ <i>mely</i> ¹¹⁸ <i>ráugrott</i> ¹¹⁹ <i>a fényes</i> , ¹²⁰	7
<i>harmatos</i> ¹²¹ <i>szénre</i> ¹²² <i>konokon</i> . ¹²³	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)

⁹⁷ *teher* 'freight' + *pálya* track' + *udvar* courtyard' + super. -on 'on'

⁹⁸ adv. so (in this/that manner)

⁹⁹ vb. *lapul* to lie low' + 1st pers. sg. past indef. -tam

¹⁰⁰ tree'

¹⁰¹ *tő* 'base of the stem of a plant' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. -e 'of' → *töve* + allative -hez towards' → *tövéhez*

¹⁰² like'

¹⁰³ piece'

¹⁰⁴ silence', alt. *csend*

¹⁰⁵ adj. grey'

¹⁰⁶ weed'

¹⁰⁷ vb. *ért* to reach', arch. to touch', fig. to understand', 3rd pers. sg. past indef.

¹⁰⁸ *száj* 'mouth' + 1st pers. sg. single poss. -m → *szám* + allative towards' -hoz → *számhoz*

¹⁰⁹ adj. 'raw'

¹¹⁰ *holt* dead' + adv.-forming -an

¹¹¹ vb. *les* to spy' + 1st pers. sg. past indef. -tem

¹¹² *őr* guard' + acc. -t

¹¹³ inter. 'what'

¹¹⁴ vb. to feel/to smell/to taste', 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹¹⁵ vb. *hallgat* to remain silent/to listen' + adj.-forming -ag

¹¹⁶ *vagón* 'wagon' + pl. -ok + super. -on 'on'

¹¹⁷ *árny* shadow/ghost' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. -a + acc. -t → -át

¹¹⁸ literary, 'which/that'

¹¹⁹ pointed action *ra-* 'at' + vb. *ugrik* to leap/to jump' + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past. indef. -ott → *ugrott*

¹²⁰ *fény* light/glitter' + adj.-forming -es → 'bright'

¹²¹ adj. dewy'

¹²² *szén* coal' + subl. -re 'onto'

¹²³ 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 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.

French

Voici le tourment intérieur,	1
pourtant l'explication se trouve à l'extérieur.	2
Ta blessure est le monde — en feu, s'échauffant —	3
et <i>tu</i> sens ton âme, la fièvre.	4
Tu es captif tant que ton cœur se révolte —	5
ainsi tu es libre s'il se complâit	6
à ne plus bâtir pour toi une maison	7
où un propriétaire vient demeurer.	8

Original Hungarian

<i>Im</i> ¹²⁴ <i>itt a szenvedés</i> ¹²⁵ <i>belül</i> , ¹²⁶	1
<i>ám</i> ¹²⁷ <i>ott kívül</i> ¹²⁸ <i>a magyarázat</i> . ¹²⁹	2
<i>Sebed</i> ¹³⁰ <i>a világ — ég</i> , ¹³¹ <i>bevül</i> ¹³²	3
<i>s te lelkedet</i> ¹³³ <i>érezed</i> , ¹³⁴ <i>a lázat</i> . ¹³⁵	4
<i>Rab</i> ¹³⁶ <i>vagy, amíg</i> ¹³⁷ <i>a szíved</i> ¹³⁸ <i>lázad</i> ¹³⁹ —	5
<i>úgy</i> ¹⁴⁰ <i>szabadulsz</i> , ¹⁴¹ <i>ha</i> ¹⁴² <i>kényedül</i> ¹⁴³	6
<i>nem raksz</i> ¹⁴⁴ <i>magadnak</i> ¹⁴⁵ <i>olyan</i> ¹⁴⁶ <i>házat</i> , ¹⁴⁷	7
<i>melybe</i> ¹⁴⁸ <i>háziúr</i> ¹⁴⁹ <i>települ</i> . ¹⁵⁰	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)

¹²⁴literary, abbrv. *íme* 'here is/ behold'

¹²⁵vb. *szenved* 'to suffer' + noun-forming *-és*

¹²⁶'inside'

¹²⁷poetic, interj. contrad. 'but'

¹²⁸adv. 'outdoor/outside'

¹²⁹vb. *magyaráz* 'to explain' + noun-forming *-at*

¹³⁰*seb* 'wound' + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-ed*

¹³¹vb. 'to be on fire', 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹³²vb. 'to grow hot', 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹³³*lélek* 'soul' + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-ed* → *lelked* + acc. *-(e)t*

¹³⁴vb. *érez* 'to feel', 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. def.

¹³⁵*láz* 'fever' + acc. *-(a)t*

¹³⁶'captive'

¹³⁷adv. 'as long as'; 'until' if followed by negated verb

¹³⁸*szíved* 'heart' + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-ed*

¹³⁹vb. *to rebel*, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹⁴⁰*úgy ... ha ...* 'then ... if ...'

¹⁴¹*szabad* 'free' + vb.-forming *-ul* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-sz*

¹⁴²'if'

¹⁴³literary, vb. *to indulge*, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹⁴⁴vb. *rak* 'to set up/to build', 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-sz*

¹⁴⁵*maga* 'oneself' + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-d* + dat. *-nak*

¹⁴⁶pron. 'such/that kind of thing'

¹⁴⁷*ház* 'house' + acc. *-(a)t*

¹⁴⁸literary, arch. *mely* 'which' + illative *-be* 'into (the inside of)'

¹⁴⁹*ház* 'house' + adj.-forming 'of the' *-i* + *úr* 'master'

¹⁵⁰vb. *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. (The metaphor is a little off, as balloons use hot air, not steam.)

French

Par dessous le soir,	1
j'ai levé les yeux aux rouages des cieux —	2
des fils scintillants de la chance	3
le métier du passé avait tissé la loi;	4
par dessous la vapeur de mes rêves,	5
j'ai regardé à nouveau dans les cieux	6
et j'ai vu le tissu de la loi	7
toujours se déchirer quelque part.	8

Original Hungarian

<i>Én fölnéztem</i> ¹⁵¹ <i>az est</i> ¹⁵² <i>alól</i> ¹⁵³	1
<i>az eget</i> ¹⁵⁴ <i>fogaskerekére</i> ¹⁵⁵ —	2
<i>csilló</i> ¹⁵⁶ <i>véletlen</i> ¹⁵⁷ <i>szálaiból</i> ¹⁵⁸	3
<i>törvényt</i> ¹⁵⁹ <i>szőtt</i> ¹⁶⁰ <i>a mult</i> ¹⁶¹ <i>szövőszéke</i> ¹⁶²	4
<i>és megint</i> ¹⁶³ <i>fölnéztem az égre</i> ¹⁶⁴	5
<i>álmaim</i> ¹⁶⁵ <i>gőzét</i> ¹⁶⁶ <i>alól</i>	6
<i>s láttam</i> ¹⁶⁷ <i>a törvény szövédéke</i> ¹⁶⁸	7
<i>mindig</i> ¹⁶⁹ <i>fölfeslik</i> ¹⁷⁰ <i>valahol</i> ¹⁷¹	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)

¹⁵¹vb. pref. *föl-* 'upwards' + vb. *néz* to look' + 1st pers. sg. past. def. *-tem*

¹⁵²arch. '(in the) evening'

¹⁵³*al* lower part' + abl. *-l* 'from'

¹⁵⁴*ég* sky' + acc. *-(e)t*

¹⁵⁵*fogas* tooth' + *kerék* 'wheel': cogwheel' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e* + subl. *-re* towards'

¹⁵⁶vb. *csillog* to glitter' + adj.-forming *-o* → *csilló*; usually *csillogó*

¹⁵⁷chance'

¹⁵⁸*szál* thread' + 3rd pers. sg. poss. *-a* + poss. pl. *-i* + elative *-ból* 'from/out of'

¹⁵⁹*törvény* law/principle' + acc. *-t*

¹⁶⁰vb. *sző* to weave', past part.

¹⁶¹*múlt?* rare, past part. 'past', inf. *múlik*

¹⁶²*szövőő* 'weaver' + *szék* chair': loom' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

¹⁶³*meg* 'again' (short action) + adv.-forming *-int*

¹⁶⁴*ég* sky' + subl. sg. *-re* 'onto'

¹⁶⁵*álom* dream' + 1st pers. sg. poss. *-a* + poss. pl. *-i* + 1st pers. sg. pers. *-m*

¹⁶⁶*gőz* steam, vapour' + 3rd pers. sg. poss. *-e* + pl. poss. *-i*

¹⁶⁷vb. *lát* to see' + short base *-t*, 1st pers. sg. past def. *-tam*

¹⁶⁸*szövédék* 'fabric/cloth/web' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

¹⁶⁹*mind* 'always' (repetition) + term. 'until' *-ig*

¹⁷⁰vb. pref. *föl-* 'upwards' + arch., poetic, vb. *feslik* to come unstitched', 3rd pers. sg. pres. indef.

¹⁷¹somewhere'

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> ¹⁷² <i>a csend</i> ¹⁷³ — <i>egyet</i> ¹⁷⁴ <i>ütött</i> ¹⁷⁵	1
<i>Fölkereshetnéd</i> ¹⁷⁶ <i>ifjúságod</i> ; ¹⁷⁷	2
<i>nyirkos</i> ¹⁷⁸ <i>cementfalak</i> ¹⁷⁹ <i>között</i> ¹⁸⁰	3
<i>képzelhetsz</i> ¹⁸¹ <i>egy kis szabadságot</i> ¹⁸² —	4
<i>gondoltam</i> . ¹⁸³ <i>S hát</i> ¹⁸⁴ <i>amint</i> ¹⁸⁵ <i>fölálllok</i> ¹⁸⁶	5
<i>a csillagok</i> , ¹⁸⁷ <i>a Göncölök</i> ¹⁸⁸	6
<i>úgy fénylenek</i> ¹⁸⁹ <i>fönt</i> , ¹⁹⁰ <i>mint a rácsok</i> ¹⁹¹	7
<i>a hallgatat</i> ¹⁹² <i>cella</i> ¹⁹³ <i>fölött</i> . ¹⁹⁴	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)

¹⁷² *fül* 'ear' + vb.-forming *-el-*: to listen (intently)' + 3rd pers. ind. past indef. *-t*

¹⁷³ 'silence'. alt. *csönd*

¹⁷⁴ *egy* + acc. *-t*

¹⁷⁵ vb. *üt* to strike' + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past indef. *-(ö)tt*

¹⁷⁶ *föl-* 'upwards' + *keres* to seek': to visit' + pot. 'may/might' *-bet* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. cond. *-ned*, alt. *felkeres*

¹⁷⁷ adj. *ifjú* 'young' + noun-forming *-ság* (state of being): 'youth' + 2nd pers. informal sg. poss. single poss. *-od*: 'your childhood' (informal)

¹⁷⁸ adj. 'humid/damp'

¹⁷⁹ *cement* 'cement' + *fal* 'wall' + pl. *-ak*

¹⁸⁰ post. 'between/amid', *köz* 'interval' + locative *-ött*

¹⁸¹ *kép* 'image' + vb.-forming *-(z)el-*: to imagine' + pot. *-bet* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. *-sz*

¹⁸² *szabad* 'free' + *-ság* (state of being): 'freedom' + acc. *-(a)t*

¹⁸³ vb. *gondol* to think/plan/guess/worry' + 1st pers. sg. ind. past *-tam*

¹⁸⁴ 'back body', 'well...', then/and/but' (questioning back), surely'

¹⁸⁵ *az* + *mint* like': 'as soon as', literary 'as'

¹⁸⁶ *föl-* 'upwards' + vb. *láll* to stand' + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-ok*, alt. *felálllok*

¹⁸⁷ *csillag* 'star' + pl. *-ak*

¹⁸⁸ *Göncöl* + pl. *-ök*: the Great Bear' (constellation)

¹⁸⁹ *fény* 'light' + freq. vb.-forming *-lik-*: to glitter' + 3rd pers. pl. ind. pres. indef. *-ek*

¹⁹⁰ adv. 'above/up/awake/upstairs', alt. *fent*

¹⁹¹ *rács* 'grid/grille' + pl. *-ok*

¹⁹² vb. *hallgat* to remain silent/to listen' + adj.-forming *-ag*

¹⁹³ cell'

¹⁹⁴ *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> ¹⁹⁵ <i>sírni</i> ¹⁹⁶ <i>a vasat</i> , ¹⁹⁷	1
<i>hallottam az esőt</i> ¹⁹⁸ <i>nevetni</i> . ¹⁹⁹	2
<i>Láttam</i> , ²⁰⁰ <i>hogy</i> ²⁰¹ <i>a mult</i> ²⁰² <i>meghasadt</i> ²⁰³	3
<i>s csak</i> ²⁰⁴ <i>képzetet</i> ²⁰⁵ <i>lehet</i> ²⁰⁶ <i>feledni</i> ; ²⁰⁷	4
<i>s hogy</i> ²⁰⁸ <i>nem tudok</i> ²⁰⁹ <i>mást</i> , ²¹⁰ <i>mint</i> ²¹¹ <i>szeretni</i> , ²¹²	5
<i>görnyedve</i> ²¹³ <i>terheim</i> ²¹⁴ <i>alatt</i> ²¹⁵ —	6
<i>minek</i> ²¹⁶ <i>is</i> ²¹⁷ <i>kell</i> ²¹⁸ <i>fegyvert</i> ²¹⁹ <i>veretni</i> ²²⁰	7
<i>belőled</i> , ²²¹ <i>arany</i> ²²² <i>öntudat!</i> ²²³	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)

¹⁹⁵vb. *hall* to hear' + 1st pers. sg. ind. past def. *-ottam*

¹⁹⁶vb. *sír* to cry/weep' + inf. *-ni*

¹⁹⁷*vas* 'iron' + acc. *-(a)t*

¹⁹⁸vb. *es*, inf. *esik* + pres. part. *-ő* + acc. *-t*

¹⁹⁹vb. *nevet* to laugh', inf. *nevetni*

²⁰⁰vb. *lát* to see' + short base *-t*, 1st pers. sg. past def. *-tam*

²⁰¹adv. 'how'

²⁰²***mult***? rare, past part. 'past', inf. *múlik*

²⁰³perfective *meg-* + vb. *hasad* to crack/split apart' + past part. *-t*

²⁰⁴adv. 'only'

²⁰⁵*képzet* 'idea/image/notion' + acc. *-t*

²⁰⁶pot. vb. *van/lesz*: 'may be/may become', 3rd pers. sg. ind.

²⁰⁷lit. vb. *feled* to forget', alt. *felejt*

²⁰⁸adv. 'how'

²⁰⁹vb. *tud* to know'/aux. can + inf.' + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-ok*

²¹⁰adj. *más* 'other/different' + acc. *-t*

²¹¹comp. different degrees than'

²¹²inf. vb. *szeret* to love'

²¹³vb. *görnyed* to bend (under a burden)' + adv.-forming *-ve*

²¹⁴*teher* 'freight/burden' + 1st pers. sg. poss. mult. poss. *-eim* → *terheim*

²¹⁵post. *al-* lower part' + loc. *-(a)tt*

²¹⁶*mi* + dat. *-nek*: 'for what'

²¹⁷doublet of *és* 'and', adv. 'also'

²¹⁸aux. vb. 'must/need to/have to + inf.'

²¹⁹*fegyver* 'weapon' + acc. *-t*

²²⁰inf. vb. to hammer', alt. *veretés*

²²¹pron. *belőle* 'out of him/her/it' + 2nd pers. sg. *-d*

²²²gold/golden'

²²³self-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 meglett²²⁴ ember²²⁵, akinek²²⁶</i>	1
<i>szívében²²⁷ nincs se anyja,²²⁸ apja,²²⁹</i>	2
<i>ki²³⁰ tudja,²³¹ hogy²³² az életet²³³</i>	3
<i>halálra²³⁴ ráadásul²³⁵ kapja²³⁶</i>	4
<i>s mint²³⁷ talált²³⁸ tárgyat²³⁹ visszaadja²⁴⁰</i>	5
<i>bármikor²⁴¹ — ezért²⁴² őrizi²⁴³ meg,²⁴⁴</i>	6
<i>ki²⁴⁵ nem istene²⁴⁶ és nem papja²⁴⁷</i>	7
<i>se²⁴⁸ magának,²⁴⁹ sem senkinek.²⁵⁰</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)

²²⁴obs. ‘adult’

²²⁵‘person’

²²⁶pron. *aki* ‘who’ + attr. poss. *-nek*

²²⁷*szív* ‘heart’ + poss. ‘his’ *-e* + inessive ‘in’ *-ben*

²²⁸*anya* ‘mother’ + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-(j)a*

²²⁹*apa* ‘father’ + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-(j)a*

²³⁰pron. rel. arch. ‘he who’, alt. *aki*

²³¹vb. *tud* to know’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

²³²conj. so that’

²³³*élet* life’ + acc. *-(e)t*

²³⁴vb. *hal* to die’ + arch. noun-forming *-ál* → death’ + subl. ‘on/for’ *-ra* → to death (by excess)’

²³⁵*ráadás* ‘addition/extra’ + essive ‘as/with the intention of’ *-ul*

²³⁶vb. *kap* to receive’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pers. def. *-ja*

²³⁷like’

²³⁸vb. *talált* to find’ + past part.

²³⁹*tárgy* ‘object/thing/subject’ + acc. *-(a)t*

²⁴⁰vb. *visszaad* to give back’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

²⁴¹*bár* ‘any’ + adv. *mikor* ‘when’ → ‘any time’

²⁴²conj. therefore’

²⁴³vb. *őriz* to guard’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-i*

²⁴⁴arch. emph.

²⁴⁵‘he who’

²⁴⁶*isten* god’ + 3rd pers. sg. sing. poss. *-e*

²⁴⁷*pap* ‘priest’ + 3rd pers. sg. sing. poss. *-(j)a*

²⁴⁸alt. *sem, sem ..., sem ...* neither ... nor ...’

²⁴⁹pron. refl. 3rd pers. ‘himself’

²⁵⁰pron. *senki* no one/nobody’

XI

I saw happiness; it was soft, bright	1
and one and half a 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 sunlight toyed with its bristles.	8

Cursory remark

While this seems a rather descriptive poem, the first and last two verses are subjective. Also the last verse echoes the first, in the fashion of a chiasm: verse 1 is about seeing happiness, and the last features light and playfulness: the Hungarian uses *fény* for 'light', but it could figuratively also mean 'joy', hence my translation: the sunlight toyed'.

<i>Láttam</i> ²⁵¹ <i>a boldogságot</i> ²⁵² <i>én,</i> ²⁵³	1
<i>lány</i> ²⁵⁴ <i>volt,</i> ²⁵⁵ <i>szőke</i> ²⁵⁶ <i>és másfél</i> ²⁵⁷ <i>mázsa.</i> ²⁵⁸	2
<i>Az udvar</i> ²⁵⁹ <i>szigorú</i> ²⁶⁰ <i>gyöpen</i> ²⁶¹	3
<i>imbolygott</i> ²⁶² <i>göndör</i> ²⁶³ <i>mosolygása.</i> ²⁶⁴	4
<i>Ledőlt</i> ²⁶⁵ <i>a puha,</i> ²⁶⁶ <i>langy</i> ²⁶⁷ <i>tócsába,</i> ²⁶⁸	5
<i>hunyorogott,</i> ²⁶⁹ <i>röffen</i> ²⁷⁰ <i>még</i> ²⁷¹ <i>felém</i> ²⁷² —	6
<i>ma</i> ²⁷³ <i>is</i> ²⁷⁴ <i>látom,</i> ²⁷⁵ <i>mily</i> ²⁷⁶ <i>tétovázva</i> ²⁷⁷	7
<i>babrált</i> ²⁷⁸ <i>pihé</i> ²⁷⁹ <i>közt</i> ²⁸⁰ <i>a fény.</i> ²⁸¹	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)

²⁵¹vb. *lát* to see' + short base *-t*, 1st pers. sg. past def. *-tam*

²⁵²adj. *boldog* 'happy' + noun-forming *-ság* (state of being) + acc. *-(o)t*

²⁵³pron. 'I'

²⁵⁴adj. soft'

²⁵⁵vb. *van* to be' + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past indef.

²⁵⁶adj. *sző* 'blonde' + dim. *-ke*

²⁵⁷*más* 'other/different' + *fél* 'half' → 'one and a half'

²⁵⁸'quintal'

²⁵⁹'yard'

²⁶⁰adj. severe/strict'

²⁶¹*gyep* lawn/grass' + super. *-én*

²⁶²vb. *imbolyog* to sway' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

²⁶³adj. curly'

²⁶⁴*mosolygása* 'smile' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

²⁶⁵vb. *ledől* to fall down' + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past indef. *-t*

²⁶⁶soft/squishy'

²⁶⁷arch. poetic *langyos* tepid'

²⁶⁸*tócsa* 'puddle' + illative *-ba* 'into'

²⁶⁹vb. *hunyorog* to squint' + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past. indef. *-rgott*

²⁷⁰*röffen* to grunt once (of a pig)'

²⁷¹adv. still/moreover'

²⁷²post. *felé* to/towards' + 1st pers. sg. poss *-m* → pron. towards me'

²⁷³adv. today'

²⁷⁴doublet of *és* 'and', adv. 'also'

²⁷⁵vb. *lát* to see' + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. def.

²⁷⁶poetic 'how ...(!)'

²⁷⁷vb. *tétova* to hesitate' (inf. *tétovázik*) → adv. part. doing smth hesitantly'

²⁷⁸vb. *babrált* to fiddle'

²⁷⁹*pihe* down, fluff' + adj.-forming *-i*

²⁸⁰post. 'between/amid' from *között*: *köz* 'interval' + locative *-ött*

²⁸¹light/glitter', fig. 'happiness/joy'

XII

<i>Vasútnál lakom. Erre sok</i>	<i>I</i>
<i>vonat jön-megy és el-elnezem,</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>hogy'szállnak fényes ablakok</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>a lengedező szösz-sötétben.</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Így iramlanak örök éjben</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>kivilágított nappalok</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>s én állok minden fülke-fényben,</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>én könnyöklök és hallgatok.</i>	<i>8</i>