Black on White

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That’s the title for a composition my teacher assigned our class to write during the holidays. I need to prepare; the project isn’t going to be easy. In Portuguese, Black on White refers to the capacity to speak one’s mind. The term has been coined in our language, and we always say Preto no Branco, never the other way round, Branco no Preto. No gray zone exists between black and white, no middle ground. Things are either one or the other.

I’m fourteen years old, and I was born in Lisbon. My mom read a book by Alice Miller called The Drama of the Gifted Child, and says I’m gifted. As soon as I could lay my hands on it, I also read the book. It deals with the tragedy of understanding more, earlier, than most children the same age.

I’m an only child and my parents are both professionals. My mom is a medical doctor, my dad an architect. We live in the center of town and I attend a public school. I want to be a medical doctor like my mom.

I’m white. My family has blueblood, and I have pedigree names on both sides. We inherited a noble title when our ancestors served our monarchy in the former Portuguese colonies. One of my relatives was Viceroy in Goa, India.

I’ve traveled a lot throughout Europe with my parents. I dislike the new fad in our country of many Portuguese visiting our former colonies, places like Brazil, Cape Verde, or Mozambique. I’ve not been to any of these territories—and I’m not interested. I enjoy traveling to cities that have cultural activities, places like Madrid, Paris, or London. My dad is very good at explaining art when we visit museums abroad.

Poetry is a passion of mine. I enjoy reading and writing it. Keywords are abundant in the genre and I’m proud to say I can name the most relevant in
our language. They are: sea, vessel, voyage, discovery, quest, east, love, empire, longing, god, destiny, and overcast.

These keywords have filled my imagination since I was born. In order to grasp a crucial matter at the core of our Portuguese identity, I say the following: When founded in the twelfth century, our territory was small and inhospitable; we went on VOYAGES, by SEA in VESSELS; our QUEST was to go EAST and DISCOVER with LOVE; as a result we built an EMPIRE; this brought us to faraway lands and left us LONGING; we fulfilled our DESTINY with the help of GOD; the Atlantic ocean was often OVERCAST by fog, the concept making an ever-lasting imprint on the nation’s psyche.

These word and their interconnections define our distinctiveness, our way of being. I enjoy using all of them, but I have a favorite one. In Portuguese we use words like encoberto (misty), nublado (clouded), and dúbio (dubious) to translate overcast. I best enjoy playing with these notions.

In history class we learned that the moment of truth in five centuries of Portuguese history was the Carnation Revolution that took place on April 25, 1974. Back then Portugal was the poorest country of Western Europe and had its longest empire. A group of army officers, aware that the Portuguese had lost wars being fought overseas to preserve the empire, thought it wise to end them. The revolution succeeded without bloodshed, and the brave officers were greeted like heroes in the streets of Lisbon.

My mom read a lot about the decolonization process that took place shortly after this historical moment. The Portuguese handed the colonial territories to those—the African Liberation groups—who had been fighting for independence for decades. Civil war followed in many of the new African nations. East Timor (in Portugal we call it simply Timor) in Southeast Asia was taken by Indonesia. At the time, people who wanted to leave and had the means fled the emerging countries and arrived in Portugal with virtually nothing except for the clothing on their backs.

My grandma, my mom, and I were talking about this issue the other day. My grandma still remembers seeing a map of Portugal everywhere in Lisbon in the early seventies that symbolized the ideology of the Estado Novo, our government. The map showed the world as a globe and displayed the territories that belonged to our country: the archipelagos of Azores and Madeira in the North Atlantic; Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and the two archipelagos—S. Tomé and Príncipe and the Cape Verde Islands to the South—in West Africa; Mozambique in East Africa; and lastly, East Timor and Macau in Asia. Because
we were the last Europeans to de-colonize, our imperialism was responsible for considerable international isolation.

The Portuguese Empire spread over four continents. The overseas territories were huge when compared to the size of the mainland. Just to give a scale of the empire’s dimension, continental Portugal has approximately 92,080 square kilometers (excluding the Azores and Madeira); Angola was more than fourteen times the size of Portugal; Mozambique was seven and a half times the size of Portugal. We started the empire in 1415 by conquering next-door Ceuta in North Africa; we arrived in India in 1498 and in Brazil in 1500. A new book says the Portuguese were the first to enter the shores of Australia. Vasco da Gama’s voyage to India took place from 1497 to 1499. Macau, currently part of mainland China, was 6,833 miles away from Portugal. The Portuguese arrived in China in 1513 and in Japan in 1542–43. It took us close to 120 years to reach Japan.

To let go of such extensive territories took a considerable amount of time. History books show how Brazil seceding in 1822 was a major blow to the Portuguese crown. Later and elsewhere, political boundaries were established to grant the Portuguese legal sovereignty of the lands occupied. The task involved major negotiations and conflict with other European colonial powers. In the decades following the 1885 Berlin conference, Portugal’s borders were set. The empire embraced vast territories, which roughly coincided with those my grandma referred to on the 1970s map and far surpassed the former coastal enclaves where the Portuguese had traditionally engaged in commerce and trading.

As my grandma explained, the map exhibited in the streets of Lisbon showed the worldwide dimension of the territories under Portuguese rule. Since we were at war on several fronts of the empire, the government exhibited the map to increase the population’s pride in Portuguese history. It was a way to acknowledge that we weren’t ready to let go.

I’m only establishing the facts to write my composition. I’ve heard my mom and dad arguing about these matters since I can remember. The 25th of April is a national holiday; I enjoy staying home from school, reading my poetry, and doing my homework. Besides this holiday—and the distinguished career of my ancestor in India forever praised in family circles—my connection to the former Portuguese colonies is zilch.

My dad says we are an old nation, and the Portuguese inaugurated the era of “discoveries.” According to him, the Portuguese played a key role in globali-
zation as we know it today. He says that our huge coastline—about 586 miles—naturally brought the sea to us. This led the Portuguese, in his views, to discover “The Other.” Given our Catholicism, Western knowledge, and written language, he claims we took upon ourselves the mission of civilizing “Him/Her.”

My mom disagrees with my dad. She replies that “The Other” existed well before we got to those distant lands. It wasn’t our “discovering” them that gave these populations either existence or identity.

My dad then adds that, in his view, the Portuguese civilizing mission was unique. We established trading posts and built fortifications on Africa’s west coast in the late fifteenth century. This initiative was a universal embrace filled with enchanting moments. He cites Pero Vaz de Caminha’s letter upon arrival in Brazil and describes the sense of excitement the Portuguese had upon landing on its shores in Portuguese caravelas. At the time, our caravelas were the most modern of vessels at sea.

My dad cites Gylberto Freire, the Brazilian author of Luso-Tropicalismo, Lusotropicalism. An anthropologist, Freire was paid by the Portuguese government to visit the colonies in the early fifties. In 1953 he wrote a book about the specificity of the Portuguese Empire. For Freire, the Portuguese are southern Europeans who, due to the Moorish conquests of Portugal and Spain in the eighth century—later designated as the Califate of the Iberian Peninsula—adopted different lifestyles from other Europeans. In his own words, these lifestyles prendem os sentidos, “blend the senses.” Such an attitude had a major historical consequence: due to the lack of European women in the lands conquered, the Portuguese increased the population by copulating with native women. Thus, we adopted and fully enjoyed polygamy. According to Freire, Portuguese men loved the exoticism of the Venus fosca—the woman of color—but, being Christians willing to expand the faith, were aware of the sin of adultery. In order “to exorcise” this behavior, Portuguese men usually treated well the women they mated with and the children they bore in faraway lands. In general, the Portuguese are darker than northern Europeans. Used to warmer climates, adaptation to life in the tropics was, therefore, congenial.

For my dad, the easy mingling of the Portuguese with those conquered allowed them not only to help populate the new lands but also to expand Catholicism without major obstacles.

Being gifted, I understand what my dad is saying when he quotes Freire. From here derives a theory of racial harmony that tries to establish the lack of
racism in the so-called Portuguese world. According to this theory, instead of colonizing by force the Portuguese connected to tropical peoples, cultures, and climates by affinity. They brought in new blood by reproduction. As colonizers, the Portuguese were colonized as well; they intermingled, fraternized, and interrelated with others.

As a consequence, a new civilization ensued.

Part of the interchange was, necessarily, language. Children born of local women were often adopted and educated in the Portuguese language and in Western ways. Christianized by baptism, the children learned the catechism in Portuguese and were often remembered in bequests and last wills. Sexual intercourse thus explained, at least in part, an idiosyncratic form of colonization by the Portuguese. The result was miscegenation—the racial mixing of peoples over time. Many biracial unions were blessed by the Catholic Church—starting with members of the clergy themselves who, despite their own vows of celibacy, abundantly took to the cohabitating practice.

The Portuguese exercised a form of imperialism centered in a distinctive lifestyle—that was neither exclusively, nor merely, based on economic advantage and/or political domination. As a consequence, the Portuguese became pluri-racial and pluri-continental.

My mom quarrels fiercely with my dad over these issues. She says that our enterprise at sea was far from noble. It’s true that we went to distant lands, settled down, and reproduced. Yes, we traded in spices, fruit trees, medicinal plants, precious stones, tobacco, cereals, rubber, coffee, cocoa, sugarcane, and cotton. We disseminated a wide variety of fauna, including elephants, rhinoceros, and rare birds; and domesticated many animals. Surely, we brought in Western attitudes, our own culture, and our language. However—and my mom says the Portuguese don’t like to admit this openly—a major trade was the slave trade. Keywords in our poetry miss the fundamental concept of our involvement in the dirty business.

The Portuguese participated heavily in the enterprise of transporting human cargo by sea. Stretching from the territories around the Gulf of Guinea—as far as from current Guinea-Bissau to current Equatorial Guinea—to Brazil, there was no end to the number of blacks the Portuguese dislocated from Africa. In Brazil alone, slavery accounted for the highest number of workers in cotton, sugar plantations, and gold mines.

According to my mom, we try to ignore and cover up historical facts, a clear attempt at clouding future generations.
She enjoys quoting Charles Boxer, a British historian. Boxer states that a nation that was a leader in placing men and women in chains across the Atlantic Ocean did not share the ideal of racial harmony. For Boxer, the slave trade was based on the notion of racial supremacy. Moreover, it had a clear financial goal, to increase the work force in our largest and most prosperous colony, Brazil. The slave trade brought considerable and substantial revenues to the Portuguese crown. Lisbon was, at one point, one of the most affluent, if not the most affluent, of European capitals.

In Boxer’s opinion, the Portuguese clearly discriminated according to color as much or more than other colonial powers. Few blacks or mestigos were in positions of power in the state, the military, or the church hierarchy throughout the empire. The exceptions only confirm the rule. Moreover, there was a generalized and widespread feeling that the Portuguese born in the colonies were portugueses de segunda, second-class citizens. Exceptions included those considered “assimilated”—those who had adapted the European lifestyle and values. In addition, the creation of secondary schools and universities was always a major deficit of our colonization.

If one wants to learn about history, my mom says, the facts are readily accessible.

My dad gets tired of my mom’s arguments, and when not busy, he takes me to the movies to see a comedy, his favorite pastime. If he feels like it, he replies that Boxer was a British historian who didn’t understand the Portuguese psyche. What we did, the why, the how.

These issues are currently at the center of a fierce national debate, arguments that instinctively have the power to divide instead of uniting our people. The debate is about the Portuguese language and the so-called recently devised Spelling Agreement; we use the sigla AO to designate the Acordo Ortográfico.

The remarkable poet Fernando Pessoa is now raised to the level of national hero. Mensagem, his only book that was published during his lifetime, in 1934, has a great nationalist/imperialist poem titled “O Quinto Império,” “The Fifth Empire.” Following authors such as Camões and António Vieira, Pessoa, a firm believer in the power and efficiency of myth, exhorts the Portuguese to follow suit with their historical past.

“The Fifth Empire” starts by saying how sad those are who live happily only at home; they do not dream; their end in sight is only death. Then, he adds, to be a man, to be fully human, is to be discontent; the soul needs a
vision. Therefore, the earth must be the theater of a clear day, a day in which a
new empire will emerge to revitalize the earth.

The poem ends in translation:

Greece, Rome, Christianity,
Europe—the four go
to where all age goes.
Who wants to live the truth
For which Don Sebastian has died? (Pessoa 77)

“The Fifth Empire,” according to Pessoa, is still to come. And it will be
ours, it will be Portuguese. If our King Sebastian died for the quest of
expanding the empire in North Africa in the battle of El-Ksar el-Kebir against
the Moors in 1578, it’s still not too late to pursue the dream now.

I find this exhortation utterly unconvincing. D. Sebastião is known by
history books as O Encoberto. The best translation of O Encoberto might be, I
think, “The Hidden One” or “The Concealed.” Since the king’s body was
never found in El-Ksar el-Kebir, the patriotic legend is one of hope. D.
Sebastião might return, alive, early one morning enveloped in fog. Then, at last,
the nation’s epic destiny will be accomplished. Today, as I write this, we
continue to long for D. Sebastião in our collective psyche.

My dad claims that we must maintain our sense of identity and evoke the
grandiosity of our past by quoting uplifting poems like “The Fifth Empire.”

My mom disagrees once again. She points out that Pessoa’s Mensagem has
far better poems to describe the country’s golden age of maritime supremacy.
She mentions poems such as “The Stone Pillar,” “The Sea Monster,” or
“Portuguese Sea.” She gets energized by the quality of some of the
descriptions: the fear of sailors at sea, the women crying in despair at the beach
for the safe return of their men, the prevailing and dangerous notion that the
world ended at the Cape of Storms in the southernmost tip of Africa (later
renamed Cape of Good Hope because it opened the route to the Indian Ocean
to the East).

My dad replies that the Portuguese nowadays need a concept that
encompasses not only the present but our magnificent past as well. He gives as
an example the Commonwealth of English-speaking countries that emerged
from the British Empire. Similarly, he holds dear the notion of Lusofonia, The
Lusophone Countries or The Lusophone World. This designation involves The
Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries.
I must explain.

There are currently eight countries in which the official language is Portuguese. Except for Macau, which was returned to China in 1999 (in the same way the United Kingdom returned Hong Kong in 1997), all the countries that my grandma saw on the map in Lisbon in the early seventies are considered part of Lusofonia now.

The notion of Lusofonia, according to my dad, reaches far beyond the dictionary definition of “Portuguese-speaking,” for it extends to countries that are historically and culturally linked to Portugal. Our politicians enjoy the notion of a strategic block operating on the basis of a common language, the Portuguese language. The block is created by countries that are rather diverse and spread over four continents. Some are rich, some are poor; some are small, some are large; and all enjoy very different degrees of social, economic, and technological development. Notwithstanding, this doesn’t seem to constitute a problem for the successive Portuguese governments dealing with the topic. To overcome obstacles derived from diversity, my dad adds the keyword love, the affection shared between colonizer and colonized.

In my dad’s view, the Lusophone World is the most efficient agent in defining our portugalidade, our Portuguese identity. My dad says that this block of countries has a determining reason to stick together beyond its historical past. For him, these countries must have a historical future. Many believe that Portugal can be the successful link between them and the European Union. These counties are all independent now and some, like Brazil, are emerging world economies.

To acknowledge this state of affairs, my dad mentions the example of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries formed in 1996, sigla CPLP. An old Lisbon palace houses the CPLP headquarters and the institution has an Internet site. The site mentions the chimera of the Instituto Internacional da Língua Portuguesa, the International Institute for the Portuguese language.

My mom is cynical about all this and says our politicians want our language to be the last stronghold of the lost empire, a reminder of our past grandeur. In fact, the Spelling Agreement has become a major point of controversy in Portugal in the media, the academic world, and among linguists. An endless amount of hours have been lost in the debate. Public petitions with thousands of names have been signed and sent to Parliament. My mom and some of her friends have stopped talking to each other over the issue.
The AO dates back to 1990 and has recently been adopted by several CPLP countries. It stands as a clear attempt to unify the Portuguese language, a language spoken worldwide by a population of more than 250 million people. The majority of this population lives in Brazil, an economy whose Portuguese language, written and spoken, is expected to have a significant impact on the international scene in the coming decades.

Any foreigner in his or her right mind will have trouble understanding the complexities of the AO implementation. However, since the AO is now mandatory in all Portuguese schools, it affects me. For instance, should I use it in writing this composition?

My mom enjoys quoting the statement from the Pen Club, Pen Clube Português, from the meeting in Barcelona of 4-6 June, 2012. It’s on the Portuguese site, in English:

The so-called “Orthographic Agreement” for the Portuguese language, signed in 1990 by the seven Portuguese-speaking countries (Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, San Tome and Principe, Cape Verde), has not yet been ratified by all, due to the recognition of basic, structural and specific problems and critic aspects of all kinds.

To speak an “essential unity of Portuguese language,” with the same orthographic rules, is the aim of the “Agreement.” That is not possible, because syntactic, lexical and semantic differences remain untouched. The linguistic variants of Portuguese language are numerous in all countries. The basic critics stress the inapplicability of such a document because the changes that were introduced were not scientifically correct; they produced an artificial language that can only be implemented through computer programs because it does not follow the natural evolution of the language. The radical changes in the European variant of the Portuguese mean a real erasure of so-called “mute” consonants (most “p” and “g,” which open the vowels and also display the Greek and Latin common roots and word family), affecting the most used words. A complete chaos is established because different writings and accent variations are accepted.

The so-called second Amendment Protocol of 2004 was ratified in May of 2008 by the Portuguese Parliament, by the majority of the deputies, due to party discipline, against the opinion of language experts and specialists in Linguistics and against the language sensibility of a considerable majority of the Portuguese population.

According to that Amendment, it would be enough that only three countries, less than a half of the eight countries of Portuguese official language (with East Timor as a new independent country), would be enough to ratify the Agreement in order to enforce it.

Since the beginning of 2012, all official documents of the Portuguese government are supposed to be written in that grapholect, which also affects the
school programs and has been adopted by a considerable number of publications and publishing houses.

The Portuguese PEN Board calls upon the support of International PEN to its actions with the goal of implementing the discussion about the measures to be taken, in order to use all legal means to revoke that unhappy treaty, which does not respect the language diversity and autonomy of Euro-A Afro-Asiatic Portuguese. (P.E.N. Clube Português)

The technical discussion involving the AO is too far-fetched to be discussed here, and the above citation mentions the major points under debate. The so-called agreement alters the traditional European spelling of Portuguese by changing the language matrix. Linguists argue that European Portuguese loses the common ground with its Indo-European branch. My mom says that the consequences have been disastrous for the language she learned in school as a child.

My mom wrote an open letter to the Minister of Education saying that the AO is a farce, an unprecedented, irresponsible, and unwise step. She explains that the attempt at language unification is not an agreement because linguists are unable to agree on the rules. In her letter she evokes the rights, liberties, and guarantees promulgated in our constitution, in particular, the right to freedom of expression and the right to linguistic identity. Because I’m a minor and my mom is in charge of my education, she says I’m only allowed to follow the norm of European Portuguese in school. She also forbade me to use the computer programs that convert European Portuguese to the rules of the AO.

As a medical doctor, she adds that the translations of medications and medical equipment from English into European Portuguese using the AO are abhorrent.

Moreover, the AO agreement was ratified by Parliament in 2008, followed by a Resolution of the Council of Ministers in 2011. Resolutions are not laws and therefore cannot be legally implemented. Thus, they do not repeal the previous spelling of Portuguese used in Portugal.

As a form of protest, best-known writers and journalists in the country now end their writings with the following statement: So and So writes according to the old spelling.

My dad says that it doesn’t matter whether the AO is legal or not. Since 2012 it has been implemented in schools, ministries, state banks, and the press. The transition period has been set to end in Portugal in 2016. In Brazil, the country that Portugal seems ready to cater to by emulating the language,
implementation was also recently delayed until 2016. The Brazilians signed the agreement, but, of course, the country does what it wants.

Parents and administrators in the school system speak of an Orwellian world with prevailing chaos and confusion in the application of the new rules for spelling. However, if a parent or guardian prevents a child from using it, as my mother does, teachers obliged to use the new spelling might refuse to read or grade the work!

As I write this in July, 2013 not all CPLP countries have signed the AO. The Society of Portuguese Authors (Sociedade Portuguesa de Autores) has repudiated it and intellectuals demand a debate in Parliament.

My mom continues to say that a major reason the AO is useless is that the CPLP countries never spoke or wrote the same Portuguese as we did. In these countries, language has always been a mélange of the language spoken by the colonizer and the various indigenous ways of communicating. As such, the European norm of Portuguese should be maintained. Maintaining European Portuguese doesn’t prevent, in my mom’s opinion, the blend of European Portuguese with other languages. In the CPLP countries the combination is rather diversified, even creative. But the European matrix of Portuguese should be preserved. In addition, there are as many differences in the Portuguese spoken in East Timor as the Portuguese spoken in Cape Verde or Angola or Mozambique. The Portuguese spoken in the various regions of Brazil is also very diverse.

A case in point is the book Budapeste by Chico Buarque de Holanda. My mom says the book is great but adds that the book is written in a language different from the one she learned in school. The phonological, morphological, grammatical, semantic, and lexical differences within our Portuguese matrix are huge. She thinks Budapeste is a superb example of how Brazilian evolved from the Portuguese norm.

Brazil is not worried about implementing the AO. And why should it be? Brazilian Portuguese is already the language spoken in most international organizations. Some say that samba is the only language that unifies Brazil. So true, I love samba! Despite its words, the musicality of Brazilian music—its erotic, open, soft, and light rhythm—has nothing to do with European Portuguese. For my mom the São Paulo Museum of the Portuguese Language is just for showing off.

Our politicians don’t seem to understand what Brazil stands for. This is a country that looks to the United States for inspiration, knowledge, and
technology. As a continent, the dialogue in the New World is primarily between north and south, not across the Atlantic Ocean.

For my mom, the attempt to unify European and Brazilian Portuguese came too late. Unfortunately—and my dad agrees on this point—the Portuguese didn’t do what Spain and the Latin American countries did over the centuries. These countries always paid close attention to the language matrix, its diversity, and the local differences. The effort can be synthesized as language unification within creative proliferation.

This dynamic has not been the case for Portugal and Brazil, my mom says. We must rely on four hundred years of history. It’s remarkable that, for all practical purposes, we continue to understand each other. Moreover, the worldwide use of English is the absolute proof of what my mom says: The language of Shakespeare continues to be the lingua franca of the English-speaking world despite the territorial differences worldwide.

The notion in Lisbon of a “common Portuguese language,” spoken at the global level is most utopian. The dream of Portuguese as one of the United Nations official languages is probably a dream of the past; the organization already has six official languages. To have more would only complicate the bureaucracy with added translations. The imagined Portuguese television channel on the magnitude of Al Jazeera undoubtedly will be in Brazilian Portuguese.

The AO is, thus, an inconsequential fast-forward movement that has impaired European Portuguese by attempting to destroy the Indo-European basis of its matrix.

My dad tells my mom to relax and look at the AO as the interplay of global world interests. The situation is comical and disconcerting at the same time. As an example, he cites the attempts of the citizens of the CPLP countries to enter the Schengen Space. This is a private club formed by the countries of the European Union that have abolished the national frontiers. There is free circulation of peoples and merchandise among them. For my dad, this is why so many CPLP citizens now want to have Portuguese citizenship. If Portuguese citizenship were granted to them, freedom of movement in most European nations would follow. Failing this aim, the closest step, already addressed, is the establishment of a Lusophone citizenship or a CPLP one.

My mom laughs when my dad says this. And my dad laughs, too.

But my mom adds that there is more. Regrettably, rumors speak of corridors of corruption between the CPLP countries. I’ll refrain from
mentioning the cases that abound in the press because being white I will be accused of elitism and racism. The fact that mature democracies have in place institutionalized systems of checks and balances will be considered of minor significance. However, the other day, a high-ranking German official said on television that if the Portuguese insist on doing business with the emerging economies they must adhere to transparent practices.

Who can disagree with this?

Something is most disturbing, my mom points out. Equatorial Guinea, located in the Gulf of Guinea, now has the status of “Associated Observer” in the CPLP. Keep in mind that this is one of the regions in Africa where the slave trade by the Portuguese was most developed. The official language is Spanish, and French is also spoken. The majority of the population is Catholic. Before Spanish colonization, parts of this territory belonged to Portugal, the Portuguese Fernando Pó being the first to arrive. The country has substantial petroleum resources discovered in 1966; it’s a fast-growing economy despite its utter poverty, and it is near the bottom of the UN human development index. According to Human Rights Watch Transparency International, Equatorial Guinea is among the top twelve most corrupt countries in the world. But the ruling dictator in Equatorial Guinea now wants Portuguese to be another one of its official languages despite the fact that no one speaks the language in the country.

Dubious, isn’t it, to think that Equatorial Guinea could be a member of CPLP in the future?

I’m young, I’m a minor, and I enjoy my language, European Portuguese. I agree with my mom: The European matrix of the Portuguese language must be preserved. Then anyone, anywhere, can recreate the language as much as he or she wants.

Fernando Gil, the philosopher, has said that Portugal has a problem recognizing its territorial dimension, its smallness. But why? I like small. Small like Holland. Small like Ireland. Small like Denmark.

I finished my class assignment, signed it, and my parents have already read it. My mom says that having a gifted child raises delicate issues for a parent; my dad says he doesn’t know what to do with me. I didn’t follow the AO in my composition, so my teacher might not read or grade it.

I hear Woody Allen wants to do his next movie in Lisbon. I hope that instead of choosing espionage as he stated in an interview by recalling Casablanca, he opts for a satire based on empire, longing, and the crucial
meaning of the word “overcast” in the Portuguese language. If he includes the current discussions in Portugal about the Spelling Agreement, hilarious as he is, he will have a masterpiece in his hands.

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Works cited

Julieta Almeida Rodrigues holds a Ph.D. in Sociology and Education from Columbia University. Dr. Rodrigues has taught courses in sociology, politics, creative writing, literature and culture at the University of Lisbon and Georgetown University. She has published in the field of sociology and has been a speaker in various international fora. Her first collection of short stories is On the Way to Red Square, a fictionalized account of her life in Moscow (1983-86), where she witnessed the realities of communism on the lives of ordinary citizens. Her second collection of short stories is The Rogue and Other Portuguese Stories (forthcoming). The story “Black on White” is part of this new collection. Currently Dr. Rodrigues is working on a historical novel based on the biographies of three distinguished Portuguese of the European Enlightenment. She will be a Visiting Scholar at the New School for Social Research (New York) in the spring of 2014.