

Portrait

Csilla Técsi Kusa



The soft spoken, petite woman, in the foreword to her 100 poems entitled "HARVEST", says about herself, "I was born in a small village, in the North Eastern corner of Hungary." Gégény, which lies by the Nyiregyháza-Záhogy railway line, has a population of nearly 2200. This is where Csilla attended elementary school, this is where she and her daughter moved back with her parents after a failed marriage...

... and 4 years ago this is where Vilmos Kusa, who was visiting from the United States, asked her to marry him. Although she now lives in Snohomish County, the center of the world for Csilla is still Gégény.

She spent 34 of her 40 years in the small Hungarian village's idyllic surroundings, where her mother's flower garden shaped the child Csilla's, the growing girl's and later the young woman's inner world. Her mother was the village's skillful seamstress. Csilla still holds on to some of the clothes that remind her of her mother's handiwork. She feels that she inherited her dexterity from her mom. Her father worked at the water department as a supervisor.

Csilla's talent with drawing showed early on. Her teachers did not encourage her to pursue artistic career, they did not mentor her and nobody was there to smooth her way. "I was told that I drew well, but perhaps I should have needed more encouragement." In her junior year she won a local 'art analysis' contest but there was no one to prepare her for the national contest. What she accomplished artistically so far, she did on her own. However, she often turned to the late artist-painter, István Huszár, for advice. Because her primary concern was making a living, her time for artistic work and creative activities was often in short supply.

After graduation she worked at the Nyiregyháza Meat Company in two shifts. She traveled daily by train from Gégény to the city and back but due to the political changes the meat company was closed and its building demolished. She took more computer classes, and worked in a lab; later she went back to school to become a teacher's aid for handicapped children. "I liked that work and it would have been fulfilling" she said. Fate intervened though, and her brother offered her the managerial position in his grocery store.

Through one of her customers she met Vilmos, who's first marriage also ended unsuccessfully. He came to Hungary to look for job opportunities and for a new wife. This is how he met Csilla who quickly

talked Vilmos out of starting over in Hungary because of the bad economic situation. When they met, the attraction was immediate. "We had an instant understanding between us", said Csilla. She embodied Vilmos' expectations of an ideal wife. "I like to cook, clean, embroider, so it is not difficult for me to fill the role that Vilmos envisioned for his wife. My artistic work rearranges my housework sometimes, but I try to keep things in a balance.

Two months ago they bought a beautiful, brand-new home with tall evergreen trees bordering the double lot near Echo Lake in Snohomish county. Yet, for Csilla, this place is foreign. She misses the sunny Szabolcs County, the sand, the plains, the garden around the house, the property that looked towards the fields, the small lake overgrown with reeds, in other words she misses the "center of the world": her homeland. Homesickness torments her. During her four-year-marriage she has returned to her village in Hungary several times for months long visits. Two years ago her beloved mother died, and with heavy heart, she put the family home of Gégény for sale. Perhaps, Csilla will never feel at home here in the wet, mossy Northwest, in the neighborhood of the Pacific Ocean. For her, the water of the blond Tisza river is sweeter, and who can blame her for it?

In the meantime, Vilmos works long hours as an electrician, and does everything within his reach to make Csilla happy. He would bring the stars to her, in fact he gave her one for her 39th birthday. He protects her from the stress of the outside world, he tries to create peace, tranquility and harmony for his wife, so she could paint and create to her liking.

In the Spring of 2008, a week before Easter, she was unexpectedly struck with inspiration. The Muse took the brush out of her hand and replaced it with a pen. In 8 days (and night) she wrote 100 poems. "I braid words now as a baker braids his soft breads" she writes in one of her poems. At her request, I read all 100 poems and I am amazed at how prolific and talented she is.

The Hungarian folk painter, Juli Dudás Vankó comes to my mind, not so much



with her paintings but poems. Csilla's style of painting is more refined, with attention to detail. Her poetry on the other hand reminds one of folk songs, although she often uses very rich images in her stanzas. For instance, as she writes about mortality "As life does it, runs-runs until his legs are lost". Csilla is definitely talented, her simple, easy to understand poetry is captivating. She wants to create joy in her readers. Hers is not revolutionary poetry, nor abstract. Her poems are "flower songs", renderings of village life, nostalgia for the homeland and making acquaintance with her "substitute" country. In four months the number of her poems reached 300. She contributes this sudden abundance of poems to God and her Muse.

Before she married Vilmos, she had to give up painting on many occasions. Now that she has the chance, she wants to use every moment to make up for the lost years. Her husband and 16-year-old daughter is happy to come home at the end of work or school and converse with her in Hungarian.

In January, with the help of Katalin Pearman, her paintings will be exhibited at the Mercer Island Community Center (see page 18). Csilla would love to find a literary translator, so her poems could complement the corresponding paintings. We all look forward to her exhibit, with or without the poems, and wish much success to the new, natural talent of our community.