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# Systematic Evil and the Freedom of the Individual

Paradigms of Liberty in Kertész Imre and Ottlik Géza

*“Great personalities create their masterpieces  
after the passing away of the periods of passion,  
as the soil is the most fertile  
after the eruption of the volcano.”*  
(CHAMFORT)

The XX<sup>th</sup> century brought forward two totalitarian systems that led human culture into unexpected shame, self-denial and deadlock. While encountering the many faces of evil in Nazism and Bolshevism, the subjects of the state had to accommodate the new circumstances in order to survive. Accommodation did not always help because particular layers of society faced total brainwashing, permanent humiliation, or certain death.

The Nazi-type and the Soviet-type of totalitarianism had many common features and distinctive elements. We can consider the two phenomena as two faces of systematic evil. *Systematic evil* is an organism with diffused responsibility in which the freedom of private life is catastrophic and everyone is a link in the chain. The working methods of these two grand narratives, or rather ideologies, objectify the person. The main hotbed of evil is the bureaucratic system, where responsibility dissolves in the floating waves of rules. In such an environment the evil masks itself, gains ground and takes over.

The territories which had the chance to look into the *Gorgo-face*<sup>1</sup> of both of the systematic evils lie between Germany and Russia. This is the area known as Central Europe (from the Baltic to the Adriatic Sea). These are the countries which experienced occupation and oppression by both of these systems.

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<sup>1</sup> In Greek mythology, the three Gorgos (one of them being Medusa) are female monsters with snakes on their heads instead of hair. Anyone who looked at their face turned to stone.



With this text we aim to concentrate on two Magyar (Hungarian) authors whose life overarches the century, thus enabling them to reflect upon the two systematic evils. OTTLIK Géza (1912-1990) studied in the Hungarian military schools between the wars. It was in these schools that future leadership of the Nazi-allied Magyar army was educated. OTTLIK's decisive experience was four years in a military school. He describes this experience as a powerful allegory in his compendium novel, *Iskola a határon* (*School at the Frontier*)<sup>2</sup>.

On the other hand, KERTÉSZ Imre (1929-) is a Magyar writer who was a prisoner in Nazi concentration camps. As a person of Jewish origin, by chance or by Providence, he happened to survive the Holocaust. In 2002 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature for his novel on the Shoa, *Sorstalanság* (*Fateless*)<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> OTTLIK Géza, *Iskola a határon*. Budapest, 1958. In English: OTTLIK Géza, *School at the Frontier*. New York, 1966.

# I. FRAGILE EXPERIENCE

## Three Steps of Destiny

The experience the two writers went through was one of *organised oppression* and of (almost) total elimination of personal freedom. For OTTLIK the starting basis was military school. For KERTÉSZ it was Auschwitz. These two realities can only be compared from the point of view of their impact on two souls – two souls which were inclined to express themselves through literature. We do not look at the military school and Auschwitz as historical realities here and now, but as creative symbols of systematic evil.

An even more important point, however, is the fact that the two writers were “*survivors*” of their experience, in a physical, intellectual and spiritual sense. Survivors are strange creatures; their physical and moral integrity was at stake (they could see the face of Gorgo), but instead of being petrified, dissolved and disappearing as entities, they “came back” and tried to enliven their treasures. For a writer the most important treasury is the experience, the thematic deepness. From a literary point of view, these artists were blessed by a compelling topic.

Most importantly, OTTLIK and KERTÉSZ found themselves in an unique position. Since their motherland, Hungary happened to lie in the centre of Europe, they could experience how *another totalitarian system* overtook the first one. In 1945, their part of the world was liberated from National Socialism, and at the same time occupied by International Socialism. The Soviet type of systematic evil proved to be more “vital” than its Nazi counterpart, and lasted for several decades, retaining its dirty influence even up until now in this tiny part of the world.

Writers and artists happened to have several destinies under the “*existing socialism*”. Some of them were tortured and killed, others were forced to emigrate, and many of them were brainwashed and made obedient servants of the mind control. There were some, however, who chose the “inner emigration”<sup>4</sup>, or to become a “single-person minority” by accepting the ban on the publishing of independent thought and writing only *to their drawers*. There might have been more conspicuous examples of these silent and free personalities in Central (and Eastern) Europe than OTTLIK Géza or KERTÉSZ Imre, but the way of interpreting their first-hand experiences with the two systematic evils makes them peculiar.

Their way of coping with the unbearable “*traditions*” which they had to carry was to try to understand their experiences with the first systematic evil through the lens of their experiences with the other systematic evil. By living in such a system for decades, they managed to better understand the other systematic evil they were given to survive. Also by evaluating the first systematic evil, they could

<sup>3</sup> KERTÉSZ Imre, *Sors talanság*. Budapest, 1975. In English: KERTÉSZ Imre, *Fateless* (tr. Christopher C. WILSON – Katharina M. WILSON). Evanston, 1992. In French: KERTÉSZ Imre, *Etre sans destin* (tr. Natalia ZAREMBA-HUZSVAI – Charles ZAREMBA). Arles, 1997. In German: KERTÉSZ Imre, *Roman eines Schicksallosen* (tr. VIRÁGH Krisztina). Berlin, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Inner emigration in a sense of staying in the country, but also in a sense of emigrating to the inner self: G. MÉRVA Mária – Kovács Éva (szerk.), OTTLIK Géza *emlékkiállítás a gödöllői városi múzeumban* (Exhibition in the Memory of OTTLIK Géza in Gödöllő). Gödöllő, 1994.

cope with the unbearable realities in the second one, and include their findings on both in their literary oeuvre. The utilising of this unique position enabled them to world-class literature, to help humanity to come to terms with the great organised perversions of the XX<sup>th</sup> century.

### The Barbaric Arbitrariness of History

The peculiar aura surrounding the literary life in Central Europe in the second half of the century perverted the publication and reception history of books. The first version of *School at the Frontier*<sup>5</sup> was ready in 1948, and OTTLIK even gave it to the press house for printing, after being accepted by the censors of the state. This year was, however, not an ordinary year in Europe; it was the year of the Communist take-over in the occupied Central European countries. Parties were dissolved except the Communist Party, opposition leaders were arrested, private schools banned, church institutions dissolved, the civil society terrorised. OTTLIK Géza decided to withdraw his novel from the press house and not to publish it for an unspecified period of time<sup>6</sup>. He was afraid that his novel could be easily misinterpreted as just another pamphlet against the previous regime.

This was not an easy decision to make, especially for a writer who was in his mid-thirties and who had never published a novel. The reason for the withdrawal was partly political, and partly artistic. He felt that the novel was not ready, being too short and too shallow – and more like a short story than a real novel. But the main point was that he sensed that provided he and his integrity survives, his new and extreme experiences could and would enrich his worldview, his novels, and would help to understand his first totalitarian experience. He decided to include Bolshevism in his worldview on systematic evil.

KERTÉSZ Imre was on the same path. After coming back from three concentration camps, he felt that he lost his own fate, his own destiny. He was forced to live a life which was not his own, and no one else's either. In 1948, he was nineteen and it was clear that he did not have a place as a writer under the Communist dictatorship. The interpretation of the Shoa was simplified by the regime, and his deepening understanding on the nature of systematic evil was similarly dangerous for the Bolshevik system. The state of Israel was established that year and KERTÉSZ could have emigrated there or elsewhere, as hundreds of thousands of his compatriots. He decided to stay, in spite of all this, or rather exactly because of this. It was clear that if he survived the regime with an integer soul, this experience would enable him to come to terms with his other built-in treasury, the memory of the Shoa.

There was another peculiar time when writers and other citizens were again considering emigration. It was after the failure of the 1956 revolution and fight for liberty in Hungary. The nation received an unexpected and tragically short two weeks – when the world was able to have an insight of the real face of the monster – with enlightened and grateful spirit, as the two authors tell us in *Buda*<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Published fifty years later: OTTLIK Géza, *Továbbélők* (Survivors). Pécs, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> OTTLIK himself tells the story of the withdrawal in the strange compilation of his prose: OTTLIK Géza, *Próza* (Prose). Budapest, 1980.

and *Az angol lobogó*<sup>8</sup> (The English Banner), respectively. We do not find OTTLIK or KERTÉSZ among the again hundreds of thousands of emigrants. On the contrary, the novel of OTTLIK was ripe for publication.

### When I'm 46

It was in 1958, when OTTLIK Géza finally published his novel, *School at the Frontier*, at the age of 46. The framework of the novel is a military school in mid-war Hungary, where the little cadets attempt to find their personality, to build community and to understand the world. The author speaks about the two par excellence systematic evils of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, Nazism and Communism, in the very same novel. That is one of the reasons why his novel was interpreted differently as time went on, and various interpreting communities tried to influence the hermeneutical key of the reading of the novel.

The two most prevailing of these ways of reading during the so-called Socialist times were the official interpretation and the alternative reading. According to the official version, the novel discloses the evils of the pre-Nazi Hungary by introducing us to the reality of a military school where the future leaders of the Second World War Magyar army were trained. The regime tried to interpret it as a usual antifascist novel, which, unfortunately, finds many positive elements in the life before the war, and therefore it has to be considered decadent and something which does not contribute to the building of international socialism in Hungary, as the official interpretation explained. For more than fifteen years no serious interpretation was published about the novel, and it seemed it was destined to disappear among the “tolerated” books during Communism.

The discovery of the novel, at least among the educated people in opposition to the regime, happened at the same time as the publication of the first novel of KERTÉSZ Imre, *Fateless*. KERTÉSZ was also 46 when appearing in literary life, in 1975. The censors refused to publish his novel for the first time, a year earlier, saying that it is a usual novel about the Holocaust, but it is too cynical and desperate to uphold any values. A close reading of the novel, of course, discloses to us that the opposite is true. As the Nobel Committee put it three decades later: it “upholds the fragile experience of the individual against the barbaric arbitrariness of history.”<sup>9</sup>

The novel was published in only about a thousand copies, and most of these were never sold. Some years later KERTÉSZ found many of them in a warehouse. The regime did not dare to ban it, but was afraid of distributing it. Up until the changing of the system in 1989-1990, *Sorstalanság* was read only by some thousands of people. The literary life was silent, and this novel, too, was destined to disappear during the systematic evil. KERTÉSZ was existentially disappointed, and wrote *Kudarc* (Fiasco)<sup>10</sup>, the second part of his trilogy<sup>11</sup>, about a writer who publishes his struggle with the Holocaust in a novel, but has to fail sociologically and artistically in Hungary.

OTTLIK died in 1990, witnessing the sudden and miraculous collapse of the sys-

<sup>7</sup> OTTLIK Géza, *Buda*. Budapest, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> KERTÉSZ Imre, *Az angol lobogó*. Budapest, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> The presentation speech, biography and bibliography of KERTÉSZ are on the Nobel Prize website: <http://www.nobel.se/literature/laureates/2002>.

tematic evil he spent most of his life in. The continuation of his first novel was published posthumously, under the title *Buda* (1993). KERTÉSZ Imre received the Nobel Prize for literature in 2002, as the first Magyar writer ever. Their novels are translated into more than fifteen languages.

### Inverting Perversion

Both of these artists tried to understand and elaborate their freedom through and parallel with their literary works. It is not only political freedom which they – together with tens of millions of their Central (and Eastern) European fate mates – were deprived of, rather it was their perception of the world which the systematic evil tried to deform and pervert.

This deformation is well depicted in the negative utopias of the XXth century, (“the lubricants of political theory”<sup>12</sup>), especially in George Orwell’s 1984 (written in 1948), or – even earlier – in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, and in the first negative utopia, in Mikhail Zamyatin’s *We*. The *School* and the *Fateless* are similar to these negative utopias in the sense that they try to build up organic parables which can live and function as defined worldviews and use a metaphoric reality to criticise the existing political systems.

They are decisively different from this literary genre, however, in the fact that they are tenderly attached in many ways to the reality which the authors themselves experienced “on their skins”. The novels were born in reality, and they try to transform the deformation, to redeem the damned. *Inverting perversion* means to turn the dissolved value system upside down again. One has to have a great inner strength, with freedom as its source, to resist systematic evil. We are challenged to try to learn from their evaluated experience, when we also seek ways and spaces for individual freedom by resisting the powers of systematic evil.

The novels can be interpreted at the political level, and surely there will be other ways to understand them as systems and regimes change. But it may be more interesting to have a deeper look at the novels as existential or even eschatological parables, or paradigms of individual freedom. After getting acquainted with the life of the authors as narratives on liberty<sup>13</sup>, let us immerse in the world of the two novels: how they function as lighthouses of freedom in the darkness of organised oppression.

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<sup>10</sup> KERTÉSZ Imre, *A kudarc*. Budapest, 1988. In French: KERTÉSZ Imre, *Le refus* (tr. Natalia ZAREMBA-HUZZVAI – Charles ZAREMBA). Arles, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> The third part of the trilogy: KERTÉSZ Imre, *Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért*. Budapest, 1990. In English: KERTÉSZ Imre, *Kaddish for a Child not Born* (tr. Christopher C. WILSON – Katharina M. WILSON). Evanston, 1997. In French: KERTÉSZ Imre, *Kaddish pour l'enfant qui ne naîtra pas* (tr. Natalia ZAREMBA-HUZZVAI – Charles ZAREMBA). Arles, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> TERRILL ROSS, *Revolutionare or Utopians?* Student World 1969/3-4. 344.

<sup>13</sup> “The educator transforms his life into a work of art”, says KERTÉSZ himself about OTTLIK, on the occasion of OTTLIK’s death: KERTÉSZ Imre, *A nevelő (Ottlik Géza halálára)* (The Educator. On the Death of OTTLIK Géza). Magyar Napló 1990. 44. sz. 5.

## II. FERTILE SOUL

### Personality in the Matrix of Structures

We are interested now in human behaviour seeking autonomy and freedom under the systematic evil – freedom in a sense that it is “setting forth the whole human essence”<sup>14</sup>. We saw how OTTLIK and KERTÉSZ reacted in their lives. They had the honour to try out how their actors in their novels could react to similar circumstances. OTTLIK’s novel, which was a school for freedom, individuality and genuine community for many, seems to be wider and to have more dimensions, while the novel of KERTÉSZ digs deeper into a topic which offers more lethal insights, more perspectives vis-à-vis death. They themselves and their main characters try to reserve and preserve the chance for a distinct dimension of freedom where they would act as free beings.

One of the most interesting phenomena in Central European thought embodied in the novels is the fundamental hopelessness of *structural* change. The velvet revolutions of the region also prove that crucial changes seem to happen for the great surprise of most of the concerned, and they do not feel involved in the process. Even the 1956 revolution in Hungary was a sudden event, but people reacted quickly and got deeply involved.

Thus, the two novels do not concentrate on a revolt against the oppression; on the contrary, they seem to completely abandon. What was given for the subjects of the state is the improbable possibility to become sovereign, autonomous individuals, by intentionally working on their personal freedom<sup>15</sup>. The methods of freedom in *Fateless* and the *School* are exclusively those of a *personal* character.

### No Escape

We stated that two writers decided to *stay* in the country, and to give up the idea of emigration. In the novels themselves, *escape* seems to be only a temptation but not a real possibility. For Köves (the main character in *Sorstalanság*) the possibility of escape is only mentioned in connection with the smoke of the chimneys. In the novel of OTTLIK, there are three attempts to escape from the School. One of the pupils (Apagyí) denies obeying the commands: his fellow cadets beat him almost to death and his parents take him out of the School. Another pupil (Ötvevényi) revolts by betraying the evil deeds of the collaborators among the pupils: he is immediately kicked out by the teachers.

The most important attempt, however, is the one of Medve, the main actor of the novel. He gets fed up with the system, and during a dark night he escapes from the institution. His journey is depicted in a spiritual way, as the dark night of the soul. Even though he even leaves the country (since the school is at the frontier of Hungary), after a while he returns and goes back to the system, accepting the punishment as well.

<sup>14</sup> TUKA Béla (Vojtech), *A szabadság. Politikai tanulmány*. Budapest, 1910. 14.

<sup>15</sup> In the first book published about Kertész, many essays deal with the building of the self in an extremely threatened situation: SCHEIBNER Tamás – SZÜCS Zoltán Gábor, *Az értelmezés szükségessége. Tanulmányok Kertész Imréről* (The Necessity of Interpretation. Essays on KERTÉSZ Imre). Budapest, 2002.

He has two reasons for that: it seems that there is no world outside the School, and it seems that one cannot escape from reality where one is placed by fate (even though in a fateless way). To build up personal freedom, one has to face the reality of systematic evil; one has to make a conscious decision that there is no hope outside the limits of one's existence. Just before freedom started, it had already ended; this is the dilemma of the escaping and returning Medve. One has to stay and wait whether there is an immanence to have pity on her or him.

### Impuissant Interdependence

After the temptation of escaping, and after the return to reality one gives up the hope for either revolution or for switching off the world. Medve and Köves are at the point of accepting the absurdity of existence, and giving up the idea that we are the constructors of our own "carrier". *Fatelessness* means that they are denied a say in their own life history (not only in their communitarian history). In the terminology of OTTLIK it is *impuissant interdependence* (which is similar to 'inertial confinement' in physics – OTTLIK studied natural sciences)<sup>16</sup>.

Even though the main characters are children in both of the novels, they still appear as personalities without a specific age. The system and expectation of an environment depicted in the novels produces types of people, who develop their personality not towards the outside world but towards the inside one. Their interdependence finds its *origo* in the deeper layers of one's inner world, where there is not much room for change.

### Tiny Places of Freedom

The fact that the main characters do not live their own fate should not mean that they are not responsible for their *existential presence* (*Dasein*) where they are. There is no escape, there is no communitarian solution to overcome the system, but there should be seemingly unimportant *tiny places of freedom* to be searched for and to be found. The distribution of food is such an event in both of the novels, where one finds moments of silence and reflection.

More prominent examples are, however, the moments of contemplation over the phenomena of nature: the sunset and the sky in KERTÉSZ, and the snow (and snowing) in OTTLIK. When Köves is about to die in *Fateless*, he is lost in the admiration of the infinite sky. The snow is of elementary importance in the *School*; it covers and brightens at the same time<sup>17</sup>.

Snow proves to be of structural importance also in the novel, being the title of one of the three parts. The three titles are based on Romans 9,16: "It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy."<sup>18</sup> The first part (*Non est volentis*) refers to the (free or servant) will, while the third part is con-

<sup>16</sup> The interdependence and inner independence is the peak of the analysis of the first monograph written about OTTLIK: SZEGEDY-MASZÁK Mihály, *Ottlik Géza*. Pozsony, 1994.

<sup>17</sup> An excellent essay on the role of snow in the *School*: BALASSA Péter, *Ottlik és a hó* (Ottlik and the Snow). Jelenkor 1982/5. 407-412.

nected to running or escaping (*Nor of him who runs*). The middle part, however, does not mention the merciful God in the title, but *Mud and Snow*. Snow becomes one of the distinguishing marks of God, the symbol of pity, forgiveness and mercy.

### Glimpses of Private Mythology

A further step in development is when the actors themselves start to invent and create symbols and *metaphors* for themselves, instead of just discovering the already given symbols of nature. In this respect the two novels differ significantly. The first half of OTTLIK's novel and the *Fateless* tell about a journey in solitude: the main actors do not have anyone to share their thoughts with, to build community in such a way. But while even the last sentence of KERTÉSZ expresses the doubt whether there is anyone to share the experience with, the second half of the *School* is about building community.

Therefore, the metaphors of Köves are ones of loneliness, they are glimpses of a private mythology; the metaphors of Medve and Bébé (the other important character in the *School*) are points of crystallisation for a community under formation. There is an explanation, however, for this seeming contradiction: KERTÉSZ speaks about an event with a plethora of available metaphors (rail tracks, chimneys, crematoria etc.) in our historical memory, while OTTLIK has to construct these points of comparison.

In that way, one of them is enlarging and universalising the experience of a small group to the grade of general significance; the other is personalising a mass-event which we tend to deal with at the level of numbers and impersonal horror. That is why we found many metaphor-building efforts in the group of the small cadets fighting for common identity: such as athletics, bear dance, or the common cigarette even in the last sentence of the novel.

### Art Maintaining and Upholding

Communitarian symbols lead us to the role of *art and literature* in developing freedom. Understandably enough, in KERTÉSZ this side is more latent, being present rather in the form of culture; just some appearing quotations mark it, some Jewish or Magyar cultural signs, plus some intertextual allusions. For the pupils of the *School*, however, literature proves to be the most powerful maintaining and upholding force. The novel contains a variety of reception histories of books, poems, short stories and tales.

Medve and Bébé do not only read and perceive, but also create their own art: play music, cultivate bear dance, compose a drama and – furthermore – they write booklets and books together. They often choose literature and composition instead of life and action. Through perpetual reflection they try to record chaos. They do have their own will, and with the help of creation they can be free beings, similar to their Creator.

They try to do what the two authors tried throughout their lives: to depict chaos in extremely well-edified constructions. Following the Magyar traditions, they

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<sup>18</sup> This translation is based on the *Authorized King James Version*.

used literature instead of metaphysics. Even though both of the authors emphasise the inability and impossibility to share such experience (OTTLIK in the beginning of his novel, KERTÉSZ rather at the end)<sup>19</sup>, they obviously seem to think the opposite, or both at the same time.

Otherwise, they would not be writing one novel for decades until it is born as an organic text, starting to live and speaking for itself. OTTLIK and KERTÉSZ became in such a way the dignitaries of remembrance. Both in during-freedom and after-freedom, artistic creation takes the role of co-creation together with the Predestinator, and it provides a safe space for the individual to dwell in liberty.

### Dispersed Theophanic Light

The constant *existence vis-à-vis death* (which is present in OTTLIK as well in the form of threat), the permanent dance on the edge, on the border, reveals a *latent transcendence*, a dispersed theophanic light in the universe of the novels. This provides perspective for the characters, for the authors and for the readers to have mercy on the tyrants, the victimised oppressors. To have mercy on the tyrants and principalities, but not at all on powers and systematic evil.

Finding their personal and individual freedom by staying in their fateless situation and history, by existentially being present in tiny places of freedom, by enabling and applying metaphors of art and literature, the novels reinterpret the traditions of obedience and collaboration in the school of the border-experience.

The choice was not given to either OTTLIK or KERTÉSZ or to their literary characters to fight for political freedom in their realm either by armed force or by political means; and they were not that kind of persons either. The “inner emigration” was their choice within the systems of evil, with an ironic and sarcastic stance that civil disobedience (or rather civil obedience to their conscience) is possible and desirable.

### From Blasphemy to Transcendence

If we have a closer look at the *style* of the novels, we can discover that everything is portioned and selected in order to help everything to breathe – afterwards.<sup>20</sup> The style – which is the person itself, as we know – becomes worldview *per se* in both of these novels. Concerning their style, their main armoury consists of irony, sarcasm, subtle mockery, of grotesque, absurd and grim humour, alternating with miraculous theophanies and lyrical moments of happiness, the smooth dizziness of freedom<sup>21</sup>.

This double armoury is a treasure which was developed in Central Europe as a mentality, answering the oppressing challenges of the two systematic evils.

<sup>19</sup> The Memorial Volume published in the memory of Ottlík gathers many essays concentrating on telling the untellable: KELECSÉNYI László (szerk.), Ottlík (Emlékkönyv) (Memorial Volume). Budapest, 1996.

<sup>20</sup> Breathing is a keyword in the art of Ottlík, as one of the anthologies of essays on him shows: Fűzfa Balázs (szerk.), Mélylégzés. Adalékok Ottlík Géza Iskola a határon című műve elemzéséhez (Deep Breathing. Supplements to the analysis of School at the Frontier by Ottlík Géza). Szombathely, 1997.

<sup>21</sup> The expression is from Ottlík himself, and it became the title of the second monograph written about him: Kelecsényi László, A szabadság enyhe mámorja. Ottlík Géza életei (The Smooth Dizziness of Freedom. The Lives of Ottlík Géza). Budapest, 2000.

Mentality sometimes has the chance to develop into spirituality, and blasphemy into transcendence, as we can learn from *Fateless* and *School at the Frontier*.

And the systems of evil just fade away, anyway.

#### Suggested Reading

##### Major Works of Kertész Imre and Ottlik Géza

- KERTÉSZ Imre, *Sorstalanság*. Budapest, 1975.  
 KERTÉSZ Imre, *A kudarc*. Budapest, 1988.  
 KERTÉSZ Imre, *Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért*. Budapest, 1990.  
 KERTÉSZ Imre, *Fateless* (tr. Christopher C. Wilson – Katharina M. Wilson). Evanston, 1992.  
 KERTÉSZ Imre, *Kaddish for a Child not Born* (tr. Christopher C. Wilson – Katharina M. Wilson). Evanston, 1997.  
 KERTÉSZ Imre, *Etre sans destin* (tr. Natalia Zaremba-Huzsvai – Charles Zaremba). Arles, 1997.  
 KERTÉSZ Imre, *Le refus* (tr. Natalia Zaremba-Huzsvai – Charles Zaremba). Arles, 2001.  
 KERTÉSZ Imre, *Kaddish pour l'enfant qui ne naît tra pas* (tr. Natalia Zaremba-Huzsvai – Charles Zaremba). Arles, 1995.  
 KERTÉSZ Imre, *Roman eines Schicksallosen* (tr. Virágh Krisztina). Berlin, 1996.  
 KERTÉSZ Imre, *Fiasko* (tr. Buda György – Agnes Relle). Frankfurt am Main, 2000.  
 KERTÉSZ Imre, *Kaddisch für ein nicht geborenes Kind* (Buda György – Kristin Schwamm). Berlin, 1992.  
 OTTLIK Géza, *Iskola a határon*. Budapest, 1958.  
 OTTLIK Géza, *Próza* (Prose). Budapest, 1980.  
 OTTLIK Géza, *Buda*. Budapest, 1993.  
 OTTLIK Géza, *School at the Frontier*. New York, 1966.  
 OTTLIK Géza, *Logbook. A Danish Story for Iván* (Hajónapló. Dán novella Ivánnak) (tr. Bátki János). In KÖRÖSY Márta (ed.), *A Hungarian Quartet. Four Contemporary Short Novels*. Budapest, 1991. 9-46.  
 OTTLIK Géza, *Nothing's Lost* (Minden megvan) (tr. MOLNÁR Eszter). In BART István (ed.), *The Kiss. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Hungarian Short Stories*. Budapest, 1993. 153-185.

##### Suggested Works about KERTÉSZ Imre and OTTLIK Géza

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**NAGYPÁL Szabolcs:**

## **El mal sistemático y la libertad del individuo.**

### **Paradigmas de libertad en Kertész y Ottlik**

La maldad sistemática es un organismo con responsabilidades difusas, donde la libertad de la vida privada es una catástrofe, y cada persona tan sólo es un eslabón más en la cadena. Los sistemas socialistas nacionales e internacionales fueron dos rostros de la maldad sistemática del siglo XX. En la primera parte, el ensayo se centra en el comportamiento de dos escritores húngaros: Ottlik Géza e Kertész Imre (ganador del Premio Nobel 2002), durante los dos regímenes totalitarios. La segunda parte, y más importante, analiza la búsqueda de libertad individual a partir de sus novelas más significativas: “Escuela en la Frontera” (1958), y “Sin destino” (1975). Novelas en las cuales sus personajes no cultivan la integridad, o hallan la libertad individual por medio de la revuelta o el escapismo, sino al mantenerse firmes en su situación “sindestino”, al estar presentes existencialmente en pequeños lugares de libertad, usando y aplicando metáforas de arte y literatura. En las novelas la ironía, el sarcasmo, la burla sutil, lo grotesco, lo absurdo y el humor negro, alternan con milagrosas teofanías y líricos momentos de felicidad para revelar una trascendencia latente, el suave vahído de la libertad.

**NAGYPÁL Szabolcs:**

## **La rationalisation du mal et la liberté individuelle.**

### **Paradigmes de liberté chez Kertész et Ottlik**

La rationalisation du mal se présente comme une organisation à responsabilité diffuse, où la liberté de la vie privée se considère catastrophique et les individus ne constituent qu’un simple maillon d’une chaîne. Le national et international socialisme ont représenté les deux faces de la rationalisation du mal au XXe siècle. La première partie de cet essai est axée sur le comportement de deux écrivains hongrois, Ottlik Géza et Kertész Imre (prix Nobel en 2002), sous deux régimes totalitaires. La deuxième partie analyse la recherche de liberté individuelle reflétée dans leurs romans plus connus, «Une école à la frontière» (1958) et «Être sans destin» (1975). Les personnages de ces romans ne cultivent pas l’intégrité ou cherchent à atteindre leur liberté personnelle par la révolte ou la fuite, mais plutôt par leur permanence dans une situation sans destin, par leur présence existentielle dans d’étroites marges de liberté ou par la création et l’application de métaphores artistiques et littéraires. Ces romans alternent ironie, sarcasme, subtile moquerie, grotesque, absurde et humour noir avec des théophanies miraculeuses et des instants lyriques de bonheur pour révéler une transcendance latente, le doux vertige de la liberté.