

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 a blur, my dream comes down 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 inescapable, 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 grain de poussière qui vole agité.	4
Maintenant estompé, mon rêve se pose 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 nem hobbant.</i> ³²	4
<i>Most homályként</i> ³³ <i>száll tagjaimban</i> ³⁴	5
<i>álmom s a vas</i> ³⁵ <i>világ a rend.</i>	6
<i>Nappal</i> ³⁶ <i>hold</i> ³⁷ <i>kél</i> ³⁸ <i>bennem</i> ³⁹ <i>s ha</i> ⁴⁰ <i>kin</i> ⁴¹ <i>van</i>	7
<i>az éj</i> ⁴² — <i>egy nap sütt</i> ⁴³ <i>idebent.</i> ⁴⁴	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' → *összeken* + 3rd pers. sg. past indef. -*t*

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

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

²⁷*álom* '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'

³²vb. *hobbant* 'to become imbalanced', arch. + past part. -*t*

³³*homály* 'blur' + essive formal -*ként* 'as'

³⁴*tag* 'member' + 1st pers. sg. poss. -(j)*a* + poss. pl. -*i* + 1st pers. sg. pers. -*m* + inessive -*ban* 'in' → *tagjaimban*

³⁵'iron'

³⁶*nap* 'day' + instrumental -*val* 'with' → *nappal*

³⁷'moon'

³⁸vb. 'to rise', 3rd pers. sg. pres. def., arch. alt. *kel*

³⁹pron. *benne* 'inside smth/smb' + 1st pers. sg. pers. -*m*

⁴⁰'when'

⁴¹'outside'

⁴²'night'

⁴³vb. 'to roast/to shine', 3rd pers. sg. pres. indef.

⁴⁴adv. *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 contre mon cœur —	5
bien que fûté, le chat ne peut attrapper d'un coup	6
la souris dehors et celle dedans.	7

Original Hungarian

<i>Sóvány⁴⁵ vagyok, csak kenyeret⁴⁶</i>	1
<i>eszem⁴⁷ néha,⁴⁸ e⁴⁹ léba,⁵⁰ locska⁵¹</i>	2
<i>lelkek⁵² közt⁵³ ingyen⁵⁴ keresek⁵⁵</i>	3
<i>bizonyosabbat,⁵⁶ mint⁵⁷ a kocska.⁵⁸</i>	4
<i>Nem dörgölődzik⁵⁹ sült⁶⁰ lopcska⁶¹</i>	5
<i>számhoz⁶² s szivemhez⁶³ kisgyerek⁶⁴ —</i>	6
<i>ügyeskedhet,⁶⁵ nem fog⁶⁶ a macska⁶⁷</i>	7
<i>egyszerre⁶⁸ kint⁶⁹ s bent⁷⁰ egeret.⁷¹</i>	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

⁴⁵'slim', 'thin', fig. 'poor'

⁴⁶*kenyér* 'bread' + acc. -et → *kenyeret*

⁴⁷vb. *esz* 'to eat', rare without verbal pref., inf. *enni* + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. def. -em → *eszem*

⁴⁸adv. 'sometimes'

⁴⁹poetic abbrv. *eme/ez* 'this'

⁵⁰'improvident/idler'

⁵¹adj. 'blethering'

⁵²*lélek* 'soul' + pl. -(e)k → *lelkek*

⁵³post. 'between/amid' from *között*: *köz* 'interval' + locative -ött

⁵⁴fig. arch. 'in vain', usually 'free of charge'

⁵⁵vb. *keres* 'to seek' + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁵⁶adj. *bizonyos* 'certain' + comp. -abb 'more' + acc. -t

⁵⁷'like'

⁵⁸'a die'

⁵⁹vb. 'to press against', 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁶⁰vb. *sül* 'to roast' + past part. -t

⁶¹'chuck' (shoulder meat cut, probably pork)

⁶²*száj* 'mouth' + 1st pers. sg. single poss. -m → *szám* + allative -hoz 'towards' → *számhoz*

⁶³*szivem* 'heart' + allative -hez 'towards'

⁶⁴*kis* 'small' + *gyerek* 'child'

⁶⁵vb. *ügyesked* 'to be clever' + 3rd pers. sg. pres. potential -het

⁶⁶vb. 'to hold', 3rd pers. sg. pers. indef.

⁶⁷'cat'

⁶⁸adv. *egyszer* 'at once' + ablative -re 'onto'

⁶⁹adv. 'outside'

⁷⁰adv. 'inside'

⁷¹*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 other,	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 prochaine	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> ⁷² <i>egy halom</i> ⁷³ <i>hasított</i> ⁷⁴ <i>fa</i> , ⁷⁵	1
<i>hever</i> ⁷⁶ <i>egymáson</i> ⁷⁷ <i>a világ</i> , ⁷⁸	2
<i>szorítja</i> , ⁷⁹ <i>nyomja</i> , ⁸⁰ <i>összefogja</i> ⁸¹	3
<i>egyik</i> ⁸² <i>dolog</i> ⁸³ <i>a másikat</i> ⁸⁴	4
<i>s így</i> ⁸⁵ <i>mindenik</i> ⁸⁶ <i>determinált</i> . ⁸⁷	5
<i>Csak</i> ⁸⁸ <i>ami</i> ⁸⁹ <i>nincs, annak</i> ⁹⁰ <i>van bokra</i> , ⁹¹	6
<i>csak</i> ⁹² <i>ami lesz</i> , ⁹³ <i>az a virág</i> ,	7
<i>ami van, széthull</i> ⁹⁴ <i>darabokra</i> . ⁹⁵	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)

⁷²conj. literary ‘just like’

⁷³‘pile/heap’

⁷⁴vb. *hasít* to cleave/to split’ + past. part. -ott

⁷⁵tree’

⁷⁶vb. to lie’, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁷⁷pron. *egymás* ‘each other/one another’ + super. -on ‘on’

⁷⁸‘world’

⁷⁹vb. *szorít* to press/to constrict’, inf. *szorítani* + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. -ja

⁸⁰vb. *nyom* to weigh’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. -ja

⁸¹*össze* together’ + vb. *fog* to hold’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. -ja

⁸²*egy* ‘one’ + 3rd pers. pl. poss. -ik ‘of’

⁸³thing’

⁸⁴adj. *más* ‘other’ + noun-forming -ik → ‘another’ + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. -a + acc. -t → -át

⁸⁵‘just so’

⁸⁶adv. *minden* ‘everyone/everything’

⁸⁷Latin *determinare* + vb.-forming -ál to determine’ + past part. -t

⁸⁸adv. ‘only’

⁸⁹rel. pron. ‘which/that’

⁹⁰art. *az* that’ + attr. poss. -nak → *annak*

⁹¹*bokor* shrub/bush’ + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. -a

⁹²adv. ‘only’

⁹³vb. to become’, 3rd pers. sg. ind. fut. indef.

⁹⁴vb. to fall apart’, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

⁹⁵adv. *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> ⁹⁶	1
<i>úgy</i> ⁹⁷ <i>lapultam</i> ⁹⁸ <i>a fa</i> ⁹⁹ <i>tövéhez</i> , ¹⁰⁰	2
<i>mint</i> ¹⁰¹ <i>egy darab</i> ¹⁰² <i>csönd</i> ¹⁰³ ; <i>sziürke</i> ¹⁰⁴ <i>gyom</i> ¹⁰⁵	3
<i>ért</i> ¹⁰⁶ <i>számhoz</i> , ¹⁰⁷ <i>nyers</i> , ¹⁰⁸ <i>különös-édes</i> .	4
<i>Holtan</i> ¹⁰⁹ <i>lestem</i> ¹¹⁰ <i>az őrt</i> , ¹¹¹ <i>mit</i> ¹¹² <i>érez</i> , ¹¹³	5
<i>s a hallgatag</i> ¹¹⁴ <i>vagónokon</i> ¹¹⁵	6
<i>árnyát</i> , ¹¹⁶ <i>mely</i> ¹¹⁷ <i>ráugrott</i> ¹¹⁸ <i>a fényes</i> , ¹¹⁹	7
<i>harmatos</i> ¹²⁰ <i>szénre</i> ¹²¹ <i>konokon</i> . ¹²²	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)

⁹⁶ *teher* 'freight' + *pálya* track' + *udvar* courtyard' + super. -on 'on'

⁹⁷ adv. so (in this/that manner)

⁹⁸ vb. *lapul* to lie low' + 1st pers. sg. past indef. -tam

⁹⁹ tree'

¹⁰⁰ *tő* 'base of the stem of a plant' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. -e 'of' → *töve* + allative -hez towards' → *tövéhez*

¹⁰¹ like'

¹⁰² piece'

¹⁰³ silence', alt. *csend*

¹⁰⁴ adj. grey'

¹⁰⁵ weed'

¹⁰⁶ vb. *ért* to reach', arch. to touch', fig. to understand', 3rd pers. sg. past indef.

¹⁰⁷ *száj* 'mouth' + 1st pers. sg. single poss. -m → *szám* + allative towards' -hoz → *számhoz*

¹⁰⁸ adj. 'raw'

¹⁰⁹ *holt* dead' + adv.-forming -an

¹¹⁰ vb. *les* to spy' + 1st pers. sg. past indef. -tem

¹¹¹ *őr* guard' + acc. -t

¹¹² inter. 'what'

¹¹³ vb. to feel/to smell/to taste', 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹¹⁴ vb. *hallgat* to remain silent/to listen' + adj.-forming -ag

¹¹⁵ *vagón* 'wagon' + pl. -ok + super. -on 'on'

¹¹⁶ *árny* shadow/ghost' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. -a + acc. -t → -át

¹¹⁷ literary, 'which/that'

¹¹⁸ pointed action *ra-* 'at' + vb. *ugrik* to leap/to jump' + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past. indef. -ott → *ugrott*

¹¹⁹ *fény* light/glitter' + adj.-forming -es → 'bright'

¹²⁰ adj. dewy'

¹²¹ *szén* coal' + subl. -re 'onto'

¹²² 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> ¹²³ <i>itt a szenvedés</i> ¹²⁴ <i>belül</i> , ¹²⁵	1
<i>ám</i> ¹²⁶ <i>ott kívül</i> ¹²⁷ <i>a magyarázat</i> . ¹²⁸	2
<i>Sebed</i> ¹²⁹ <i>a világ — ég</i> , ¹³⁰ <i>bevül</i> ¹³¹	3
<i>s te lelkedet</i> ¹³² <i>érezed</i> , ¹³³ <i>a lázat</i> . ¹³⁴	4
<i>Rab</i> ¹³⁵ <i>vagy, amíg</i> ¹³⁶ <i>a szíved</i> ¹³⁷ <i>lázad</i> ¹³⁸ —	5
<i>úgy</i> ¹³⁹ <i>szabadulsz</i> , ¹⁴⁰ <i>ha</i> ¹⁴¹ <i>kényedül</i> ¹⁴²	6
<i>nem raksz</i> ¹⁴³ <i>magadnak</i> ¹⁴⁴ <i>olyan</i> ¹⁴⁵ <i>házat</i> , ¹⁴⁶	7
<i>melybe</i> ¹⁴⁷ <i>háziúr</i> ¹⁴⁸ <i>települ</i> . ¹⁴⁹	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)

¹²³literary, abbrv. *íme* 'here is/ behold'

¹²⁴vb. *szenved* 'to suffer' + noun-forming *-és*

¹²⁵'inside'

¹²⁶poetic, interj. contrad. 'but'

¹²⁷adv. 'outdoor/outside'

¹²⁸vb. *magyaráz* 'to explain' + noun-forming *-at*

¹²⁹*seb* 'wound' + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-ed*

¹³⁰vb. 'to be on fire', 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹³¹vb. 'to grow hot', 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹³²*lélek* 'soul' + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-ed* → *lelked* + acc. *-(e)t*

¹³³vb. *érez* 'to feel', 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. def.

¹³⁴*láz* 'fever' + acc. *-(a)t*

¹³⁵captive'

¹³⁶adv. 'as long as'; 'until' if followed by negated verb

¹³⁷*szíved* 'heart' + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-ed*

¹³⁸vb. *to rebel*, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹³⁹*úgy ... ha ...* then ... if ...'

¹⁴⁰*szabad* 'free' + vb.-forming *-ul* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-sz*

¹⁴¹'if'

¹⁴²literary, vb. *to indulge*, 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef.

¹⁴³vb. *rak* 'to set up/to build', 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-sz*

¹⁴⁴*maga* 'oneself' + 2nd pers. sg. single poss. *-d* + dat. *-nak*

¹⁴⁵pron. such/that kind of thing'

¹⁴⁶*ház* 'house' + acc. *-(a)t*

¹⁴⁷literary, arch. *mely* 'which' + illative *-be* 'into (the inside of)'

¹⁴⁸*ház* 'house' + adj.-forming 'of the' *-i* + *úr* 'master'

¹⁴⁹vb. *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 a 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> ¹⁵⁰ <i>az est</i> ¹⁵¹ <i>alól</i> ¹⁵²	1
<i>az eget</i> ¹⁵³ <i>fogaskerekére</i> ¹⁵⁴ —	2
<i>csilló</i> ¹⁵⁵ <i>véletlen</i> ¹⁵⁶ <i>szálaiból</i> ¹⁵⁷	3
<i>törvényt</i> ¹⁵⁸ <i>szőtt</i> ¹⁵⁹ <i>a mult</i> ¹⁶⁰ <i>szövőszéke</i> ¹⁶¹	4
<i>és megint</i> ¹⁶² <i>fölnéztem az égre</i> ¹⁶³	5
<i>álmaim</i> ¹⁶⁴ <i>gőzeit</i> ¹⁶⁵ <i>alól</i>	6
<i>s láttam</i> ¹⁶⁶ <i>a törvény szövédéke</i> ¹⁶⁷	7
<i>mindig</i> ¹⁶⁸ <i>fölfeslik</i> ¹⁶⁹ <i>valahol</i> ¹⁷⁰	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)

¹⁵⁰vb. pref. *föl-* 'upwards' + vb. *néz* to look' + 1st pers. sg. past. def. *-tem*

¹⁵¹arch. '(in the) evening'

¹⁵²*al* lower part' + abl. *-l* 'from'

¹⁵³*ég* sky' + acc. *-(e)t*

¹⁵⁴*fogas* tooth' + *kerék* 'wheel': cogwheel' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e* + subl. *-re* towards'

¹⁵⁵vb. *csillog* to glitter' + adj.-forming *-o* → *csilló*; usually *csillogó*

¹⁵⁶chance'

¹⁵⁷*szál* thread' + 3rd pers. sg. poss. *-a* + poss. pl. *-i* + elative *-ból* 'from/out of'

¹⁵⁸*törvény* law/principle' + acc. *-t*

¹⁵⁹vb. *sző* to weave', past part.

¹⁶⁰***múlt***? rare, past part. 'past', inf. *múlik*

¹⁶¹*szövőő* 'weaver' + *szék* chair': loom' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

¹⁶²*meg* 'again' (short action) + adv.-forming *-int*

¹⁶³*ég* sky' + subl. sg. *-re* 'onto'

¹⁶⁴*álom* dream' + 1st pers. sg. poss. *-a* + poss. pl. *-i* + 1st pers. sg. pers. *-m*

¹⁶⁵*gőz* steam, vapour' + 3rd pers. sg. poss. *-e* + pl. poss. *-i*

¹⁶⁶vb. *lát* to see' + short base *-t*, 1st pers. sg. past def. *-tam*

¹⁶⁷*szövédék* 'fabric/cloth/web' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

¹⁶⁸*mind* 'always' (repetition) + term. 'until' *-ig*

¹⁶⁹vb. pref. *föl-* 'upwards' + arch., poetic, vb. *feslik* to come unstitched', 3rd pers. sg. pres. indef.

¹⁷⁰somewhere'

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> ¹⁷¹ <i>a csend</i> ¹⁷² — <i>egyet</i> ¹⁷³ <i>ütött</i> ¹⁷⁴	1
<i>Fölkereshetnéd</i> ¹⁷⁵ <i>ifjúságod</i> ¹⁷⁶	2
<i>nyirkos</i> ¹⁷⁷ <i>cementfalak</i> ¹⁷⁸ <i>között</i> ¹⁷⁹	3
<i>képzelhetsz</i> ¹⁸⁰ <i>egy kis szabadságot</i> ¹⁸¹ —	4
<i>gondoltam</i> ¹⁸² <i>S hát</i> ¹⁸³ <i>amint</i> ¹⁸⁴ <i>fölálllok</i> ¹⁸⁵	5
<i>a csillagok</i> ¹⁸⁶ <i>a Göncölök</i> ¹⁸⁷	6
<i>úgy fénylenek</i> ¹⁸⁸ <i>fönt</i> ¹⁸⁹ <i>mint a rácsok</i> ¹⁹⁰	7
<i>a hallgató</i> ¹⁹¹ <i>cella</i> ¹⁹² <i>fölött</i> ¹⁹³	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)

¹⁷¹*fül* ‘ear’ + vb.-forming *-el*: to listen (intently)’ + 3rd pers. ind. past indef. *-t*

¹⁷²‘silence’. alt. *csönd*

¹⁷³*egy* + acc. *-t*

¹⁷⁴vb. *üt* to strike’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past indef. *-(ö)tt*

¹⁷⁵*föl*- ‘upwards’ + *keres* to seek’: to visit’ + pot. ‘may/might’ *-bet* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. cond. *-ned*, alt. *felkeres*

¹⁷⁶adj. *ifjú* ‘young’ + noun-forming *-ság* (state of being): ‘youth’ + 2nd pers. informal sg. poss. single poss. *-od*: ‘your childhood’ (informal)

¹⁷⁷adj. ‘humid/damp’

¹⁷⁸*cement* ‘cement’ + *fal* ‘wall’ + pl. *-ak*

¹⁷⁹post. ‘between/amid’, *köz* ‘interval’ + locative *-ött*

¹⁸⁰*kép* ‘image’ + vb.-forming *-(z)el*: to imagine’ + pot. *-bet* + 2nd pers. sg. ind. pres. *-sz*

¹⁸¹*szabad* ‘free’ + *-ság* (state of being): ‘freedom’ + acc. *-(a)t*

¹⁸²vb. *gondol* to think/plan/guess/worry’ + 1st pers. sg. ind. past *-tam*

¹⁸³‘back body’, ‘well...’, then/and/but’ (questioning back), surely’

¹⁸⁴*az* + *mint* like’: ‘as soon as’, literary ‘as’

¹⁸⁵*föl*- ‘upwards’ + vb. *láll* to stand’ + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-ok*, alt. *felálllok*

¹⁸⁶*csillag* ‘star’ + pl. *-ak*

¹⁸⁷*Göncöl* + pl. *-ök*: the Great Bear’ (constellation)

¹⁸⁸*fény* ‘light’ + freq. vb.-forming *-lik*: to glitter’ + 3rd pers. pl. ind. pres. indef. *-ek*

¹⁸⁹adv. ‘above/up/awake/upstairs’, alt. *fent*

¹⁹⁰*rács* ‘grid/grille’ + pl. *-ok*

¹⁹¹vb. *hallgat* to remain silent/to listen’ + adj.-forming *-ag*

¹⁹²cell’

¹⁹³*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> ¹⁹⁴ <i>sírni</i> ¹⁹⁵ <i>a vasat</i> , ¹⁹⁶	1
<i>hallottam az esőt</i> ¹⁹⁷ <i>nevetni</i> . ¹⁹⁸	2
<i>Láttam</i> , ¹⁹⁹ <i>hogy</i> ²⁰⁰ <i>a mult</i> ²⁰¹ <i>meghasadt</i> ²⁰²	3
<i>s csak</i> ²⁰³ <i>képzetet</i> ²⁰⁴ <i>lehet</i> ²⁰⁵ <i>feledni</i> ; ²⁰⁶	4
<i>s hogy</i> ²⁰⁷ <i>nem tudok</i> ²⁰⁸ <i>mást</i> , ²⁰⁹ <i>mint</i> ²¹⁰ <i>szeretni</i> , ²¹¹	5
<i>görnyedve</i> ²¹² <i>terheim</i> ²¹³ <i>alatt</i> ²¹⁴ —	6
<i>minek</i> ²¹⁵ <i>is</i> ²¹⁶ <i>kell</i> ²¹⁷ <i>fegyvert</i> ²¹⁸ <i>veretni</i> ²¹⁹	7
<i>belőled</i> , ²²⁰ <i>arany</i> ²²¹ <i>öntudat!</i> ²²²	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)

¹⁹⁴vb. *hall* to hear' + 1st pers. sg. ind. past def. *-ottam*

¹⁹⁵vb. *sír* to cry/weep' + inf. *-ni*

¹⁹⁶*vas* 'iron' + acc. *-(a)t*

¹⁹⁷vb. *es*, inf. *esik* + pres. part. *-ő* + acc. *-t*

¹⁹⁸vb. *nevet* to laugh', inf. *nevetni*

¹⁹⁹vb. *lát* to see' + short base *-t*, 1st pers. sg. past def. *-tam*

²⁰⁰adv. 'how'

²⁰¹*mult*? rare, past part. 'past', inf. *múlik*

²⁰²perfective *meg-* + vb. *hasad* to crack/split apart' + past part. *-t*

²⁰³adv. 'only'

²⁰⁴*képzet* 'idea/image/notion' + acc. *-t*

²⁰⁵pot. vb. *van/lesz*: 'may be/may become', 3rd pers. sg. ind.

²⁰⁶lit. vb. *feled* to forget', alt. *felejt*

²⁰⁷adv. 'how'

²⁰⁸vb. *tud* to know'/aux. can + inf.' + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. indef. *-ok*

²⁰⁹adj. *más* 'other/different' + acc. *-t*

²¹⁰comp. different degrees than'

²¹¹inf. vb. *szeret* to love'

²¹²vb. *görnyed* to bend (under a burden)' + adv.-forming *-ve*

²¹³*teher* 'freight/burden' + 1st pers. sg. poss. mult. poss. *-eim* → *terheim*

²¹⁴post. *al-* lower part' + loc. *-(a)tt*

²¹⁵*mi* + dat. *-nek*: 'for what'

²¹⁶doublet of *és* 'and', adv. 'also'

²¹⁷aux. vb. 'must/need to/have to + inf.'

²¹⁸*fegyver* 'weapon' + acc. *-t*

²¹⁹inf. vb. to hammer', alt. *veretés*

²²⁰pron. *belőle* 'out of him/her/it' + 2nd pers. sg. *-d*

²²¹gold/golden'

²²²self-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 meglett²²³ ember²²⁴, akinek²²⁵</i>	<i>I</i>
<i>szívében²²⁶ nincs se anyja,²²⁷ apja,²²⁸</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>ki²²⁹ tudja,²³⁰ hogy²³¹ az életet²³²</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>halálra²³³ ráadásul²³⁴ kapja²³⁵</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>s mint²³⁶ talált²³⁷ tárgyat²³⁸ visszaadja²³⁹</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>bármikor²⁴⁰ — ezért²⁴¹ őrizi²⁴² meg,²⁴³</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>ki²⁴⁴ nem istene²⁴⁵ és nem papja²⁴⁶</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>se²⁴⁷ magának,²⁴⁸ sem senkinek.²⁴⁹</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)

²²³obs. ‘adult’

²²⁴‘person’

²²⁵pron. *aki* ‘who’ + attr. poss. *-nek*

²²⁶*szív* ‘heart’ + poss. ‘his’ *-e* + inessive ‘in’ *-ben*

²²⁷*anya* ‘mother’ + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-(j)a*

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

²²⁹pron. rel. arch. ‘he who’, alt. *aki*

²³⁰vb. *tud* ‘to know’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

²³¹conj. so that’

²³²*élet* ‘life’ + acc. *-(e)t*

²³³vb. *hal* ‘to die’ + arch. noun-forming *-ál* → ‘death’ + subl. ‘on/for’ *-ra* → ‘to death (by excess)’

²³⁴*ráadás* ‘addition/extra’ + essive ‘as/with the intention of’ *-ul*

²³⁵vb. *kap* ‘to receive’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pers. def. *-ja*

²³⁶‘like’

²³⁷vb. *talált* ‘to find’ + past part.

²³⁸*tárgy* ‘object/thing/subject’ + acc. *-(a)t*

²³⁹vb. *visszaad* ‘to give back’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-ja*

²⁴⁰*bár* ‘any’ + adv. *mikor* ‘when’ → ‘any time’

²⁴¹conj. therefore’

²⁴²vb. *őriz* ‘to guard’ + 3rd pers. sg. ind. pres. def. *-i*

²⁴³arch. emph.

²⁴⁴‘he who’

²⁴⁵*isten* ‘god’ + 3rd pers. sg. sing. poss. *-e*

²⁴⁶*pap* ‘priest’ + 3rd pers. sg. sing. poss. *-(j)a*

²⁴⁷alt. *sem, sem ..., sem ...* ‘neither ... nor ...’

²⁴⁸pron. refl. 3rd pers. ‘himself’

²⁴⁹pron. *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> ²⁵⁰ <i>a boldogságot</i> ²⁵¹ <i>én,</i> ²⁵²	1
<i>lány</i> ²⁵³ <i>volt,</i> ²⁵⁴ <i>szőke</i> ²⁵⁵ <i>és másfél</i> ²⁵⁶ <i>mázsa.</i> ²⁵⁷	2
<i>Az udvar</i> ²⁵⁸ <i>szigorú</i> ²⁵⁹ <i>gyöpen</i> ²⁶⁰	3
<i>imbolygott</i> ²⁶¹ <i>göndör</i> ²⁶² <i>mosolygása.</i> ²⁶³	4
<i>Ledőlt</i> ²⁶⁴ <i>a puha,</i> ²⁶⁵ <i>langy</i> ²⁶⁶ <i>tócsába,</i> ²⁶⁷	5
<i>hunyorogott,</i> ²⁶⁸ <i>röffen</i> ²⁶⁹ <i>még</i> ²⁷⁰ <i>felém</i> ²⁷¹ —	6
<i>ma</i> ²⁷² <i>is</i> ²⁷³ <i>látom,</i> ²⁷⁴ <i>mily</i> ²⁷⁵ <i>tétovázva</i> ²⁷⁶	7
<i>babrált</i> ²⁷⁷ <i>pihé</i> ²⁷⁸ <i>közt</i> ²⁷⁹ <i>a fény.</i> ²⁸⁰	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)

²⁵⁰vb. *lát* to see' + short base *-t*, 1st pers. sg. past def. *-tam*

²⁵¹adj. *boldog* 'happy' + noun-forming *-ság* (state of being) + acc. *-(o)t*

²⁵²pron. 'I'

²⁵³adj. soft'

²⁵⁴vb. *van* to be' + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past indef.

²⁵⁵adj. *sző* 'blonde' + dim. *-ke*

²⁵⁶*más* 'other/different' + *fél* 'half' → 'one and a half'

²⁵⁷'quintal'

²⁵⁸'yard'

²⁵⁹adj. severe/strict'

²⁶⁰*gyep* lawn/grass' + super. *-én*

²⁶¹vb. *imbolyog* to sway' + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

²⁶²adj. curly'

²⁶³*mosolygása* „smile” + 3rd pers. sg. single poss. *-e*

²⁶⁴vb. *ledőlt* to fall down' + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past indef. *-t*

²⁶⁵soft/squishy'

²⁶⁶arch. poetic *langyos* tepid'

²⁶⁷*tócsa* 'puddle' + illative *-ba* 'into'

²⁶⁸vb. *hunyorog* to squint' + 3rd pers. sg. ind. past. indef. *-rgott*

²⁶⁹*röffen* to grunt once (of a pig)'

²⁷⁰adv. still/moreover'

²⁷¹post. *felé* to/towards' + 1st pers. sg. poss *-m* → pron. towards me'

²⁷²adv. today'

²⁷³doublet of *és* 'and', adv. 'also'

²⁷⁴vb. *lát* to see' + 1st pers. sg. ind. pres. def.

²⁷⁵poetic 'how ...(!)'

²⁷⁶vb. *tétova* to hesitate' (inf. *tétovázik*) → adv. part. doing smth hesitantly'

²⁷⁷vb. *babrált* to fiddle'

²⁷⁸*pihe* down, fluff' + adj.-forming *-i*

²⁷⁹post. 'between/amid' from *között*: *köz* 'interval' + locative *-ött*

²⁸⁰light/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>