

Modernism and Faith in the Poems of Jenő Dsida

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Abstract: Jenő Dsida (1907–1938) was a poet and translator and a central figure of Transylvanian Hungarian literature in the interwar period. This study examines the relationship between modernism and faith in his poetry, with particular attention to the crisis of identity and language. It explores how the disintegration of the self and the human body reflects a fractured worldview shaped by secular modernity. Images of death, corporeal decay, and linguistic failure are interpreted as key manifestations of modern existential doubt and anxiety. The analysis situates Dsida's work within pastoral traditions, late modernist poetics, and religious worldviews, emphasizing poetry's growing skepticism about its own expressive capacities. At the same time, it identifies an alternative poetic mode grounded in childlike faith, playfulness, and an intimate relationship with the divine.

Keywords: *Jenő Dsida; Transylvanian Hungarian literature; existential anxiety; late modernism; faith and doubt; crisis of identity.*

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Hungarian literary criticism, to highlight the defining characteristics of Jenő Dsida's poetry, points to a longing for transcendence, the experience of God, and the expression of the perfection of the created world (Cs. Gyimesi 1999; Rónay 2005; Lisztóczy 2005). Poems such as *Templomablak* [Church Window], *Tíz parancsolat* [Ten Commandments], *Nyáresti áhítat* [Evening Devotion], *Álmodsz...* [You Give Dreams...], *Hálóing nélkül...* [Without a Nightgown...] depict a direct relationship between the individual and God. In these poems, as Cs. Gyimesi Éva maintains: "belonging to God is self-evident for the poet, something that can be spoken of just as naturally and obviously as everyday life" (Cs. Gyimesi 1999, 198).

The portrayal of a trusting relationship between God and man appears more contrived in Dsida's late avant-garde poems, where the speaker presents a profaned image of Christ (*Krisztus* [Christ]; *Az utcseprő* [The Street Sweeper]) or desires to identify with the role of the Savior (*Út a Kálvária* [Road to Calvary]). These texts align with the expressionist aspirations of the early twentieth century, which, alongside a fundamentally existentialist outlook, demonstrate significant social sensitivity and a desire to change the world. However, in Dsida's poetry of the 1920s and



1930s, there is also a stylistic-poetic approach that can be compared to the poems of his contemporaries such as Attila József or Lőrinc Szabó, expressing a clear skepticism regarding the optimistic view of modern Cartesian thinking, and subordinating the individual's experience of transcendence to the tragic, a lack of values, or identity crisis. In this context, alongside the questioning of the public role of poetry, the conventional relationship between the author and the text, poet and language, have also been radically transformed.

Hermit of Pastoral Landscapes

In the early twentieth century, Georges Bataille emerged as a theorist of a movement, first appearing in Baudelaire's poetry and resonant with the interests of psychoanalysis, that sought to break taboos by exploring morbid, repulsive, naked human bodies and corpses as literary themes. Beneath this surface, however, lay a deeper intent: to conceal the inescapability of tragedy, the pervasive sense of anxiety, existential alienation, and the fear of death (Bataille 1997, 35–59). Expanding on this perspective, the intact human body comes to symbolize the systematic order of the world and the idea of individual unity, while its disintegration is understood as reflecting the fragmentation of the universe or the self. Accordingly, the disintegration of the ego is perceived as a reflection of the world's imperfections, with the self-projected as a fragmented entity that ironically masks its own doubts. As Paul de Man observes regarding Baudelaire's poetic gestures—those deliberately hidden behind the mask of the absurd and the grotesque, celebrating the spectacle of decay: "Baudelaire celebrates the most repulsive aspects of death in a language of natural and joyful sensation, or in his deliberate use of necrophilic imagery [...] which allows him to state desire in terms of death, hiding, as it were, the very inevitability of this association behind a pretense of the bizarre and the abnormal. [...] Such poets are at their greatest when, at rare moments, they drop the mask—as in the extraordinary poem [*Le Rêve d'un curieux*] in which Baudelaire perceives that the promise of unity contained in death is itself a theatrical fiction, a game of the imagination which does not end the real torture of the eternal waiting for a reconciliation of opposites that will never occur" (De Man 1988, 10).

A similar stylistic-poetic discourse characterizes Jenő Dsida's lyrical works, particularly in verses that revive the poetic tradition. Primarily, the two cycles from the *Nagycsütörtök* [Maundy Thursday] collection, composed between 1929 and 1932, can be classified into this category: *Pásztori tájak remetéje* [Hermit of Pastoral Landscapes] and *Szerelmes ajándék* [Lover's Gift]. These poems of solitude and escape, "sing the harmony between love and nature in a way that isolates the subject from the real world acting as a narcotic against the dissonant powers of reality" (Láng 1996, 35):

Our cottage is hidden by the forest.
Only the smiling God knows
that the hermit has a wife.
The scent of pine has made us muscular,
strengthened our hearts, expanded our lungs,
made our love infinite.
You are grateful to me for the joys of the night –
I sharpen arrows and spears
while you milk the goat.

The victorious sun rises.
Down on the winding path,
a whip cracks,
and the oxherds are singing.
Hegyen lakók [Highlanders]¹

To repress the anxiety of materialistic thinking, and as a consequence of individual alienation, the author constructs here a new face, a new identity for himself, by turning to the tradition of pastoral poetry. However, the fairy-tale-like, illusory nature of the depicted landscape also signals the loss of the world and of reality, owing to its idyllic character that distances itself from the truth: *Halvány, borús táj* [Pale, gloomy landscape]; *Elalszom, mint az őzek* [I fall asleep like the deer]; *Hajnali séta* [Morning walk]; *Emléksorok* [Lines from memory]; *Szőkevények a fák közt* [Fugitives among the trees].

The contradiction between the lyrical role and reality is also evident in the poem *Alkony* [Twilight] from the *Pásztori tájak remetéje* [Hermit of Pastoral Landscapes] cycle, but this time it candidly points out the illusory nature of the idyll: "On cool marble gates, tangled tendrils / creep silently, thickly, darkly, / and decaying birds fall from them." The poet's mask is far less capable here of concealing the fundamental crisis of identity and values that defines late modernism in the period between the two World Wars. It is no coincidence that alongside the existential solitude revealed behind the metaphysical disguise of the imaginary natural landscape, the poem exposes the artifice of the speaker's self-created role and reveals the painful and tragic consequences of his lie:

In tatters, the damp
sky hangs in fear.
– The silent hermit in a dark-brown robe.
Murmuring deliriously, he wanders, roams
on dilapidated, overgrown paths.

"What is the pastoral convention," asks Paul de Man, "then, if not the eternal separation between the mind that distinguishes, negates, legislates, and the ordinary simplicity of the natural? [...] There is no doubt that the pastoral theme is, in fact, the only poetic theme" (De Man 2005, 239). In Dsida's poems, however, the departure from the pastoral tradition signals a broader distancing from poetry itself as understood in its classical sense. This distancing may be one of the reasons why his lyrical works occupy a unique position in twentieth-century Hungarian poetry.

In these verses, the crisis of identity, together with a growing skepticism regarding the validity of modern thought, leads to the questioning of faith in the expressive power of poetry. The attempt to tame death and dissolve horror through utterance proves to be inherently unsuccessful, as can be experience in several pieces from the *Nagycsütörtök* [Maundy Thursday] collection, such as the poem *Szomorú pásztor* [Sad Shepherd]. As a result of this realization, both the stoic tranquility of accepting reality and the security afforded by the poet's creative, reflective role appear to be irrevocably lost:

¹ All quoted texts and poems for which no translator is indicated are translated by the author.

Oh—the shepherd, seven times sad,
whose thoughts wander scattered,
and whose sheep have strayed away forever.

“In the events of life – as Peter Sloterdijk points out in a similar context –, poetry, fictionality, and lies are always present.” As a result, human consciousness finds itself ontologically in an ironic situation: “one from which the pretending [...] is condemned to see through his own fictions” (Sloterdijk 1989, 80).

The crisis of faith in modern poetry, emerging from the disintegration of the world and the recognition of a fractured cosmic view, also manifests in the disintegration of the human face or body, reflecting the loss of the divine image. One example of disintegration and the impossibility of (re)creating can be found in Dsida’s 1934 poem *Légyott* [Assignment]:

Her hair’s thicket
slowly begins to crawl
and wraps around—
entwines the wall.
Her heart, which has decayed,
releases from her chest,
flies like a wasp
underneath the ceiling.

Above her mouth,
violet flames ignite.
I reached for her hand:
her damp fingers,
with a soft rustle,
fell to the ground one by one,
like withered petals
tend to fall.

The analogy between the wasp and the falling flower petals, as well as the metaphor of the violet flames, emphasizes a movement of distancing, in which the various components of the whole (heart, mouth, fingers) scatter as independent entities in the world—not only in terms of their functions but also in their essential characteristics. This process produces an uncanny metamorphosis from human to “nature,” from a woman’s body into different biological forms (flower, wasp, hair), while at the same time revealing the sexual desire masked within the yearning for death. The transformations that occur through the identification of the human body with the elements of the universe, however, are not real but within the act of utterance. Emblematically, this also means that the external world manifests only as a projection of the experience of identity loss. That the “desire for unity,” as Paul de Man claims, “should have to be stated in terms deriving from the most dreaded of all experiences, that of death, is a supreme paradox which is bound to introduce an almost unbearable tension in a poetry which set out to be all quietness and appeasement” (De Man 1988, 10).

After all, the thought of death necessarily entails the loss of control over one's own body. The consciousness of annihilation also carries within it the deprivation from experiencing and influencing the universe. We can interpret from a similar position the poem *A pántos kapukon túl* [Beyond the Strapped Gates], one of Dsida's last works, as a representation of the experience of the fear of death. The concept of passing is interpreted here through the expression of losing the well-known world:

Later, at the thought of passing,
horror burst out on my skin,
and I thought of the repulsive cemetery beetle,
which burrows into my putrid flesh
and soon lays its eggs inside me.
When I looked at a woman,
her charm frightened me,
for I imagined her bloated, lifeless,
and I sniffed the stench of corpses with dizziness.

The image of the body disintegrating into its elements—like the reflection of the self in the world and the world in the individual—can only be recognized as a representation. The speaker mostly experiences his own body as an emblematic (alter)ego in relation to others. In the quoted poem, this specular relationship connects the phrase "When I looked at a woman" to the individual's realization of the finitude of their own existence, reinforcing the fact that death-consciousness is essentially a result of an external experience, and it can only develop through encounters with the death of another person.

As one of the relevant conclusions of the quoted lines, the recognition emerges that every human face is a kind of mirror-face, which, however, is not merely the result of individual intention or conscious activity, but is determined by the inherent rhetoric of writing, the constraint of language tradition, and its conventions. As Derrida points out: "we speak only one language—and [that] we do not own it [...] and, since it returns to the other, it exists asymmetrically, always for the other, from the other, kept by the other" (Derrida 1998, 40). This experience is indicated in the poem titled *Itt feledtek* [They Left Me Here]:

Oh, how pitiable I must appear,
with a mouth bent to weep,
drawing the evening cloak over myself,
with hanging arms by the rosebush.
But I am alone,
cloud-serpents crawled onto the stars,
no one can see me.
Ghost-fingers wander on the wall of silence,
and heavy scents cling to my shoulders.

The reflection of the speaker's image—his (false) visage of anxiety and pain—emerging from the (linguistic) background produces a multiply refracted movement, through which the lyrical subject proceeds from identification toward the recognition of an authentic identity. Yet, paradoxically, within the text of the poem, this process culminates in the final dissolution of the relationship

between the self and the surrounding world. The "wall of silence" represents the only real experience that becomes the emblematic expression of the speaker's feeling, that he has passed out of his life: "cloud-serpents crawled onto the stars, / no one can see me. [...] heavy scents cling to my shoulders." While the assertion of life can ironically be seen as a metaphor of passing, the mask becomes the real face of death, as the voice of the individual, seeking to validate its own existence can no longer break through the imperviousness of the "silence-wall":

First, I groan quietly,
then I cry louder,
then, in the terrible fear of solitude,
I jump up and shout hoarsely.

Therefore, the final monologue of self-abandonment can only conclude in the annihilation of his voice for the people left outside. However, this poetic gesture also means the departure from the linguistic fiction of the lyrical identity that can be postulated as a speaker (and is intended to determine the directionality of the discourse initiated by the text of the artwork). In the final part of the poem, the speaking persona summarizes his own situation from an infinite spatial and temporal distance and an impersonal position, thus ironically heralding the irreversible occurrence of his own annihilation. "Self-death writing," as Schein Gábor states, "is permeated by the knowledge of transience, and thus writing frees the self from its individual nature" (Schein 1999, 52–53). In this context, the presence of speech and the lyrical subject are nothing more than mere illusions:

My cry receives a stuffy darkness as an answer,
no one responds to me.
From afar, crispy shreds of music
flow tickling into my ear,
and the rolling turmoil of dance beats
down my desperation, confusedly.
There is a wedding somewhere in the thousandth house,
at the end of the big street. They went there,
everyone went there, the whole world.
They left me here.

Paradoxically, as speech reveals the dissolution of the subject within the text, it simultaneously offers the possibility of preservation and continued existence through the act of writing. As language itself becomes a tool of identity loss, it can equally, against the author's intention, repeatedly recreate its author's (pseudo)persona. In its transience, the human exists here merely as text, and thus, as evident in the poem *Sírfelirat* [Epitaph], the essence of creation becomes a metaphorical preserver of the decaying human face in death:

I have done everything I could,
All debts I owed I have paid
I release everyone from their obligations,
forget the decaying earthly likeness of my face.

"All writing claims it can be awakened into spoken language" as Hans-Georg Gadamer states (Gadamer 2006, 395). Indeed, the illusion of the presence of the (textual) subject, materialized in the final line of the poem, not only ironically rejects the necessity of oblivion, but also prompts the evocation of the biographically grounded Dsida-face in the interpreter's mind. Within this context, prosopopoeia suspends that autonomy by which the speaker would be able to separate their own face and voice from the figurality of the rhetorical horizon constituted by language (See: De Man 1984, 67–81).

Naming the Unnameable

Thus, what the poet had previously thought to be his own voice and face is revealed to be mere fiction, while the artwork itself proves to be, in essence, an identification with conventionalized roles. A declaration of this poetic attitude is manifested in the poem *Hulló hajszálak elégiája* [Falling Strands Elegy]: "I walked all paths / I loved and got angry / I lived, cried, I sang / for everyone. I was a poet." The questioning of the concept of originality in these poems demonstrates precisely that the power of lyrical words—poetry itself—is no longer a solution to issues of value or identity. Just as the speaker's voice is lost in the rhetorical proliferation of language, the illusion of the subject's integrity always dissipates when expressed in a literary text. The poet's name, as the trademark of his unity of self, leaves behind the mirage of identity and identification between signifier and signified, word and reference, as soon as something is spoken.

"[W]e believe," as Nietzsche points out, "we know something about the things themselves when we speak of trees, colors, snow, and flowers; and yet we possess nothing but metaphors for things—metaphors which correspond in no way to the original entities...." (Nietzsche 1990, 83). The questioning of the descriptive power of language and the linguistic possibility of depicting reality is characteristic of the lines of Dsida's poem *Túl a formán* [Beyond the Form]:

You call something a house,
—it has four walls—,
but it isn't.
Call it a furnace,
but it isn't.
call it a flower,
but it isn't.
call it woman,
call it God,
but it isn't.

Translated by Joe Váradi (Váradi 2025)

Here, gradation transforms the linguistic definability of the ontological status of being and reality into an incessantly re-created movement that extends from the banal tools of everyday life—that is, from human-made objects whose validity lies solely in their functionality (house, stove)—through the unnameable elements of divine creation (flower, woman), all the way to the final point of a transcendental worldview (God). The failure of rational cognition through language in this rhetorical movement can ironically always be (re)rewritten backwards, for while the extralinguistic nature of fundamental questions of being and existence—the divine principle or the concepts of woman and flower—may seem obvious to anyone, the unnameability of objects of everyday reality (house, furnace) calls into question the very foundations of Cartesian thought. As Friedrich

Nietzsche states: "mankind set up in language a separate world beside the other world, a place it took to be so firmly set that, standing upon it, it could lift the rest of the world off its hinges and make itself master of it. To the extent that man has for long ages believed in the concepts and names of things as in *aeternae veritates* he has appropriated to himself that pride by which he raised himself above the animal: he really thought that in language he possessed knowledge of the world" (Nietzsche 2005, 16). The Dsida poem illustrates the deceptive nature of the presumed immediacy between things and language, as well as the futility of the poetic attempt to eliminate this distance:

Beyond all adjectives and objectives,
lies the soul of the thing
(Váradi 2025)

"The name dissolves before what it names," observes Gergely Angyalosi (Angyalosi 1996, 162). In the conclusion of Dsida's poem, the prosopopeia, or anthropomorphization of the universe, points primarily to the intimate relationship of the individual to the transcendent, the peace of being greeted as a familiar or the secure unity of the individual and their world (Cs. Gyimesi 1999, 149–155); and yet, this solution suspends the autonomy in which the speaker could separate their own face and voice from the rhetorical horizon presented by language:

Their uncertain words reach toward me,
their invisible arms embrace me
and these veiled mysteries rock me,
as my mother did in her lap.
(Váradi 2025)

By giving his own body and face to things, the individual also transforms (ironically) into a rhetorical figure constantly reoccurring within the self-referential horizon of language. As observed in the context of a similar nature by the lyrical subject of Dsida's sonnet titled *Kalendárium szonettekben, Augusztus* [Calendar Sonnets, August] dated from 1930: "See, now at noon, like the weak, dead salt / spreading in the waters of swaying seas, / I also dissolve in this poem's very essence / and with concern I say: perhaps this is the last."

Speech, which represents the means of cognition and describing metaphysical reality for humans in the twentieth century, can no longer appear as a reliable path to grasp existential questions for the individual. In (modern) poetry, existence becomes inexpressible through words, as the paradigm that proclaims the existential primacy of divine revelation has lost its validity in modernism compared to the primacy of matter. Instead of the Christian statement that: "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, 423), modern materialistic thinking regards the linguistic expressibility of the world as the only real dimension of existence, placing the description of human and nature at the focus of all theoretical inquiries. Unlike writing and information, which can be seen as metaphors of life, in this manner, matter itself, or death, becomes the primary ontological characteristic of existence. In this relation, the only attribute of humans is transience, and time becomes the foremost experience which gains meaning in the decay of the body. Jenő Dsida's poem titled *Már majdnem elfeledted* [You've Almost Forgotten] from 1938 ironically reflects on this question: "you won't be able to avoid it, / you can't escape from it, / even though you almost forgot: / —No one can die in your place."

Fear of Darkness

In modernism, the shift in perspective that attempted to replace the ethical and aesthetic norms and objectives of the religious worldview with a "progressive," scientifically oriented mindset grounded in rational thinking became increasingly problematic after the First World War, as faith in the possibility of societal improvement diminished and the ideological programs of communism and fascism came to dominate political life. By the 1930s, the modern vision of a future detached from the past had become increasingly evident, and the divine principle appeared ever more elusive, despite humanity's persistent need for transcendence. Let us recall Jenő Dsida's poem titled *Kóborló délután kedves kutyámmal* [Roaming Afternoon with My Beloved Dog]:

It's a beautiful thing to leap over life, to circle around,
to fly through the young fields, on the path of instincts,
so freely, irresponsibly. Here's the ditch, forward,
down into the deep, up the hill and, oh my, up the mountain,
and beyond the mountain, in the air filled with diamond dust,
there, let's go, our figures enlarged on the dark horizon,
our faces shining, a beautiful dog's forehead surrounded by a glowing flame,
pouring down the heavenly blue light, laughter of flutes, deep horns, merry
sounds of golden violins, we glide through the meadow,
amidst the blinding double row of
angelic guards, only forward...
soaring, bursting, exhausted, ignited, rushing forward,
until we reach the Marble Throne and declare: "We have returned before you, eternal
divine Majesty.
We have crossed over life. And we have caught the cat!"

The tragedy of transience, the love of being, and the duality of the "death-face" behind the "cheerful mask" are all depicted here, as the line "It's a beautiful thing to leap over life" can be interpreted both as a figure of speech that softens death in a eulogistic hope for an afterlife and as the ironic pathos of modern hopelessness before the finitude of life. What may be resolved within religious conviction becomes tragic from the perspective of modern thinking, and this duality persists for the people of the twentieth century, as long as doubt—which is a fundamental determinant of the Cartesian worldview—and fear (especially regarding the inevitable occurrence of rationally incomprehensible transience) continue to recreate themselves even in the shadow of faith.

The modern concept of the individual, therefore, inherently presumes solitude, loneliness, and the fear of death. In our consciousness, says Northrop Frye, we perceive "the tragic aspect of time in which every moment brings us toward death, and in which we know only what has been, and never what is or is going to be" (Frye 2000, 209). This is why we can find in Jenő Dsida's lyrical work titled *A sötétség verse* [The Poem of Darkness] from 1938 the same ironic-allegorical discourse, in which the speaker evokes the ruthless tragedy of transience, destined for every human being:

But tell me: have you ever let
a snow-white sugar-cube soak up
dark liquid, dipped in the bitter night
of coffee in its cup?
Or watched how the dense liquid,
so surely, so insidiously,
will seep up through the white cube's
pure, crystalline body?
Just so the night seeps into you,
slowly rising, the smells
of night and of the grave all through
your veins, fibres, cells,
until one dank brown evening,
so steeped in it, you melt and sink—
to sweeten, for some unknown god,
his dark and bitter drink.

Translated by George Gömöri and Clive Wilmer (Gömöri 2013)

"The reading of the poem is imbued with a fascination," notes Gyöngyi Orbán, "and, just as »slowly rising«, it is subtly permeated by the horror of death" (Orbán 1999, 123). And essentially, the same aesthetic-poetic attitude characterizes Dsida's earlier pieces of poetry—for example, the well-known lines of *Nagycsütörtök* [Maundy Thursday]—where doubt, uncertainty, lack of (self)confidence, and the failure to establish connections with fellow human beings become significant:

I looked around:
it would have been so good to speak a little
to close friends, a few words to men you trust,
but there was only damp night, dark and chill,
Peter was now asleep, and James and John
asleep, and Matthew, all of them asleep...
Thick beads of cold sweat broke out on my brow
and then streamed down over my crumpled face.

Translated by George Gömöri (Gömöri 2013)

The allusions referring to the Gospel text here demonstrate the duality of expectation and hopelessness, just like in the text of *Olvadó jégvirág* [Melting Ice Flower]: "Awakening, tangy wine-colored lions / settle on the great rock tomb / and Lazarus lies silently, coldly / as a three-day-old corpse."

The crisis of identity and values in the poetry between the two world wars can be understood not only in terms of the disintegration of the individual, but also as an expression of modern thought, fundamentally derived from Enlightenment traditions. In this worldview, all forms of transcendent-based knowledge are denied at the metaphysical level, yet its axioms preserve the structures of faith, just like in pre-Enlightenment thinking. After all, in the duality of the empirical inscrutability of human existence and the Cartesian pursuit, the birth of the modern "self" could only come about as a convoluted interplay of the knowable and the unknown. The language of

science, the metaphysical language devoid of tropes, directs the dimensions of knowledge into a reflective rhetorical movement in which—due to the subject's connection to temporality, objective analysis and (self)understanding are unveiled as illusions.

However, the relationship with God is essentially a hermeneutic relationship, which means that we can only fulfil it by recognizing the distance between ourselves and God, realizing that which is different from us, and we can "present it to oneself as it is" (See: Gadamer 2006, 440–441). Such a relationship does not arise in the direction of (subject-object-based) scientific knowledge, but it presupposes attentiveness, humility, love, and openness of inquiry. Modern individuals place themselves at the center of every discourse, such that they can speak only from a standpoint that experiences "their fundamental relation to beings as the objectification—understood as mastery—of what is encountered" (Heidegger 1998, 187–188). The individuum, interpreted in his own subjectivity as an "ego," thus becomes incapable of establishing and maintaining a genuine dialogue, and his attempts are incapable of passing beyond self-directedness and a behavior that defines the "other" as an object. Only in a few instances can Jenő Dsida's poetry give up this limited perspective.

Playfulness and Faith

Alongside poems that articulate a fear of death, some of Dsida's verses disclose another dimension of his poetic universe: works shaped by childlike faith and untroubled serenity, in a way unique in modern Hungarian poetry. The speakers of these poems conceive of human existence as a pilgrimage, thereby articulating a poetic perspective that—following Thomas Molnár's terminology—embraces the path of the *homo viator* rather than that of the *comprehensor* (Molnár 2021, 97–104). For example, *Álmodsz...* [You Give Sleep...] embodies the subtle and discreet gestures of paternal providence and grace. *Nyáresti áhítat* [Summer Eve's Devotion], in turn, articulates a transcendent message that may be discerned in the voices of nature and the created world—in thunder, in the quivering speech of oaks, and in the evening chirring of crickets: "At times, the Lord may thunder, / other times He murmurs / with moonlit oak trees trembling / whispering wisened words [...] Now, as I sit serenely, / calm, untroubled and still / amid pure quietude / on this spotless / doorsill: // He chose as his messenger / a tiny cricket's chirr. / He speaks to us. Just listen! / I discern every word." *Translated by Joe Váradí* (Váradí 2025).

These lyrical texts suggest that the transcendent remains readily accessible even within the profane sphere, insofar as the threshold at which the sacred becomes manifest may be crossed at any moment. *Templomablak* [Church Window] conveys this initiatory courage, the unforgettable experience of entering sacred space, and the irrepressible joy of encountering sacrality. As Éva Cs. Gyimesi observes in her outstanding analysis: "For Dsida, there is no boundary between the finite and the infinite, the worldly and the transcendent, the profane and the sacred. Or if there is such a boundary, it is easily traversed. [...] One who believes sees differently from one who does not; quite simply, they see the world from a different perspective. [...] For one who experiences God's presence so directly, the entire universe becomes a temple" (Cs. Gyimesi 1999, 197).

Jenő Dsida's poetry offers a means of overcoming the anxiety-ridden existential condition of modern humanity through trust in God and playfulness, through the acceptance of life's transience, and through faith in the hope of resurrection. From this emerges a distinctive mode of relating to the world, manifested above all in the recognition of the beauty of creation, in the

unconditional joy of childlike wonder, and in gestures of gratitude and humility: "Gather sweet fragrance into your nostrils, / peace and smiling into your heart, / light into your eyes, so that even on the final / day you may know how to rejoice continually, / and thus say only this, and nothing else: / thank you for having nourished me, / flesh, apple, wheat, lentil, pea!"
(*Tíz parancsolat* [Ten Commandments])

Thus, in Jenő Dsida's poetry, the relationship with God assumes a distinctive character—familial, even intimate in its closeness—where mystical experience and lived faith become integral parts of everyday life (*Hajnali séta* [Morning Walk]; *Jámbor beszéd magamról* [Pious Speech about Myself]; *Hálóing nélkül...* [Without a Nightgown...]). Themes drawn from biblical texts and Christian tradition are animated precisely through a kind of naïve, charming immediacy, simplicity, and medieval devotion that emanate from these works:

To live forever, to live—
may this be given to me,
to sit at Your feet
upon rose petals,
to speak with Christ and with You
high in the pure heavens,
to live quietly, to sit
upon rose petals.
[...]
O virgin bush of holy love,
to sleep in one chamber
with You, and upon Your bed
to scatter roses!

Sainte Thérèse de Lisieux

"It seems," the critic notes, "as though the poem were the product of mystical contemplation – a meditation between two prayers, a poetic spiritual exercise. [...] It is no coincidence that this intimate relationship with God often finds expression in the tone and style of the »holy love« of medieval hymns. [...] The intimate moment of the *amor sanctus* becomes vividly alive through a playful impropriety, as the image is tinged with just a touch more eroticism than usual. It is improper in the way a child is improper—fully aware that the love directed toward them can accommodate a hint of audacity" (Cs. Gyimesi 1999, 196; 198).

In conclusion, Jenő Dsida's work reflects the profound spiritual and intellectual tensions of late modernity, where faith, doubt, and existential anxiety coexist. While many of his poems reveal the fragmentation of identity, the limits of language, and the fear of death, others preserve a childlike openness to transcendence and divine presence. In this duality, Dsida's lyricism articulates both the crisis of modern consciousness and the enduring human longing for faith and spiritual meaning. His poetry reveals how the modern individual confronts the loss of metaphysical certainty while continuing to seek a meaningful relationship with the transcendent.

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