

George: A Tribute

Steven Mueller

George Monteiro might have been surprised if he'd known he would be commemorated posthumously during a poetry reading at the Round Rock, Texas, Public Library. But in fact on the afternoon of Saturday, February 1, 2020, such an event occurred, and it is a simple if unexpected story.

My tribute to George came about after translator Katharine Baker, a mutual friend, sent me an email about him the day after his death. She thought I would enjoy reading some of his poetry that is posted online because, since the death of my beloved wife in early 2019, I've found some solace in writing poetry and prose, and have been aspiring to improve my craft.

Although I had never heard of George, I was inspired by his poems, especially "Celeste" (in memory of legendary fado singer Amália Rodrigues' sister) – a poem of seeming simplicity but deep meaning. The samples I read of his work all moved me to write my own poem about George, and about the effect his poems had on me. When the next monthly poetry reading at the Round Rock Public Library was scheduled (following a hiatus for the holidays), I decided to present both "Celeste" and my own poem in tribute to George.

I hope George would have been pleased to know that his poetry has brought pleasure to unexpected others.

George (A tribute)

Steven Mueller

"This sounds like something I would write."
To be more accurate, something that I wish I could write!
When I read the works of others
I often think this.

The talent of others amazes and baffles me
Where does it come from? Why? How?
I wish I could possess even the talent
That others possess in a discarded fingernail.

But I do have other talents
Mundane and pedestrian as they may be
Talents that would support my family
But never make the impact of a Frost or a Monteiro

All art is autobiographical to some extent
I have read a bit of Frost and less of Monteiro
Just a minuscule sampling really
I did enjoy this fleeting glimpse into George's life...

Celeste

George Monteiro

She died yesterday, at 95,
the youngest sister of the nation's number one fadista.

I met her once, in Lisbon, at an obscure (to me) fado house.
She sang and then circulated among the tables peddling her tapes.

"I know who you are," said someone,
"and I have your tapes at home." So he bought none.
And neither did I, though, at home, I had not a one.