Narratives of Political and Literary Freedom: Portugal and the Constitution of Liberty Post-25 April

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Abstract
2024 marks fifty years since the Carnation Revolution took place in Portugal which saw the return of constitutional democracy to that country. Making use of poetic and narrative fiction in conjunction with historical political theory and constitutional doctrine, this text seeks to examine the role of rhetorical forms in reflecting on the current forms and future shape of the democracy and democratic expression. Works by well-known Portuguese writers Fernando Pessoa and Manuel de Fonseca are brought into dialogue with musings on the purpose of writing by Seamus Heaney in conjunction with more traditional forms of political theory in an attempt to interrogate the process and result of the revolutionary period during and after 25 April in Portugal.

Keywords: literary freedom, political liberty, rhetorical forms, constitutional government, revolution, Portugal.

Introduction

The noted twentieth century sociologist, Hannah Arendt, in *The Human Condition*. remarked on how "the human condition comprehends more than the conditions under which life has been given to man" in how "Whatever enters the human world of its own accord or is drawn into it by human effort becomes part of the human condition."[1] Understanding what Arendt terms the "human condition" is arguably as complex a task as is the variety of forms of human beliefs and perspectives. This article sketches an outline of the constitutional form of the Portuguese state in the period immediately following the Carnation Revolution with some references to the cultural and political forces that both precipitated and propelled the cultural waves that crystallised into more definite forms at key junctures in this complex process. The narrative forms which critiqued this process in subsequent decades are also given attention so as to stimulate deeper reflection and discussion on the process overall and to its intended and actual results.

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[1] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018), p. 9.

Aesthetic Education and Political Evolution

The first issue I will explore is what role does literature and philosophical thinking play in the development of deeper insights into broader political and social development and reform? Since we are commemorating half a century since 25 April, it is appropriate to look at ways of stimulating interest in education and civil engagement. For this I shall turn to the writings of Friedrich Schiller in his *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795). In Part I of Letter II, Schiller alerts us to the need to concern ourselves with the well-being of the political system if we are truly concerned about genuine freedom. On this he notes:

> It would appear to be unseasonable to go in search of a code for the aesthetic world, when the moral world offers matter of so much higher interest, and when the spirit of philosophical inquiry is so stringently challenged by the circumstances and structure of a true political freedom.It is unsatisfactory to live out of your own age and to work for other times. It is equally incumbent on us to be good members of our own age as of our own state or country. If it is conceived to be unseemly and even unlawful for a man to segregate himself from the customs and manners of the circle in which he lives, it would be inconsistent not to see that it is equally his duty to grant a proper share of influence to the voice of his own epoch, to its taste and its requirements, in the operations in which he engages. But the voice of our age seems by no means favourable to art, (which echoes with today's conditions) at all events to that kind of art to which my inquiry is directed. The course of events has given a direction to the genius of the time that threatens to remove it continually further from the ideal of art. For art (which I take to mean writing and literature more broadly) has to leave reality, it has to raise itself bodily above necessity and neediness; for art is the daughter of freedom, and it requires its prescriptions and rule to be furnished by the necessity of spirits and not by that of matter. But in our day it is necessity, neediness, that prevails, and bends a degraded human under its iron yoke. Utility is the great idol of the time, to which all powers do homage and all subjects are subservient. In this great balance of utility, the spiritual service of art has no weight, and, deprived of all encouragement, it vanishes from the noisy Vanity Fair of our time. The very spirit of philosophical inquiry itself robs the imagination of one promise after another, and the frontiers of art are narrowed, in proportion as the limits of science are enlarged.[2]

It is clearly evident that Schiller is keenly aware of the effects of the industrial revolution and the spirit of empiricism which was reinvigorated by the Enlightenment. He casts a weary eye on the role of literature and its prospects in an ever matter-of-fact, utility and profit-driven world where commerce trumps culture. We see hints of these concerns surfacing in later times in twentieth century Portuguese prose, which I shall return to shortly. He is, however, not entirely without hope for what philosophical enquiry and literary endeavours can achieve in how he also goes on to say that:

[2] Friedrich Schiller, *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man*, pp. 2-3. At: https://openspaceofdemocracy.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/letters-on-the-aesthetic-education-of-man.pdf.

> The eyes of the philosopher as well as of the man of the world are anxiously turned to the theatre of political events, where it is presumed the great destiny of man is to be played out. It would almost seem to betray a culpable indifference to the welfare of society if we did not share this general interest. For this great commerce in social and moral principles is of necessity a matter of greatest concern to every human being, on the ground both of its subject and its results. It must accordingly be of deepest moment to every man to think for himself. It would seem that now at length a question that formerly was only settled by the law of the stronger is to be determined by the calm judgment of the reason, and every man who is capable of placing himself in a central position, and raising his individuality into that of his species, can look upon himself as in possession of this judicial faculty of reason; being moreover, as man and member of the human family, a party in the case under trial and involved more or less in its decision. It would thus appear that this great political process is not only engaged with his individual case, it has also to pronounce enactments, which he as a rational spirit is capable of enunciating and entitled to pronounce.[3]

It is through the firm affirmation of his faculty of reason, that man, all human beings, assert the crucial ability to critical reflection upon this human condition. The faculty is particularly important in times of revolution where intellectual capacity is required to find a path forward as was the case after the fall of Salazar/Caetano regime in Portugal in 1974. Indeed, as part of this wider human family and thus the cultural and community of the world around him and those in it – he is compelled to seek remedies for perceived ills that this rational spirit can target. Such a concern transcends time and tide. For his part, Australian writer John McLaren has noted that this conflict between concern for the future and awareness of the past must admit that "culture generally and literature in particular are crucial. They determine our understanding of who we are and whence we come, and thus set the limits within which we can imaged who we might be …."[4] An engaged mind inspired by those who have gone before us and a hunger for a better future, such as the situation in times immediately preceding and following the Carnation Revolution reflects much of this spirit of acknowledging the powerful role played by literature and the artistic capacity of creative people in forging a new future. Indeed, writing before the Estado Novo came into being, Fernando Pessoa defended the need for a democratic culture for a free people to choose as they please. In his text *Opinião e Democracia* (*Opinion and Democracy*) written in 1918, Pessoa affirmed that:

> What we have to do is to make possible for the elector, in a democracy, to choose the elected by suggestion, and for it not to be forcibly imposed or by fraud. Nothing else is needed. And that's how the true democratic experience can be carried out – an experience that has yet to happen, so we cannot say democracy has failed, but that many imperfect versions of it have failed, or other words, many forms of absence or the perversion of it.[5]

[3] Schiller, *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man*, p. 3.
[4] John McLaren, *Writing in Hope and Fear: Literature as Politics in Postwar Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 1.
[5] Fernando Pessoa, *Obra Completa VI: Escritos sobre Política e Sociedade* (Ruriak Ink, 2015), in English Fernando Pessoa (2015) *Complete Works VI: Writings on Politics and Society*, p. 2222.

The Rhetorical Citizen

Pessoa's affirmation taken in conjunction with McLaren's thesis alerts us to the possible contours of a politics of representation which has evolved quite considerably since Schiller's lifetime where "reflections on rhetoric responds to an important, intellectual transformation in modern societies that distinguishes them from those of the past and profoundly alters the way in which the political dimension is now experienced."[6] It is through this paradigm that we observe the decentring of society characterised by a loss of faith and - in some cases total abandonment - in the idea of a central powerful being – a God. Traditional societal notions on the form and function of authority, justice and power have subsequently been subject to profound interrogation. Society then comes to reflect the fractured nature of the identity and thinking of its members and can longer function as a unifying force that provides certain guarantees to citizens. As Niccoló Machiavelli observed in *The Prince*,[7] this is why political action is concerned with creating order in a world that no longer (or perhaps never had) any fundamental moral or objective cohesion. Under these circumstances the power exercised in the wider community is entirely devoid of morality or personality and uncertain as to its ultimate objective.[8] A lack of specific direction in the wider political community thus has the effect of further fragmentation notions of order and security and this in turn exacerbates the alienation of the citizen even further with the ultimate result of making the constitution seem ever more monolithic and inaccessible to the public.

Governance and Rhetorical Forms

An obvious danger arises under these circumstances, the threat of a totalitarian state. An alienated citizen is a disempowered one and thus faces the dangers of unrestrained political power exercised virtually alone. Such dangers must be faced with a strong capacity for candour, essentially this means honesty both in the realms of public and private life. George Orwell has much to say on this in his 1941 essay "Literature and Totalitarianism," in which he remarks:

> It is an age of partisanship and not of detachment, an age in which it is especially difficult to see literary merit in a book whose conclusions you disagree with. Politics – politics in the most general sense – have invaded literature to an extent that doesn't normally happen, and this has brought to the surface of our consciousness the struggle that always goes on between the individual and the community. It is when one considers the difficult of writing honest, unbiased criticism in a time like ours that on begins to grasp the nature of the threat that hangs over the whole of literature in the coming age. We live in an age in which the autonomous individual is ceasing to exist – or perhaps one ought to say, in which the individual is ceasing to have the illusion of being autonomous. Now, in all that we say about literature and above all in all that we say about criticism, we instinctively take the autonomous individual for granted.
> The whole of modern European literature – I am speaking of the literature of the past four hundred years – is built on the concept of intellectual honesty, or, if you like to put

[6] McLaren, *Writing in Hope and Fear: Literature as Politics in Postwar Australia*, p. 38.
[7] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Tim Parks (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 2009).
[8] McLaren, *Writing in Hope and Fear: Literature as Politics in Postwar Australia*, p. 38.

> in that way, on Shakespeare's maxim, 'To thin own self be true.' The worst thing we can say about a work of art is that it is insincere. And this is even truer of criticism than of creative literature, in which a certain amount of posing and mannerism and even a certain amount of downright humbug doesn't matter so long as the writer has a certain fundamental sincerity. It is either the truthful expression of what one man thinks and feels, or it is nothing. As I say, we take this notion for granted, and yet as soon as one puts it into words one realizes how literature is menaced. For this is the age of the totalitarian state, which does not and probably cannot allow the individual any freedom whatsoever.[9]

Orwell rightly identifies partisanship as being an acutely dangerous thing for the survival of freedom. If a situation persists whereby only the extremes persist and all moderate dialogue has been extinguished whether by accident or design, flexibility and tolerance quickly become endangered and eventually die out. Where writers seek to influence the broader social and cultural agenda, writing in the political sphere become inevitable and it is here that a clear materialisation of what Orwell referred to as "the struggle that always goes on between the individual and community." Dying illusions of perceived moral and literary autonomy also become more evident when material barriers – such as ideological biases and legal sanctions – are consciously erected by governing elites in both democratic and authoritarian regimes alike. Orwell was particularly strident in his warnings about these developments and his acute awareness of this fundamental threat of our basic freedoms of expression is clearly evident in his remark that "the writer has a certain fundamental sincerity. It is either the truthful expression of what one man thinks and feels, or it is nothing."[10] In age of highly polarised public discourse, this warning from 1941 remains valid. It would seem it must fall to the educated and articulate segments of society to formulate a response that will ultimately re-assert these hard-won freedoms and defend them against the sophisticated and evolving threats of the modern world.

Defence of Desire for Freedom

Writing just one year before Portugal's *Primavera Marcelista* (Marcelist Spring), renowned linguistic and public intellectual Noam Chomsky instantiated the writings of Dwight Macdonald who published a series of texts in which he referred to the responsibilities of people, in particular intellectuals. These texts were originally written a few years after the end of World War II (just six years after Orwell's warning) and remain persuasive today. Macdonald asked a difficult set of questions. For example, to what extent were the German or Japanese people responsible for the atrocities committed by the governments of their countries? He also asked a similar set of questions about the conduct of the British and American peoples in respect of whether they too were complicit or responsible for the bombings of innocent civilians in warfare conducted by Western governments – that culminated in the dropping of the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki – deemed as belonging to among the worst crimes in human

[9] George Orwell, *Fascism and Democracy* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), pp. 13-14.
[10] Orwell, *Fascism and Democracy*, p. 14.

history? Chomsky also gives the example of the horrors of the Spanish Civil War in 1930s, and the Nazi atrocities, against which he contrasts the position of the West on these matters.[11]

Chomsky asserts that a heightened sense of responsibility and duty to question accrues to intellectuals, observing that:

> Intellectuals are in a position to expose the lies of governments, to analyze actions according to their causes and motives amid often hidden intentions. In the Western world at least, they have the power that comes from political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression. For a privileged minority, Western democracy provide the facilities, and the training to seek the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and misrepresentation, ideology and class interest through which the events of current history are presented to us.[12]

Chomsky's observation on the responsibility of intellectual can be construed as a broad appeal to thinking people to use their mental faculties to challenge totalizing practices by governing authorities wherever they may be found. In this respect, writers have a special role in challenging and speaking truth to power.

Possible Paths Forward

The well-known Portuguese public intelectual and sociologist António Barreto, opines that:

> We can only foresee many possible paths. We can prepare ourselves for all eventualities, like someone that travels without a particular direction. However, my belief is that this should not make us give up on scrutinizing the times to come. Quite the opposite. It is this uncertainty that makes me insist, attempting to foresee all possibilities. It should also inspire political authorities, those that direct economic resources and the intellectual elite. Without the anxiety of predicting the unpredictable, nor by planning through artificial constructions, we can examine the present, searching for tendencies and seeking ways of inflecting and influencing. We also, as is currently done by others and should also be done by us, should be better at debating and in that way be more meaningful, especially more collectively, the strategic concept that defines frameworks. [13]

Barreto adopts a realistic approach in warning against excessively grand designs on a detailed future, but this does not mean we should desist in thinking about the times to come. We cannot predict the exact forms that the future may take. However, we can anticipate certain scenarios within which conditions for constructive narratives can be created. Barreto also warns against certain risks that threaten these possibilities where he says: "But it's important to avoid taking risks. 'Let it take its own course', as has been done over the last number of years, is a serious

[11] Anthony Arnove (ed.), *The Essential Chomsky* (London: The Bodley Head, 2008), p. 39.
[12] Arnove (ed.), *The Essential Chomsky*, p. 40.
[13] António Barreto, *Portugal, Que Futuro/Portugal What Future?* (Lisbon: Lisbon Academy of Sciences, 2015), pp. 1-7, p. 2. At: https://www.acad-ciencias.pt/books/portugal-que-futuro/.

mistake for which will always end up paying for. As we do now. And 'forseeing the future', as some will believe to be possible, is a childish illusion."[14]

His warning is eternally necessary: we cannot take things for granted nor can we rely upon childish illusions to sustain our thinking. Uncertainty and adversity demand a creative response. Even in the depths of dark days of Salazar's authoritarian regime, Portuguese writer Manuel de Fonseca created the means of critiquing the insular nature of the *Estado Novo* (New State) in the form of his short story "O Largo" ("The Square").[15] De Fonseca tells the tale of how a village square once represented the centre of a community's world, but this place of importance was decentred with onset of modernity:

> It was the centre of the village. Travellers would pause at the meeting point and share their news. It was through the Square that the villages communicated with the world. It was also there, in the absence of news, that people would make things up that would seem true. Time would pass by, and that invention would come to be true. Nothing would destroy it: it had come from the Square. Therefore, the Square was the centre of the world.[16]

As we can see the limited horizons offered by the local village square are dependent on travellers from outside to bring updates on events in the world beyond. Where genuine information about external events could not be procured, feigned awareness takes the place of fact and is treated as having the same status. Its largely isolated nature reflected the closed authoritarian society under the Salazar regime in which the story is based.

In an era where the loudest and the most aggressive controlled the agenda, changing times also changes the characters who once dominated the village square and through the wider community. De Fonseca illustrates these points when he writes:

> Whoever dominated it, dominated the whole village. The brightest and wisest would go down to the Square and from there would instruct the village. The mighty would argue in the middle of the Square and would challenge the whole village, making them bow to their will. The drunks laughed at the village.[17]

Traditional tradesmen, craft workers, stonemasons and carpenters dominated the scene, directed conversation and enjoyed prestige across the community. They too begin to experience the shifting tides of fortune in a modernising world that causes their previously sturdy positions in life to also run aground:

> The men of the village would go to the Square and would speak on equal footing with stonemasons and blacksmiths. And even with business owners, with peasants,

[14] Barreto, *Portugal, Que Futuro/Portugal What Future?*, p. 2.
[15] All translations from Portuguese to English are the responsibility of the present author.
[16] This story, "O Largo" or "The Square," comes from a collection written by Portuguese writer Manuel de Fonseca (1911-1993). See Manuel de Fonseca, *Obra Completa*, 19ª edição, *O Fogo e as Cinzas* (Lisboa: Editorial Caminho, S.A., 1992 [1981]), "O Largo," pp. 21-31. In English Manuel de Fonseca, *The Complete Works*, 19th edition, *The Fire and the Ashes* (Lisbon: Caminha S.A. Publishers 1992 [1981]), "The Square," pp. 21-31, at p. 24.
[17] De Fonseca, "The Square," pp. 21-31, 24.

> municipal workers. Even, on an equal footing with conmen, mysterious-men and arrogant vagabonds. That was the place for men, where class did not matter. These old men that never revealed themselves to anyone and only took off their hats to lie down.[18]

Such was their arrogance and confidence; young boys would frequent the square seeking the advice and experience of the older men. This space served as their school as regular school was beyond the economic reach and imaginative horizon of many families. Habits – good and bad – were taught to these youths as part of the greater intrigue of the square:

> It was also the best for children. That is where they learned the crafts by listening to the masters of trades, looking at their grave gestures. Or they would learn to be brave, or drunk or vagabonds. The Square was full of life, of prowess and tragedies. It was full of flashes of intelligence. And it was sure that any child that learned all of this would become a poet and would be saddened because they could not remain a children learning about life – the great and mysterious life of the Square.[19]

Women, particularly unmarried woman, were treated like children and the children themselves had no real voice or right to an opinion of their own:

> The home was for the women (machoism). At the end of the houses, hidden from the street they would comb their braids, as long as horses' tails. They worked in the shadow of the yard, under the grapevines. They would cook and make the beds – they lived only for the men. And they waited for them, submissively. They couldn't go out onto the street because they were women. A male family-member would always accompany them. They would visit friends and the men would leave at the door and would go into a nearby shop where would wait for them to leave again to bring them home. They would go to mass and the men would stay out in the patio.[20]

One way or another, there was no doubt, it was the men that dominated the square and determined the complexion of all things that emanated from it: "Anyway, it was the men that dominated the Square."[21]

Despite their fearlessness and public bravado, their self-confidence could not withstand the onslaught of technological advancement and social mobility where traditional trades became largely obsolete and new opportunities arose for younger members of the local community and people from outside it. Far greater choice in terms of fashion and dress becomes possible and style and manner also become subject to personal preference rather than tradition. Women could go where they pleased, and dress and they wished. The introduction of new means of transport and communications transforms the lives of citizens. "O Largo" loses its central role in the community and only the die-hard alcoholics and old commoners frequent it anymore. Old certainties are swept away, and new practices take their place. It is becoming

[18] De Fonseca, "The Square," pp. 24-25.
[19] De Fonseca, "The Square," p. 25.
[20] De Fonseca, "The Square," p. 26.
[21] De Fonseca, "The Square," pp. 24-25.

increasingly obvious that an agitation, that would eventually lead to the events of 25th April, was slowly gathering momentum:

> The train came and changed the village. The shops were filled with utensils, which previously could only be bought from blacksmiths and carpenters. Trade developed, a factory was built. The workshops went bankrupt, the blacksmiths were demoted to labourers, stonemasons became bricklayers and also become labourers. A police station opened and replaced the placid justices of the peace and arrested the brave. Women cut their hair, used lipstick and went out alone. Nowadays, men tip their hat at one another. They go to mass with the women and spend their afternoons at the club and no longer go down to the Square. Only the drunks and conmen hang around there on Sunday afternoons.[22]

Malaise to Movement

De Fonseca provides us with a powerful social critique of a highly insular state of affairs within a highly authoritarian regime under Salazar. I shall return to this same piece of work before the end of this article. However, before we depart from his story, it would be correct to acknowledge that the story does depict a strong degree of malaise that took some time to overcome. Finding solutions to both ameliorate and eradicate the effects of malaise and indeed its causes has proven to be a difficult task, particular since 1974 when a disparate constellation of concepts appropriated by exiled political leaders who were themselves influenced by their new surroundings caused further complications.

While it is challenging for native residents to come to terms with trying circumstances, it can be even more difficult for external observers to gain an accurate insight into the true course of events and their likely evolution. In his discerning work *The Making of Portuguese Democracy*, historian Kenneth Maxwell remarks on the relevance of the time-worn phrase for the process of projecting a certain image just for foreigners – *para o inglês ver* – *for the Englishman to see.* Thus, interested observers from abroad are treated to what the Portuguese would like them to know rather than what they wish to learn. Maxwell asserts that:

> Not surprisingly, therefore, those who arrived seeking the "truth" were sure to return with it. The Portuguese themselves, knowing the rules of the game, remained more quizzical and they rarely underestimated the difficulties involved in discovering in Lisbon is as good a description as any I know of the problems that confronted those involved in the process. He described a pair of French communist intellectuals sent to write on the situation in Portugal for *La Nouvelle Critique* as "as two characters out of Beckett, looking for Godot in the mists of Portuguese non-information."[23]

These remarks reveal a lack of clarity in terms of definite direction of clear, whether by accident or design, of the regime at the time and which has proven to persist in the form of strong inertia in the decades since. This situation has been analysed by António Barreto in which he states:

[22] De Fonseca, "The Square," p. 26.
[23] Kenneth Maxwell, *The Making of Portuguese Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009 [1995]), p. 106

> There are other specific reasons that explain the evolution of the Portuguese State, its problems and the growing need to reform it. After the 25th April, the Portuguese State was reorganized in an improvised manner. Rushed, without any objective. Political democracy was established on top of obsolete corporate structures, typical of other times and ways of government. Democratic structures were combined with the previous corporative regime to which they added liberty in conjunction with other forms of government and administration hastily forged during the 1974/75 revolution. The result was a composite work, devoid of coherence.[24]

Barreto criticizes the manner in which these reforms were conceived and the way in which those reforms have been implemented. It would seem there has been something lacking in terms of substance in the process that has led to the creation and implementation of these ideas. Where can further inspiration be found? For this we can look to the thinking of J. W. Burrow who refers to Wilhelm Von Humboldt: "A work of art was, in some respects, an admirable image for a reconciliation of living, multifarious, concrete but early substances, coherent, ethereal form, of unity in diversity."[25] In making such a claim, Von Humboldt clearly acknowledges the important role played by works of art; in this case, the literary work of art, in giving form and purposes to the frustrations and problems of the populace at large.

Politics and Poetry

The late Seamus Heaney (1939-2013), famed Irish poet and Nobel laureate, never had any doubt that writing and poetry in particular plays an essential role in the creation and challenging of ideas and the condition of living which he set out in his collection *The Government of the Tongue*. Much of what he believed stands in alliance with Chomsky's reference to the "Responsibility of Intellectuals." For Heaney, poetry – a refined form of literature – is a multifaceted tool in that it is:

> for more than 'dissidents' it gives no consolation to papmongers or propagandists of whatever stripe. It's whole intent is to devastate those arrangements which are offered as truth by power's window-dressers everywhere. It can hear the screech of the fighter bomber behind the righteous huffing of the official Spokesman, yet it is not content with just an exposé or an indictment. Herbert always wants to probe past official versions of collective experience into the final ring of the individual's perception and endurance. He does so in order to discover whether that inner citadel of human being is a selfish bolt hole or an attentive listening post. To put it another way, he would not be all that interested in discovering the black box after the crash, since he would far prefer to be able to monitor the courage and conscience of each passenger during the

[24] António Barreto, "Uma Reflexão sobre a Reforma do Estado," *Nação e Defesa*, N.º 136-5.º Série (2013), pp. 224-233, in English, "A Reflection about the Reform of the State," *Nation and Defence*, No. 136, Issue 5 (2013), pp. 224-233, at p. 227.
[25] J. W. Burrow (ed.), *Wilhelm Von Humboldt: The Limits of State Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. xv.

> minutes before it.[26]

It is in the fine details of the thoughts and events of those who witness life – the public and ourselves – that we may find many of the questions that need to be asked and at least some of the answers to those very questions. As readers and citizens of the community, we are subject to life's experiences, but frequently lack the insight to understand the meaning of these experiences. On this Heaney remarks also find resonance:

> this aspect of poetry as its own vindicating force. In this dispensation, the tongue (representing both a poet's personal gift of utterance and the common resources of language itself) has been granted the right to govern. The poetic art is credited with an authority of its own. As readers, we submit to the jurisdiction of achieved form, even though that form is achieved not by dint of the moral and ethical exercise of mind but by the self-validating operations of what we call inspiration.[27]

The power of poetry bestows with a form of governance over discourse and in turn it sets the framework of thought and its eventually production of ideas:

> Poetry's special status among the literary arts derives from the audiences readiness to concede to it a similar efficacy and resource. The poet is credited with a power to open unexpected and unedited communications between our nature and the nature of the reality we inhabit.[28]

Heaney captures the poet's unique ability to penetrate people and politics and the community between them as well as the world they inhabit. One of the many treasures that literature can bestow upon interested readers is that ability to enter a dialogue between our own nature and the reality we inhabit – the wider culture that contains the lived human experience. Whether fleeting or forensic, the artists pen sketches out a portrait of our existence. For an instructive example of this in Portuguese culture, I return to "O Largo" by Manuel de Fonseca, mentioned earlier. We saw how modernity changed the stature and role of the village square and it is the arrival of modern communications systems that transforms the lived experience in that fictive world – one which closely mirrors many villages and communities of the time in Portugal and the world over:

> Today, news arrives from all over the world on the same day. You hear it in every shop and the many cafés that opened in the village. The radio shouts all about everything that happens on the face of the earth and seas, in the air, at the bottom of the mines and oceans. The world is everywhere, it has become small and intimate to everyone. Anything that happens anywhere is known to all immediately, who think and immediately form an opinion. No one is unaware of what happens in the world. And

[26] Seamus Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue: The 1986 T. S. Eliot Memorial Lectures and Other Critical Writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988 [1979]), p. 61.
[27] Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue*, p. 92.
[28] Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue*, p. 92.

> something is happening on earth, something terrible and wanted is happening everywhere. Nobody is excluded, everyone is interested.[29]

There seems little doubt that whatever is happening, will happen and cannot be stopped. Change is real, change is constant. It is happening everywhere as de Fonseca quite rightly asserts: "something is happening on earth."

As change creeps across the landscape and percolates through the culture of community in "O Largo" and works its way through decades that follow, a certain inertia asserts its presence through stubborn individuals who have no interest in the future. They cling to more traditional societal models and old habits. A character in the form of the drunk, João Gadunha, who presents a good example of dated ideals and ignorance of the wider world. He attempts to fool his audience in the square about what he claims was a recent experience in had on a visit to Largo do Rossio in Lisbon – a place he has never once set foot in at any point in his life. While his story seems credible on the surface, his lies are exposed by fine detail as we can see:

> -You know what? One afternoon, I was down in Largo do Rossio
> -In Largo do Rossio?
> -Yes, boy! Remarked Gadunha, lifting his head with self-importance.
> - It was down in Largo do Rossio seeing what was going on. People were going down, families coming up, a world of people, with me looking at them from the side. Here's a thief, I thought. And wasn't it just! He came up slowly, without drawing attention to himself, and he slipped his hand under my jacket. But I was expecting him to do that! So, I jumped aside and bang, I punched him in the chin; the guy fell over and banged his head on a eucalyptus and collapsed cold on the ground.
> Gadunha's words were greeted with laughter.
> A eucalyptus?
> By just a small detailed, a fine tailed was spoiled. If it had been in the old days, everybody would have listened without saying a word. Now, everybody knows and they laugh. But Gadunha is stubborn.
> Everybody leaves, laughing.
> João Gadunha is alone and sad.[30]

The sad tale of how the older generation loses touch with reality and can no longer credibly converse with the younger generation is exposed in this segment of de Fonseca's short story. We can see Heaney's allusion the 'unedited communications of our nature and the nature of reality we inhabit' at work here and it cannot be denied.

As we stand in the fifth decade after the Carnation Revolution, which for many represented 'alguma coisa terrível e desejada', we are in a position to look back with some objectivity as to what educated experts, who Chomsky notes as having 'the power that comes from political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression'. One key individual in this mould, the respected Portuguese constitutional law expert, Professor Jorge Miranda recently shared his insights into his contribution on establishing the constitutional machinery of state after 25 April. Miranda notes that:

[29] De Fonseca, "The Square," p. 26.
[30] De Fonseca, "The Square", p. 28.

> The Constitution is an instrument of liberty since it implies that governing authorities no other right to govern beyond the competencies with which they are invested and, therefore, it brings into its practice the same limitation principle that affects its origin. It is not sufficient that the Constitution grants guarantees, it also in turn, must be guaranteed. The doctrine of the social state endorses not just harmony…rights of individual nature with rights of a social nature in respect of its mutually interdependent and subsumptive character. Instead of repelling one another, these rights complete each other, even though they are different and have distinctive grounds, they serve common values that can hardly be achieved without the other. Having overcome this liberal framework stage, the former which only achieve their ends, if citizens are suitably equipped with the means to achieve this purpose, the latter, while applying higher justice, should not be directed towards abusive exercise of political power.[31]

Miranda quite rightly notes that rights must not only be enumerated; they must also be guaranteed. This idea of mutual interdependence in terms of rights under the constitution also extends to liberties for citizens as they too depend on mutual interaction and affirmation. Miranda made these remarks in the context of having been part of a formal parliamentary committee charged with drafting a new constitution for a new democratic Portugal in 1976. He expresses his pride at the level of participation in the elections that took place and expresses his hope for the future:

The Public Speaks: Elections, At Last!

> I – On the 25the April elections were held and early in the morning there already hundreds of thousands of voting citizens leaving their homes to vote. (…) It was moving and impressive in comparison with the last two "elections" during the Salazar regime, in 1969 and 1973, which I had observed.
> The number of voters exceeded 91%, almost six million people, something never happened before or since in Portugal. And they were elections without a speck, fraud or pressure… As I have highlighted, true democracy in Portugal was born that day over and over again through universal suffrage, that electoral legitimacy, quite precarious during the constitutional monarch and in the first republic, was then affirmed among us for the first time, and from then on, everything would change.[32]

It was indeed very position that 91% of the electorate choice to exercise its franchise and many changes came in the years that followed. However, did this promise of great change and more importantly '*legitimidade eleitoral*' finally come to pass? In the greater sense, there is no doubt that Portugal is a democratic society, but does the electorate enjoy a close proximity to the public representatives that it chooses to represent its interests.

[31] Jorge Miranda, *Passos da Vida, Passos da Constituição* (Coimbra: Edições Almedina, 2023); in English Jorge Miranda, *Steps of Life, Steps of the Constitution*, pp. 83-84.
[32] This subsection of Miranda's text is titled: "As eleições, enfim!" which translates approximately as: "The elections, at last!" See Miranda, *Passos da Vida, Passos da Constituição*, p. 109.

The Portuguese Constitution and Public Representation

In more developed democracies, the constitution is said to be at the heart of government of the people, for the people and by the people (i.e. in the U. S. Federal system). Should it then not follow that any changes to the constitution written and functioning in the name of that same people should be only be carried out with their explicit consent?

The Portuguese Constitution deals with the issue of the holding of referenda in Article 115[33] where Paragraph 3 states that:

> A referendum can only be the object of questions of relevant national interest which must be decided by the Assembly of the Republic or by the Government through the approval of an international convention or a legislative act.

Paragraph 4 states:

> The domain of a referendum **excludes**:[34]
> a) changes to the Constitution;
> b) questions and acts of budgetary, taxation or financial content;
> c) Matters foreseen under article 161 (political and legislative competencies of the Assembly of the Republic) of the Constitution, without prejudice to the provision that follows;
> d) Matters foreseen under article 164 (absolutely reserved functions of the Assembly of the Republic) of the Constitution with the exception of the provision in line (i)

A surface reading of these provisions reveals that the Portuguese are not permitted to express an opinion on any substantive provisions in the constitution because that constitution itself expressly forbids it. The four grounds under which it expressly forbidden to hold a referendum concern 1) alterations to the constitution; 2) financial and taxation matters; 3) powers of the national parliament; absolute competencies of the national parliament.

In addition to this, the first article of the Statute of Deputies[35] deals with the nature of the mandate exercised by members of the Portuguese parliament. Line 1 specifically states that 'Deputies represent the entire country, and not the electoral districts for which they are elected.' The practical effect of this provision is that members of parliament are prohibited from representing the very people who elected them. It would seem rather surprising that a constitutional republic founded in the spirit of a liberal democratic system should specifically disenfranchise members of the public from having any meaningful say on such fundamental matters within the constitution. In situations such as those described here, where the public is unable to affect direct change to the fundamental rules of the game, the circumstances in force would seem to comply under the circumstances of the sentiments set out by Wilhelm Von

[33] As previously mentioned, all translations are the responsibility of the present author. This text is taken from Isabel Rocha (ed.), *Constituição da República Portuguesa*/*Constitution of the Portuguese Republic* (Porto: Porto Editora, 2009), p. 55. At: https://imprensanacional.pt/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Constituicao-Republica-Portuguesa_MdA.pdf.

[34] My emphasis.

[35] Law-Decree number 7 of 1993, 1st March – last updated by Law No. 16/2009, 1st April. At: https://www.parlamento.pt/legislacao/documents/legislacao_anotada/estatutodeputados_simples.pdf

Humbolt in his *The Limits of State Action*. On this issue Von Humbolt notes that perhaps such limitations are necessary because:

> One major source of liberal ethical and political theories has been an attempt to avoid disputed moral ground, to cut ethical imperatives, which might be disputed, to a minimum, and to seek the absolutely basic rules without which social life would be impossible, and which may therefore be supposed to be acceptable to all shades of moral opinion; hence the force of the image of a state of nature. Unless the relentlessness of this search is mitigated, as for example in Locke's political thought, by a lingering belief that distinctively moral as well as prudential thought, by a lingering belief that distinctively moral as well as prudential rules are discoverable by reason, the result is a would-be value-free theory of politics, founded on a moral laisse faire which demands only an acceptance of the basic rules need to allow each individual to conduct his life and pursue such ends as may appeal to him.[36]

In this sense, the fine tuning of the moral system which guides conduct within society through the laws made in the legislature and promoted by other institutions provide models not means by which citizens can live their lives as:

> Political institutions and fundamental moral rules are not, in this view, nurseries or virtues or trumpet calls to a pure and holy life but traffic lights and highway codes, not prescribing to the traveller where he shall go but providing the framework within which he and others may travel to their separate and individually chosen destinations without colliding.[37]

But what of the denizens of "O Largo" in light of these provisions? They, of course, are fictional characters, but we can imagine how this situation could be treated in the changing world in which Mr Gadunha would be increasingly exasperated. A village neighbour in the form of the character Ranito provides an example:

> old Ranito, a former craftsman, was important and respected. Today, he is so poor and useless that he doesn't even known how many children he has got. He only knows how to get drunk. If there is any brave person out there, let him come out and fight! But there are no more brave men in the Square anymore, there are no more people in the Square. He goes around in a maddened rush, through the deserted Square, hitting the ground. He walks around with rolled-up shelves in an agile and ridiculous way, challenging long-dead men … the Square has already died, he doesn't want to, but he has to fall down. Weighed-down with drunkenness and disgrace, he falls down, a beaten-man.[38]

Old Ranito collapses under the weight of his frustrations into a drunken stupor. This is a scene that is repeated multiple times in his life until one day he falls and does not rise again and nobody else wishes to frequent the 'Largo'. Roles have changed, times have changed, but many

[36] Burrow (ed.), *Wilhelm Von Humboldt: The Limits of State Action*, p. xxxv.
[37] Burrow (ed.), *Wilhelm Von Humboldt: The Limits of State Action*, p. xxxv.
[38] De Fonseca, "The Square," p. 29. Note: the first edition of "O Largo" appeared publicly in 1953 while Portugal was still living under a dictatorship.

frustrations remain. Invisible ghosts duel with real demons in a democracy still grappling with its historical legacy. Seasoned commentators such as António Barreto recognises the need for fundamental reform. He notes that:

> The truth is that it is not possible to successfully initiate a process of reform of the state without starting or by revising the Constitution. This makes everything harder. The Constitution and the base laws outline in detail a defence system against authoritarianism, despotism, imperialism, commonly called fascist and communist regimes, military-inspired populism, amongst others.[39]

Conclusion

While many of the answers may lie in the Constitution, identity and giving form to them and giving rise to the mindsets that breed the freedom to figure them out remain the domain of literature and imaginative writing. As Fernando Pessoa (in *Tabacaria*)[40] so wisely said: "I have within me, all the dreams of the world."[41] There is more than enough room in the world for more ideas, for more discussion and we must use this freedom productively. Pessoa also eloquently wrote in a verse from his poem *Liberdade*[42]:

> Great is poetry, kindness and dance,
> But the best of the world are the children,
> Flowers, music, moonlight, and the sun, that sins
> Only when it dries instead of creating.[43]

We must dream better for a brighter future. Who knows, perhaps we may be able to resurrect old Ranito or perhaps befriend his grandchildren. We need not agree on everything, but we must respect our freedom to think differently. Old Gadunho's imaginary eucalyptus may yet cast a shadow on proceedings, but this may mean that it provides some respite from the intense heat of the sun and allow a more rational state of being to permeate the community.

[39] Barreto, "Uma Reflexão sobre a Reforma do Estado," *Nação e Defesa*, pp. 224-233, at p. 228.
[40] "The Tobacco Shop."
[41] The original reads as: "Tenho dentro de mim, todos os sonhos do mundo."
[42] In English, simply "Freedom."
[43] Pessoa, *Obra Completa VI: Escritos sobre Política e Sociedade*, p. 272.