

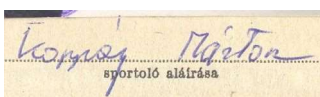
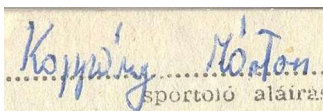
**my name and other issues**

## My Name Is (Not)...

for Clark Lunberry

Hope you are doing well! There is nothing special to report, I just wanted to be in touch. We are still in the pandemic universe, the third wave has been the worst one in Central Europe so far. There is a vaccine shortage all over the EU. Our savior (aka The Criminal) bought a big bunch of Russian and Chinese vaccines, which is not necessarily bad in itself but he is using it for his usual anti-EU rhetorics, for lying and dividing. I have no idea when we will be vaccinated.

As for new projects, for a while I've been thinking about doing something with/on my name, more exactly with my very special family name that I could never identify with, and what it means and what it meant all my life. It has a visual element to it, too, because if I take a look at my old signatures (in identification cards, membership cards, passports etc.) I see a continuous shift toward asemicity and reduction as far as the family name is concerned. My signature has never been consciously controlled by me, I mean I didn't care what it looked like, so it is free of aesthetic control, but my inquiry is not psychoanalytic either. I'm simply contemplating the fact. The handwriting of my "first" name, on the other hand (which comes only second in Hungarian, and that is meaningful, too), has remained safe and sound all the time.



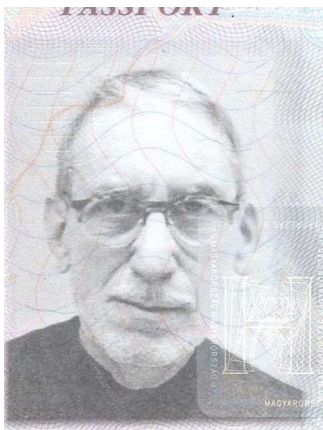
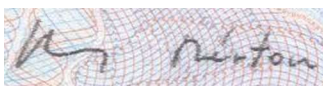
Yes, you are absolutely right, it is the same name thing I discussed with Geof (incomprehensible mumbling is more correct on my part), and although I had been aware of it and its pressure all my life (or at least from my early teens), that was the moment when I realized (inspired by pálinka, a traditional Hungarian brandy, as well) that I could use it as a metaphor for many events in my personal history. I wonder whether it will morph into an art project or simply remains a support of contemplation. At this point, all I have is a bunch of scanned graphic names and related photos plus a few notes.

My Name Is (Not) ...

1. My father had Hungarianized his name before I was born. He thought that with a family name sounding more Hungarian I would be more safe in life.
2. My family name is not only Hungarian, it is so in the extreme.
3. I could never identify with it. I always thought, especially in my childhood, that people realized at once that I was hiding or I was as stupid as to suppose I could hide.
4. I was ashamed of thinking that they might think that I was ashamed.
5. In foreign countries my family name is meaningless.
6. That has still nothing to do with my "original" name which would disambiguate my background.
7. I have no family name. My first name is Márton, after my grandfather who was killed before I was born. I am Márton. I am either dead or not real.
8. Dependent origination is sunyata, sunyata is dependent origination.\*
9. In Hungarian, family names come first. In my childhood, whenever I had to introduce myself, I gave my family name in a whisper, but it is much easier to give your family name in a whisper in those languages where the first name comes first.
10. I reached out because I wanted to get rid of my mother tongue (which actually wasn't my mother's mother tongue).

11. I wanted to become more real and to experience what it would be like.

12. Coincidentally, I knew that it was only another way to metacommunicate my dead-end with identification. Still, at least in the beginning, it was an ecstatic state of mind...



...Yes, I understand why you hesitate. Gyöngyi has been tempted as well, but we postponed her DNA test because of the pandemic. As for me, I'm not too enthusiastic about it and am doubtful about its correctness. Also, if I turn out to be one half Babylonian and one half Ukrainian, what is the difference? :-). On the other hand, I would be immensely interested in Gertrude S'. (our late dog - a beautiful mongrel) ancestors. I couldn't imagine a more exciting thing than to see together the pics of all her forebears. Unfortunately, it is a wish I won't be able to fulfill.



\* "Szunya" (pronunciation of sz: like s in sunyata) is a colloquial word for sleep in Hungarian. Whenever I wanted Gertrude to go to sleep at the end of the day, I told her "Sunyata!" and she moved, slowly, close to my bed and fell asleep.

/Late March, 2021, Budapest/

## The Ellipsis Project

Lately I've been playing with putting together pieces from distant periods. Some recurring topics are: question marks, clouds, ellipses. They overlap, but ellipses outnumber everything else. Any triad of objects can be considered an ellipsis, and occasionally different (or seemingly different) numbers like 1, 2 and 4 serve the same "idea" even better, because they are elliptical only elliptically.

*Austro-Hungarian Ellipsis – for Anatol Knotek*: In Hungarian and in German (also in Turkish) there is a vowel similar to o, but with two dots on it.

*Butterfly – for Gertrude* is dedicated to my late dog-friend, Gertrude, and was written on the day she died. A butterfly flew to the kitchen: it had never happened before.

Some of the pieces are more directly political than others. *Elliptical Idyl* originally had a subtitle referring to Hungary. Then I changed my mind because the situation in other countries had changed to the worse as well. I might change my mind again – I hope/I'm afraid.

Also: *Exile* is a home, and *Emigration* is when you should have left.

*PerMu 1-2 – for Dan Waber*: "mu" is for negation or rather for dynamicity.

## From The Bury Performance

I'm back (in a certain sense) to my collage period of the late 70's, which led me out from writing textual poetry in Hungarian. I've been too depressed lately, and needed real sky, water, earth etc. (In a metaphorical sense, of course :-)  
Hope you don't mind my swamping you with two more pieces – I'm too animated for the moment not to show them, and I know from experience how quickly this condition changes...

\*

I don't think my original intentions are necessarily important or that a poem should "talk back", but I'd like to confess to you (for the sake of curiosity), that I didn't realize (at least consciously) that my colons and the image of the surfer constituted a division sign. I'm happy with that extra-meaning, which suggests – at a different level – the same thing I wanted to represent. First of all, I simply wanted to make a comment on your turned commas, which (from my point of view) had also made an insightful comment on my question mark sequence. The BACKWARD moving of the surfer, and the suddenness of his motion are very important to me! As if one could (thanks to a colon), continue backward, and withdraw/delete some meaning, or reach back to some original meaning or to a "state" of meaninglessness – or simply get "home". Plus I know how much you like "the ocean", and I'm also water crazy.

\*

Here I send you another new piece, titled Click Poem. Its only excuse is that it is the way of sending my best wishes for 2007!

Yes, it is supposed to open. To actual images? I'm not sure. :-)

When *you* try it, each solution points to the good one.

\*

A white (erased?) (already "missing"?) comma-man is sailing, quietly, in a small black boat consisting of an opening bracket, and under a series of opaque closing brackets consisting of some fleecy clouds in motion.

\*

One of the page numbers – 2 – is swimming (in flock) across itself and the other pages, toward the "unknown", which is still numbered. As most of my pieces, it is about (perhaps more than one) modulation.

\*

Thank you so much! I'm VERY glad you liked it and I'm grateful for your attention! The title serves only to slow the reading down in this case. Yes, it may be too overt. The two things on the two sides of the dash are identical: they're the images of an iceberg. I had a certain idea, and needed two icebergs for it. But I didn't guess beforehand that they would look like a pair of shoes. This time the "material" really surprised me, and it took the initiative. DASH is the base of a mountain-like (and already thawing) negative space between two disappearing icebergs, which are identical with each other. And the shoes belong together, and the negative space is their wearer. Between? Around? I don't remember.

\*

"Still" is the reflection (on the water) of something that can't be seen anymore. "Still" is its only presence. And it is "still" present!!!

\*

Both are about decomposing question marks, and seeing that the answer (period) is implicit in the question, and no question is completely grounded in anything – they also hang in the air, or grow out of it. I'm also attaching a longer sequence from the mid-80's, because that is my real reaction to your work, and I couldn't explain it better in a different way. Hope I'm not a nuisance with my lengthy minimalism.



## Post-Visuals

My intention was to write in light on the dusty canvas of sky a word which is illuminated by the four small quotation "lamps" – but also hidden by their unusual arrangement. It is about the paradoxical nature of evocation, and it is also a kind of "response" to "Light and Dust", the poetry site of my late friend, Karl Young. The other dedicatee, in parentheses, is my late father who Hungarianized his name before I was born. First came "aside", but it was too descriptive, then "ash", with my family's idea, but it was too direct, finally I found "dust".

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The small handwritten symbols are there to indicate the places where missing elements are to be inserted – as we use them when correcting manuscripts or school assignments. But nothing is inserted. The three lower ones should suggest that something is missing from the sky, and the fourth upper one should suggest that something is missing from "blankness" as well. I wonder whether my symbols really mean in "your" culture what they mean in "ours". And I'm a bit scared for the moment because my piece should be simple and clear, and if it is not clear to you, I must have done something wrong! Please let me know what the handwritten symbols mean for you, if anything. Are they misleading in a way?

In the sky blankness should be inserted, and in the blankness the sky as the vees indicate it (do they?), respectively. I'm a bit relieved to hear that you would use the vees as I use them.

Thank you indeed! Yes, exactly, the piece was made because I suddenly realized that the v's, I mean the symbols of insertion, are breathing – they inhale blankness when "staying" in the sky, and inhale sky when staying in blankness.

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I imagined white on white: italicized white on white.

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Playing cards are symmetrical, you can turn them upside down. They are the same from both directions, and that has a metaphoric sense as well about ups and downs etc. But you can't turn my card upside down. There is only one

"right" way to read the message. You can't choose. It is not a game. Or if it is a game, it is a social game with fixed roles.

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"Hello"? I don't remember. But always the stranger at the door: always the stranger inside: we are connected.

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I frequently feel that my visual poems are simply comments on their titles even when the title is made last. I mean: the visual comments try to communicate something about the subject in the title that I wouldn't have been able to communicate in words (especially not with my very limited English). In case of the X-piece I'm moving ahead by striking myself through, as if invalidating, disaffirming myself. What you actually see is not me but a walking deletion. But without its kind presence there would be no walk at all. Of course it is not only about my English. The piece contains a faint hope though that it is not completely so, because the form of the poem speaks, perhaps, for me, somehow (although not necessarily in English). But that "me" is less personal.

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The title refers to an invisible Master with unknown identity, but he or she certainly has a leash. And there's an "i", represented, whose head sunk between his shoulders. That "i" is half a Times New Roman letter, half a kind of neo-Nazi creature (or just a good citizen), half serif, half boot. And his title/head radiates like the sun, but one ray is replaced by the leash, and there the direction reverses. The basic image just emerged – there was nothing conscious about it. It has nothing specifically Hungarian about it, at least from my angle. Perhaps it is enough to know that (well, from my perspective) Hungary has become an autocracy with strong inclinations toward racism and xenophobia, and the majority apparently buys it. "Hungary" in the title makes the poems tale-like too, because it is a far-away place for most of my potential readers.

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The guy should leave now, because we see on the first stamp that it is only one minute to midnight. But on the other stamp the escaping of the trunkless foot is quite artificial – almost ceremonial. It belongs to the scene. We are in a stamp, after all.

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I listened to a few friends' advice to use my health issues as a source of inspiration. I also wanted to do something more "physical" than before (or at least in the last two decades). The right "ear" is bigger than the left one, so the FEAR is growing... (In reality, my left ear has become smaller as a result of the first operation. It had to be trimmed.) The quotation, accompanying the piece, (from "Meaning, Understanding and Knowing-what: An Indian Grammarian Notion of Intuition" by Chien-hsing Ho) is deliberately mysterious. The joke is about having a – relatively – small fear at first and then having a bigger one as a result of thinking it over. And the reference to the essay is quite ironic, too, since fear is rather spontaneous.

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"He" is also a punctuation mark (most of my works written over the last 15 years or so has had something to do with punctuation), a period in this case, in the making or perhaps in the process of disintegration (the wind can do both to a crumpled sheet of paper) – who knows and who cares when the breeze is so nice. It comes from other recent sequences with three pellets (embodying ellipses, frequently subtitled or titled as such), and then with four ones (in "peut-être le Messie", which is an ellipsis unlimited :-). It follows that one pellet – in itself – must be a period. But no full stop is absolute! And when a period is destroyed, the breeze has done a good job. It is on the border of asemicity but I don't want to cross that border... Also, and to slightly contradict my former comment, it was written from the period's perspective, because it is a selfportrait.

## Text Art Archive Guest Blogger

Late Intro from 2021:

...Thanks for the link, I enjoyed your video a lot!

My favorite part of the Seder Haggadah is a song, called Dayenu, based on the repetition of the "it would have sufficed us!" formula. (It is actually only the repeated formula and not the actual content of the song that I like or am interested in.) When I was asked, years ago, to contribute to a blog commemorating the Bury text festivals (I participated twice), I sent a text based on a similar repetition.

### THE OTHER SIDE

If many decades ago my only book in Hungarian had been ridiculed by my own editor because of the three blank pages following each other, and as a consequence I had tried to get rid of my Hungarian and find other tools and means for communication, and had not met Bob Grumman, it would have sufficed me!

If I had gotten in touch with Bob Grumman, one of the most innocent souls and self-ironic minds I've ever met, and he had not talked to Geof Huth about me, and I had not gotten the support and friendship of both of them in moments when I was down (as usual) (but happy notwithstanding as usual) (as all of us), it would have sufficed me!

If I had gotten their support and Geof (it was him, I guess) had not mentioned my name to Tony Trehy, it would have sufficed me!

If he had talked to Tony about me, and Tony had come to Budapest and visited me, my wife and our dogcompanion, Gertrude, and had taken with him an old copy of The Other Side, and he had liked Gertrude a lot, and had disliked The Other Side, it would have sufficed me!

If he had liked The Other Side almost as much as he liked Gertrude and had not invited me to the next Text Festival in 2011, it would have sufficed me!

If he had invited me to the Text Festival of 2011 and invited me to the party in his and Sue's apartment where I met many wonderful digital friends in flesh for

the first time, and tasted Sue's wonderful potato-based stuff, similar to Hungarian *rakott krumplics* (and a lot of other marvels), and Stephen Nelson and I had not gotten drunk a bit, and had not tried to approach, very slowly and carefully what was left of the dip, with minimalist crumbs of tortilla chips in hands, and we had not cried of laughter (poetry at its best!), it would have sufficed me!

If we had cried of laughter and I had the opportunity to walk Barney the next morning and be included in readings and exhibits, and see Bury, and be miraculously involved in activities similar to those which make me isolated in those days which are not *different*, and had not listened to Jaap Blonk performing a part of the Ursonate, one of the most cathartic events I've ever witnessed, it would have sufficed me!

If I had listened to Jaap Blonk and had not discovered *The Secret*, my only poem ever (because the only one known by the larger public, I guess) hidden by Philip Davenport, very appropriately, in a cattle truck, it would have sufficed me!

If Phil had exhibited *The Secret* (my only poem) by hiding it in the Bury Transport Museum, and hadn't published it as the cover art for *The Dark Would*, and the book hadn't segued into events related to the next Text Festival as well, it would have sufficed me!

If Phil had published *The Secret* and I had been invited to the next Text Festival in 2014 as well, and had seen strikingly beautiful and/or funny works again by Matt Dalby, Caroline Bergvall, Liz Collini, Steve Giasson, Sarah Sanders and others, and I had not gotten lost in the company of Eran Hadas and Jörg Piringer, because the taxi driver was the reincarnation of the East German taxi driver in Jim Jarmush's *Night on Earth*, and we hadn't cried of laughter (the best kind of poetry!), it would have sufficed me!

If we had gotten lost, and Tony hadn't exhibited *The Other Side*, it would have sufficed me!

If Tony had exhibited *The Other Side*, and I had never reached It, it would have sufficed me!

## **"Bibliotheca Invisibilis"**

*Ellipsis No. 15, /2008/, is a comment on Ancient Ellipsis (Fragment), /2006/.*

*Ancient Ellipsis (Fragment) /2006/, is a comment on Ellipsis No. 15, /2008/.*

My idea was to give the underlying concept in another image, and make it both ways. I think that "blankness" is always referential, and ellipses are the doorkeepers of invisibility.

## **"Poets on Mortification"**

### TOWARDS A BIENNIAL OF PEACE

In the eighties I was involved in mail art. I got in touch with many people and got info about many shows, mostly open ones, but not only. "Towards a Biennial of Peace" was held in Hamburg in 1985. I sent my work, and was very happy when a big envelope with a catalogue and a huge poster arrived in my home. The letter in the envelope claimed that I participated in the show. The catalogue and the huge poster contained many names (well known fluxus and conceptual artists among them) but my own name was missing. The two pictures (below) document the private performance I made in my home as an instant reaction. The measuring tape roughly shows how big the poster should have been to include my name as well.





## further notes

Marked and unmarked: partly marked, partly unmarked.

Not irrespective, perhaps, of the atmosphere of the late seventies in Hungary (ps: it was not so different from the atmosphere of the 2010s and early 2020s, to say the least) I became more and more interested in the problem of how to get rid of linguistic and cultural barriers. This issue was in agreement with my real interest: what are the ways of referring to something "absent" – how do metaphors operate?

But of course invisibility belongs to the realm of the visual.

Works of art are reminders – or "reminders". The quotation marks puts the stress on metacommunication, and metacommunication is not a different level, just a way of moving away.

"Few men speak humbly of humility, chastely of chastity, few doubtingly of scepticism." I tried to reach out toward concrete poetry and Co. because I was missing (maybe by mistake) the actual manifestations of that kind of concreteness.

Conceptions get alienated from personal experience, we try to fight back, and catch at least a momentary glimpse of our vicious circles.

Art doesn't solve anything. It just helps to survive. Although in Hungarian "die" and "postpone" come from a common root.

In the late 70's when I started tinkering with my first non-just-textual black and white sequences, I cut the xeroxed A/4 pages into four because I wanted to put my work into normal size envelopes and send it out as mail art. (There was no way to publish them in Hungary although I tried my best.) But it was difficult to handle the borders without background, so I glued the originals on black

cardboards, and it was convenient to keep the frames as well. Very soon I became conscious of their presence. They started to represent limitations – and the opportunity of changing them into a playfield. I noticed another white layer "behind" the black one – and also that there was no "background" anywhere at all. I'm not using frames anymore.

I don't buy that the emotional/aesthetic effect can be anything but a by-product. It belongs to the peripheral vision.

Directness is the inspiration to make something new, to shorthand something which perhaps was born only in the process of shorthanding and didn't exist before. But it becomes representation in the world. Therefore taking directness too seriously might be a phantasmagoria. How to be more direct? You are "there".

The image editor that I use is from the mid 90's. It forces me to select my tools, and also minimize them, which is a relief. For instance I have been using the very same cloud item for a long time. At first that was related to my laziness. Then I realized that its invariability was helpful. Associations dissociate, clouds come and go – and remain.

Some of the texts included in this collection were originally published in or performed at:

*Bibliotheca Invisibilis*

*Brave New Word*

*Litter*

*Poets on Mortification*

*Text Art Archive*

*Text Festival*

*The Last Vispo*

and/or they are from letters to friends.