

## Interrogations about the Identity of *Someone Other*

The research focuses on the concepts of “identity” and “crisis of identity” in the book of Imre Kertész titled *Someone Other: The Chronicle of the Changing*, in the context of the Central European literature. Imre Kertész is a Hungarian Jewish author, Holocaust concentration camp survivor and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2002. He initially found little appreciation for his writing in Hungary. In his semiautobiographical novels, he has analyzed the experience of the individual during barbaric times, especially in the Holocaust. His early prose exhibit existentialist traits but his works are difficult to classify. Like almost all his fiction, Kertész’s novella *Valaki más* is largely autobiographical. Here there isn’t even an attempt to disguise the central character: the first person narrator is obviously Kertész himself and the book itself far more memoir than fiction. One might wonder why this autobiographical account is billed as a novel. The answer is clear, given in the epigraphs that open the book – specifically one attributed to I.K. (Kertész himself), which begins: “I is a fiction”. Identity itself is, for Kertész, a construct, and any written attempt to capture even actual events is a fiction.

The book is an attempt to understand what (or who) that “I” is, and what has made and changed him. Another of the epigraphs is Rimbaud’s famous “Je est un autre” (“I is another”), and it is the pervasive watchword of the novel. The book subtitled *A változás krónikája* chronicles the transformation of his self and of his perception of his self. Kertész is constantly confronted by his memories. The past is instructive but remains at a remove. The personal experiences seem always to have touched that *autre je*, the other I – and even his books appear to have been written by another. He reveals: his only identity comes in writing: his is “a self-writing identity”, a constant written self-reinvention, that necessitates if not the death at least the loss of the previous identity. Therefore, Kertész’s fiction is signed by the repetitive, self-reflexive aspects and a notable Central European sensibility.