

Obituary

Mária Krisztinkovich (1918-2008)

Mária Krisztinkovich was an art historian, writer, librarian, art collector and, together with her second husband Eugene [Jenő] Horvath, a generous patron of artistic and scholarly causes. She was born in Budapest where she attended the prestigious preparatory school of the Angolkisasszonyok [English Ladies] and later the Academy of Commerce. An important part of her education was language training. As an adult, Mária spoke four of Europe's major languages: English, German, French and Italian.

Several of Mária's ancestors were involved in what she would value in life: art collecting and writing. György Ráth, a great-great-uncle of hers, founded a museum; István Ráth-Végh was a writer. Béla Krisztinkovich, her father, was an avid collector of Anabaptist-Hutterite pottery. He introduced Mária to this activity — that later became her passion as well.

The young Mária's life was full of unexpected turns. In 1946 she moved to Bucharest where her first husband, István Gyöngyössi, became the head of Hungary's post-war diplomatic mission to Romania. During the height of Stalinist rule in Hungary Gyöngyössi was imprisoned while Mária and her infant daughter were exiled to a small Hungarian village. In 1959 she managed to leave Hungary, immigrated to Canada where she found employment at the University of British Columbia's Library in Vancouver. While at UBC she pursued her earlier scholarly interests and continued her research into the history and artistic legacy of Central Europe's Hutterite (Anabaptist) communities. In this work her knowledge of the relevant languages served her very well.

She, often in collaboration with J. Eugene Horvath, published numerous bibliographies and papers on these and other subjects. The latter appeared in learned journals such as *Kerámos*, *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, *Ungarn Jahrbuch*, as well as in this journal, in which her work appeared twice. Her first paper was on "Historical Hungary as Background for Hutterite Needlework in Canada" (Vol. 8 [Spring 1981]: 11-23); while the second was entitled "Prince Rupert, Godson of Gábor Bethlen" (Vol. 13 [Fall 1986]: 11-19).

There can be little doubt that her scholarly *magnum opus* was *An Annotated Hutterite Bibliography* (1998) on which she worked for three decades. This 312-page volume contained some 2,600 entries. With the help of Professors Werner Packull and Peter C. Erb, as well as the Reverend Olivér E. Szebeni of Hungary, the work was made into an electronic database. Another of Mária's major contributions to knowledge was her compilation of a Dukhobor bibliography. Still another of her major works, produced in collaboration with J. Eugene Horvath, was *A History of Haban Ceramics: A Private View* (2005).

In the realm of *belles-lettres* her writings included poetry, some of it written during her exile from Budapest in the early 1950s. Her favourite volume was *Nevetek Sírva* [I laugh crying] published in 2006 (with drawings by Ildikó Lansonius and a CD of readings by actress Györgyi Hegedős). Mária also wrote a book-length novel entitled *Híd a víz alatt, 1937-1945* (Budapest, 1996). Its English version appeared first, *Bridge Under the Water* (1993).

Mária was a persevering member of the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada, from the organization's beginnings until old age and illness made visits to the HSAC's annual conferences difficult. She was also a member of our journal's editorial staff — who sometimes bemoaned the fact that few if any papers were submitted to the journal in her fields of expertise.

The last decades of Mária's life were filled by her struggle with ill-health but such an adversity did not break her spirit and prevent her from her writing, artistic and art-collecting pursuits, nor from keeping her home's grounds in magnificent horticultural order as well as being an engaging host mainly to the members of Vancouver's — and the North American Pacific rim's — Hungarian artistic and intellectual community. As one visitor to the Kisztkovich-Horvath home, the Hungarian poet György Faludy remarked, Mária was a woman with expertise in everything, from writing poetry to preparing scrumptious meals from a newly-slaughtered pig. The latter art, as well as that of vegetable gardening, Mária no doubt learned during her exile in the Hungarian countryside.

Mária Kisztkovich, or Mári as she was known to her friends, lived a long and eventful life. Through her work and activities she had enriched the lives of others — from the members of her family, to her circle of friends, to the artistic and scholarly communities of North America and Central Europe. She will be missed by many — in the city where she had lived for half-a-century, in her post-1950s homeland, as well as elsewhere.