

Brief observations on the notion of *saudade*: cultural symbol and paradox

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Brief observation on the notion of *saudade*: cultural symbol and paradox. *This paper seeks to problematize certain aspects of the notion of *saudade*, a peculiar Lusophone word known for being a “cultural symbol” of the Brazilian-Portuguese subjectivity, yet intricate to translate. The main purpose is to shed light on aspects the theme unfolds and point out the hypothesis of a supposed contradiction, a paradox of the term *saudade*, a word that must be understood as a feeling containing in its core pairs such as pleasure-pain, joy-sorrow, happiness-sadness, good-bad. To do so, this paper does not make use of established theses previously put forward, lines of interpretation, literary schools or specific scholars. Nor will it attain to the debates over it in philology and linguistics, anthropology, sociology or history. Instead, this article aims at highlighting certain nuances of such diversified notion at first, to then show in what measure *saudade* could signify a conceptual paradox through the attributions and characteristics typically associated with it, such as the desire of returning to a “happy” past, together with the nostalgic pain, melancholy and sorrow brought by the impossibility to do so. For the latter, we resort to passages of popular Brazilian songs and poems.*

Keywords: Saudade; Pain; Nostalgia; Melancholy; Happiness; Paradox.

Breves observações sobre a noção de *saudade*: símbolo cultural e paradoxo. *O presente artigo visa problematizar algumas dimensões da noção de *saudade*, palavra conhecida por ser peculiar da lusofonia, um “símbolo cultural” da subjetividade luso-brasileira e, ainda, de difícil tradução. O propósito central é destacar alguns aspectos que o tema engendraria e indicar a hipótese de que se poderia sustentar uma ambivalência, um paradoxo da *saudade* que a noção sugere na medida em que ela não poderia ser tomada sem a constatação de que se trata de um sentimento que aduz a pares como prazer-dor, alegria-tristeza, felicidade-sofrimento, bom-ruim. Para tanto, não nos dedicamos a comentar ou analisar teses norteadoras já defendidas sobre a questão da *saudade*, linhas interpretativas, escolas literárias ou autores específicos. Do mesmo modo, não nos deteremos no debate filológico e linguístico ou nos debates antropológico, sociológico e histórico. Ao invés disso, visamos, num primeiro momento, destacar certos matizes dessa variada noção para, num segundo momento, indicarmos em que medida ela poderia denotar um paradoxo conceitual a partir de atribuições e características que geralmente lhe são conferidas, como a ideia do desejo de retorno do passado “feliz”, mas, também, o nostálgico sofrimento, a melancolia e a dor pela impossibilidade de tal retorno. Para este último objetivo, lançaremos mão de trechos de algumas conhecidas canções e poesias brasileiras.*

Palavras-chave: Saudade; Sofrimento; Nostalgia; Melancolia; Felicidade; Paradoxo.

*Não é logo a *saudade*
das terras onde nasceu
a carne, mas é do Céu,
daquela santa cidade
de onde esta alma descendeu.*

(Luís Vaz de Camões, *Símbolos rios*)

In 2004, the British company *Today Translations* released a study in which the Portuguese word *saudade* was ranked as the seventh most difficult word to be translated in the world¹. Despite being understood by translators, it is a challenging term to be fully defined in other words due to the struggle of capturing the underlying local cultural references of a word of such current use. Cultures which, by the way, are as diverse as the semantic meanings of the term *saudade*, since they refer to (oppose/pertain, include) the group of Lusophone or Portuguese speaking countries which, despite sharing the same official language – with the exception of the region of Galicia, whose official languages are Galician and Spanish – hold significantly different histories and identities. This is an undeniable fact looking at countries such as Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, among others. At first glance, one could argue that there is a lack of terms in foreign languages, which could translate the possible meanings of *saudade* with the necessary completeness. Correlated terms would be the English word *remembrance* or the French *souvenir*, but these are limited to the idea of remembering; as well as the Galician *morriña*, or the German *Sehnsucht*, which, perhaps, express more closely the meaning of *saudade*². As starting point, even before concerning with the translation, we should question the very possibility of defining the notion of *saudade*. Being a contradictory feeling of such multiple meanings, could there be enough consensus in order to reach a conclusive and objective definition? Or is it a feeling so personal and intimate that any conceptual attempt to define it would result impossible? Questions like these may show even greater relevance if we take into account the existence of those who advocate that only Portuguese native speakers would fully comprehend its meaning, that it is an

¹ See on: <https://www.todaytranslations.com/news/most-untranslatable-word>.

² As Óscar Lopes already observed in the fifteenth century, it had been envisioned “a contrastive exploration among *suidade* (an ancient form of *saudade*), disgust, sadness, unpleasantness and nuisance, a pioneer exploration of such phenomenological reflection to which, from the 1950’s on, many Portuguese and especially Galecian scholars have devoted while attempting to define *saudade* and distinguish it from the Galician *morriña* and *arela*, the Asturian *señardad*, the Spanish *soledades*, the Catalan *añoranza*, the Romanian *dór*, the German *Sehnsucht*, the specific Heideggerian *Angst* and *Sorge*, etc” (Lopes 1994, p. 128). [originally: “uma perscrutação contrastiva entre *suidade*, nojo, tristeza, desprazer e avorrecimento, perscrutação efectivamente precursora daquela meditação fenomenológica a que, a partir de 1950, se entregaram vários ensaístas portugueses e sobretudo galegos quando tentaram caracterizar a *saudade* e distingui-la da *morriña* e *arela* galegas, da *señardad* asturiana, das *soledades* castelhanas, da *añoranza* de origem catalã, da *dór* romena, da *Sehnsucht* germânica, da *Angst* e da *Sorge* especificamente heideggerianas etc”]. An excellent comparative study on the notions of *Sehnsucht* and *saudade*, which flows through the fields of philosophy and poetry, was conceived by Delfina de Araújo Madureira, and is entitled “*Sehnsucht e Saudade: para uma história comparada do pathos*” (2008).

autochthonous term, a “Portuguese-Brazilian” feeling linked to the identities of these places³. An unlikely hypothesis, which would imply that only the natives of these cultures have the chance to experience *saudade*, or the equally reckless idea that this unique nostalgic feeling has been held hostage by one word.

1. Etymology

Despite all, historiography ensures that the term *saudade* has its origins in the Latin *solitatem*, or solitude, which was culturally appropriated for the Galician-Portuguese peoples inhabiting the Iberian Peninsula throughout the Middle Ages. It is common to find in the written documents of the region the use of terms such as *solitate*, *solitas*, *suidade* or *soidade* (in Galician, Spanish or archaic Portuguese)⁴. The history behind the term *saudade* and its unique semantics is deeply linked with that of the establishment of the Portuguese identity and languages. And this, in turn, is connected to the raise and establishment of the Kingdom of Portugal, whose maritime expansion and overseas conquests led it to be reckoned as a political and economic power. The Brazilian writer and scholar Moacyr Scliar (2003, p. 99) highlights the fact that Portuguese sailors who left Portugal in search of new horizons, the New World, carried with them the Portuguese culture and the feeling of nostalgia along with them. According to him, quoting the Portuguese writer and researcher Teixeira de Pascoaes, Portuguese ships had “*saudade* at the steering wheel”⁵ (*ibidem*). It comes as no surprise that at that very moment in history, the Portuguese “king-philosopher” D. Duarte I (1391-1438), one of the men responsible for the beginning of Portugal’s maritime expansion, was also one of the modern pioneers in the creation of the taxonomy of feelings related to loss, in which he describes the mental states of disgust, sadness, unpleasantness and nuisance, and the feeling of *saudade* (cfr. *ibidem*).

³ The case made for the notion of *saudade* as an autochthonous term comes up in what is considered the first philosophical work on *saudade*, Chapter XXV of *Leal Conselheiro*, by Dom Duarte, the King of Portugal. On the matter, see, for instance, the following references: Botelho, Afonso; Teixeira, António Braz (Orgs.). *Filosofia da saudade*. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 1986 (Col. Pensamento Português); Queiruga, Andrés Torres. Nova aproximacion a unha filosofia da saudade In: Botelho, Afonso; Teixeira, António Braz (Orgs.). *Op. cit.*, pp. 570-639; Teixeira, António Braz. *A filosofia da saudade*. Porto: Quidnovi, 2006, pp. 22-30.

⁴ Cfr. Ferreira, Aurélio Buarque de Holanda. *Novo Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 1975, p. 1276.

⁵ In Portuguese: “eles tinham 'ao leme a saudade’”.

Overall, the contradictory feeling of loss and solitude experienced by those sailors who left their homeland to explore new territories, or what those who are left behind experience while waiting for their return, is understood as being *saudade*. By analogy, we assume this feeling as the anxious wish to be reunited to those who had to part, a sort of desire motivated by bonds of mutual recognition and interests; a relationship built on inter-subjectivity, an awareness of one's own self, as well as an otherness, which is based on the representation of someone or something. The entry for *saudade* in the Dicionário Houaiss de Língua Portuguesa describes it as “somewhat melancholic feeling of incompleteness connected by memory to situations of deprivation of someone's presence or someone as a whole, of departure from a place or thing, of absence of certain experiences and pleasures once lived and thought to be the cause of a desirable wellness”⁶ (Houaiss 2001, p. 350). In the wide horizon of dictionary definition, the notion would include examples such “saudades of a friend”, “saudades of a deceased relative”, “saudades of Bahia”, “saudade of eating one's favorite fruit, a beach, a land, a place and time” etc.

2. “Saudade” as a cultural symbol

In the cultural history of Portugal and Brazil, there are numerous references to the contradictory meaning of *saudade*. Since Luís Vaz de Camões, the founding poet of the Lusophone literature, as supported by Scliar (2003, p. 102), the neo-platonic Christian view of the late Middle Ages helped to establish a true “mythology of *saudade*” that will become the hallmark of a distinct cultural identity. In fact, Portugal and Galicia have experienced a significant historical debate over this symptomatic aspect of the Iberian culture – including congresses dedicated to *saudade*– followed by a profuse literary-philosophical production on the subject⁷ which has been several scholars' object of study for over five centuries, gaining new momentum from the half of the twentieth century on.

⁶ Originally: “sentimento mais ou menos melancólico de incompletude, ligado pela memória a situações de privação da presença de alguém ou de algo, afastamento de um lugar ou de uma coisa, ou à ausência de certas experiências e determinados prazeres já vividos e considerados pela pessoa em causa como um bem desejável”.

⁷ In general terms, the possible distinctions *saudade* has in the cultures and literatures from Portugal, Galicia and Brazil, cfr. Teixeira, Antonio Braz, *op. cit.*, 2006, as well as the *Dicionário de Literatura*, Vol. 4, edited by Jacinto do Prado Coelho. A brief research on some of the main philosophical and literary pieces on the theme can be found in Baptista (cfr. 2000, p. 49).

There have been several attempts to put forward a justification for a systematic “philosophy of *saudade*”, as the works of Botelho and Braz Teixeira in the collection *Filosofia da saudade* (1986), the article compilation by Ramón Piñeiro, also entitled *Filosofía da saudade* (1984), in Spanish, as well as numerous articles published on the *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, such as Antunes’, entitled *O significado da saudade numa filosofia portuguesa* (1983)⁸. On that note, one of the best-written pieces came from another great name of Lusophone literature, Teixeira de Pascoaes. For the author, a member of the so called Saudosismo⁹, *saudade* would be, in the words of Braz Teixeira (2004, p. 20), “a synthesis of a memory or a remembrance with desire or hope, thus involving at the same time a painful evocation or creative presentiment of the past and a future element, referred to specific people and situations”¹⁰.

Too much of an abstract definition? Or rather a definition which would surprise those who conceive *saudade* as, for instance, just one of the several “cultural symbols” of Brazil, together with its Carnival, samba and football? The answer is most likely to be affirmative, if in the observer’s imaginary the idea of *saudade* was only associated with artistic poetical musical events (especially in Brazil). In the end, at least in Brazil – differently from the motherland Portugal or other former Portuguese colonies – approaching *saudade* without considering the vast cultural expressions which take it for object would be a vacuous attempt to study it, or mere wordplay. How can one talk about the notion of *saudade* in Brazil without considering the stigma of a country which has hit millions of Africans made slaves, taken away from their home nations and ethnicities as if they were unable to show any sort of feeling close to *saudade*? Regarding this sad

⁸ For a rigorous, detailed historical reconstruction of the philosophical thinking of *saudade* through its many advocates and schools, cfr. Teixeira, Antonio Braz, *op. cit.*, 2006.

⁹ Saudosismo was a literary movement with further philosophical and religious developments, of nationalist character, which took place in Portugal notably during the first half of the twentieth century. Having Teixeira de Pascoaes as a mentor, the movement was closely linked to *Revista A Águia*, from the Portuguese Renaissance, which gathered intellectuals such as Jaime Cortesão, Leonardo Coimbra, António Carneiro, among others, as well as, to a certain extent, Fernando Pessoa. The later, however, drifted away from the movement due to a disagreement with its nationalist tone, adhering instead to a project of cosmopolitan nature, represented by *Revista Orpheu*. Saudosismo saw *saudade* as a defining element of the Portuguese soul, not merely as an individual feeling, but to the point of lifting it up to a mystic level as enabling a relationship of men with God, a nostalgic unity of the material and the spiritual, besides hoping to achieve its merge of ideals in the political and social fields.

¹⁰ Originally: “uma síntese de memória ou lembrança e de desejo ou esperança, envolvendo, por isso, ao mesmo tempo, uma dolorida evocação ou presentificação criadora do passado e um elemento futurante, referidos, um e outro, a pessoas e situações concretas e singulares”.

and odd condition, Moacyr Scliar wrote that:

Brutally taken away from their homeland, put into the infamous slave ships, submitted to humiliating slavery, it would be a miracle if they were not sad. In addition to that, there was the *banzo*, *saudade* of Africa, which not rarely led them to commit suicide. An observation: the melancholy of the black was a reality seen in slave societies as “common”. Uncommon was the wish to escape, labelled as a sign of mental issues¹¹ (Scliar 2003, p. 135).

How can one not relate the theme of *saudade* in Brazilian lands to the notorious songs, identity expressions of the mixing races (miscegenation) aspect and of the so called “Brasilidade”, such as *Chega de saudade*, by Vinicius de Moraes and Tom Jobim; *Saudade da Bahia*, by Dorival Caymmi; *Que nem Jiló*, by Luiz Gonzaga and Humberto Teixeira; *Ai, que saudade d'ocê*, by Vital Farias, besides the vast repertoire of popular folk, regional, country songs? In a different field, but under the same perspective, it is hard to investigate “Brazilian *saudade*” in literary terms, if we do not take into account the poetry of Casimiro de Abreu, of Olavo Bilac and that of Mario Quintana, as well as the novels by João Guimarães Rosa¹². It is clearly a vast rich field which, even if one restricted the issue of *saudade* in terms of literature of Brazilian cultures only¹³, it would prevent any attempt of fully understanding the totality of its nuances, the particularities and collective imaginary that *saudade* is able to generate.

3. The “*saudade*” paradox

Without ignoring the tremendous importance of different definitions and philosophical contributions on the theme (which are here briefly mentioned and

¹¹ Originally: “Arrancados brutalmente à sua terra, transportados nos infames navios negreiros, submetidos ao humilhante trabalho escravo, seria um milagre se não fossem tristes. A isto se acrescentava o banzo, a saudade da África, que não raro também os levava ao suicídio. Detalhe: a melancolia do negro era uma situação considerada, nas sociedades escravistas, ‘normal’. Anormal era o desejo de fugir, rotulado como manifestação maníaca”.

¹² On the theme of *saudade* through the works of Guimarães Rosa, refer to book *João Guimarães Rosa e a saudade*, by Susana Kampff Lages (Ateliê Editorial, 2002).

¹³ Commentators such as Osvaldo Orico claim there is a significant difference between *saudade* in the Portuguese culture and the Brazilian culture, which may be explained by general characteristics among which sorrow and joy, pain and exhilaration etc: “The Portuguese *saudade* is beyond “dying of love”, it is often sad and the cause of pain. Its Brazilian counterpart is more joyful, imaginative, it is a young lady [...]. *Saudade* which does not cry, it sings; it does not sting, it praises; *saudade* which does not weaken, it strengthens; *saudade* which does not hurt, it heals” (Orico 1948, p. 44). [Originally: “A saudade portuguesa é mais um “morrer de amor”, triste muita vez e provoca dor. A brasileira é mais alegre, imaginativa, é mulher moça [...]. Saudade que não chora, canta; saudade que não punge, exalta; saudade que não abate, enaltece; saudade que não fere, vivifica”].

not deeply analysed), and without taking a specific line of interpretation among the established ones, we shall limit to point out the following scheme: *saudade* may be conceived from an initial idea of conceptual ambivalence, in other words, as a feeling or affection characterised by the wish of returning (allowed by remembrances and memories) to a happy and successful past, as for the possible pain, suffering and melancholy which those very remembrances and memories cause due to the impossibility of such return, which establish a kind of *saudade paradox*.

The Brazilian author José Antonio Tobias, in his book *A saudade: ideia ou sentimento*, is one of the researchers who seem to be attentive to the paradoxical aspect of *saudade* highlighted in this article. For him, it is a “bittersweet feeling of absent love”¹⁴ (Tobias 1997, p. 28). Although it is not improper to imagine a feeling that is both bitter and sweet, the formulation sounds intriguing. On that note, Tobias would not drastically oppose what the Portuguese scholar Pascoaes had stated since the latter claimed *saudade* would encapsulate, simultaneously, a painful past recollection and a hopeful future vision. In Bittencourt’ words, once certain aspects of *saudade* are considered, one may notice the following paradoxes:

It is a friendly evil, a wellness that makes us sick [...]. *Saudade* is characterised by its contradictions, its bittersweet remembrance of extraordinary proportions of what left a mark in our lives, whether it is what we have lived, a loved one who is no longer near us and who we long for. This new possibility of interaction reasonably soothes our hearts¹⁵ (Bittencourt 2016, p. 1).

The well-known dictionary of Brazilian Portuguese *Aurélio* seems to take *saudade* on with its ambiguity: “soft and nostalgic remembrance of people or things which are distant or extinct, accompanied by the desire to see or possess them again”¹⁶ (1975, p. 1276). This brief definition of the *Dicionário Aurélio*, although vague since it states *saudade* is a remembrance both nostalgic and soft,

¹⁴ In Portuguese: “um 'sentimento amargosamente gostoso de um amor ausente”.

¹⁵ Originally: “É um mal de que se gosta, e um bem que se padece [...]. A saudade se caracteriza pela ambivalente lembrança alegre-triste de algo extraordinário e marcante em nossa vida, seja uma vivência do passado, seja uma pessoa querida que não esteja mais presente em nosso mundo de relações e que ansiamos ter mais uma vez próxima de nós. Essa nova possibilidade de interação satisfaz razoavelmente nosso âmagos”.

¹⁶ Originally: “lembrança nostálgica e, ao mesmo tempo, suave, de pessoas ou coisas distantes ou extintas, acompanhada do desejo de tornar a vê-las ou possuí-las”.

could inspire a reflection focusing on proximities, analogies and differences between *saudade* and nostalgia. Why cannot *saudade* be simply a matter of nostalgia? The dictionary entry depicts the nostalgic remembrance as opposing the soft or pleasant memory, from which one may suggest the existence of a possible distinction between the abovementioned notions: if nostalgia is necessarily associated to pain and sadness, *saudade* sets itself apart from it by referring to either painful or wishful thinking towards something one wishes to relive or someone one vehemently hopes to reunite with. Therefore, this paradoxical aspect of *saudade* may allow distinguishing *saudade* from the overall notion of nostalgia.

Although, we are aware that such philosophical question would require a longer and deeper discussion, we shall limit here to point out which could be the content of our hypothesis of the “*saudade* paradox”, starting from some pieces of poetry and songs of Brazilian culture and literature. In addition, it is symptomatic how in some cases a poet or composer characterises *saudade* as a feeling of happiness, which mix pleasure and joy, but straight after, in the same piece, begins to take it from memories referring to pain, sorrow and suffering. This is the case of the well-known song by Luiz Gonzaga and Humberto Teixeira, *Que nem Jiló*, particularly in the following verses:

Se a gente lembra só por lembrar
O amor que a gente um dia perdeu
Saudade *inté* que assim é bom
Pro cabra se convencer
Que é feliz sem saber
Pois não sofreu

Porém se a gente vive a sonhar
Com alguém que se deseja rever
Saudade, *entonce*, aí é ruim
Eu tiro isso por mim
Que vivo doído a sofrer

Known as one of the most popular songs of Brazilian culture, its lyrics would serve as an example of the abovementioned ambiguity of the notion of *saudade*, and could be understood in terms of “Brazilidade”. The same term *saudade* may refer to the remembrance for a lost love one wish to keep, which would be *bom* (good) as the *cabra* (person) has not suffered, as the desire to see

again someone whose absence is *ruim* (bad) and synonymous with suffering.

This same issue of *saudade* based on the idea of past happiness which one wishes to relive is exemplified in splendid form in the well-known verses of Casimiro de Abreu (2009, p. 30-31):

Oh! Que saudades que tenho/ da aurora da minha vida,/
da minha infância querida/ que os anos não trazem mais!/
Que amor, que sonhos, que flores,/ naquelas tardes fagueiras,/
à sombra das bananeiras,/ debaixo dos laranjais!

In the verses above, it is noticeable how the notion here analysed may demand memory to convey the return to a state of happiness once experienced, brought back through customs, values, experiences and intimate images among others. This denotes the impossibility of repeating experiences so specific and unique, which turns out to be a lamentation for being conditioned to only memory.

However, this type of lament which sounds melancholic is not the only face of the idea of *saudade* – unlike the notion of nostalgia – and may even contrast the wish to overcome the sadness caused by the impossibility to relive a situation or reunite with someone. In addition, it may also differ from the actions taken and decisions made in order to, somehow, put an end to the pain caused by *saudade*. It is what one may notice in the well-known song, which founded Bossa Nova, *Chega de saudade*¹⁷:

Vai minha tristeza
E diz a ela que sem ela não pode ser
Diz-lhe numa prece
Que ela regresse
Porque eu não posso mais sofrer

Chega de saudade
A realidade é que sem ela não há paz
Não há beleza
É só tristeza e a melancolia
Que não sai de mim, não sai de mim, não sai

¹⁷ Perhaps it is fair to assume the overall notion of *saudade* in the Brazilian culture is rooted in this song and Bossa Nova, which possess overall significant and unique aspects of *saudade*. For an attempt to grasp this connection, refer to the work of Ruy Castro entitled *Chega de saudade: a história e as histórias da Bossa Nova* (Companhia das Letras, 1990).

Mas se ela voltar, se ela voltar
Que coisa linda, que coisa louca
Pois há menos peixinhos a nadar no mar
Do que os beijinhos que eu darei
Na sua boca

[...]

Dentro dos meus braços
Os abraços hão de ser milhões de abraços
Apertado assim, colado assim, calado assim
Abraços e beijinhos, e carinhos sem ter fim
Que é pra acabar com esse negócio de você viver sem mim
Não quero mais esse negócio de você longe de mim
Vamos deixar desse negócio de você viver sem mim

It is clear, from its title, that the subject seems to have reached a conclusion, and on the basis this, lead to a decision. Such decision has been taken by someone suffering, sad and melancholic, and is recorded in present simple verbs which confess a past and a present both painful. The decision is announced in the first half of the song in several verses: “sem ela não pode ser”, “eu não posso mais sofrer”, “chega de saudade”, “sem ela não há paz, não há beleza, é só tristeza...” “e a melancolia que não sai de mim, não sai de mim, não sai”. Separated by a *Mas* (But) of prolonged melody, this first part, which describes a past and a present of pain and sorrow, is then followed by a second half which, without believing in the certainty of the return of the beloved one, sings a happy interior certainty on a beautiful and wonderful future. Using here future tense verbs, the grandness of a promised love is not only demonstrated by the intimate affection to be relived, but by the quantity element: the vastness of all *peixinhos* (little fishes) inhabiting the sea would not be comparable to the amount of *beijinhos* (little kisses) to be exchanged. Meanwhile, hugs would come in *milhões* (millions) until infinity is reached; refreshed attitudes and comparisons so enthusiastic that rhythm is altered, mainly in the last three verses of the last stanza, but already from the third verse, replaced by a significantly faster beat, relaxed and joyful in relation to the melancholic verses of a *saudade*, which was sang differently in the first verses. Had Antonio Carlos Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes given a “tune” to the “*saudade* paradox”?

Undoubtedly, these few considerations are far from establishing an undeniable truth, which validates our hypothesis of *saudade* as a bivalent, and therefore paradoxical, feeling; one which, as cultural symbol of Lusophone countries, may be perceived in artistic and philosophical Portuguese-Brazilian expressions. Nonetheless, this article seeks to serve as a conversation starter, aiming at opening a prospect of wider and in depth research possibilities. At the same time, as this paper hopes to find readers beyond its homeland, Brazil, we get the initial thoughts and introductory debates presented here on the notion of *saudade*, as an invitation to discover such complex and curious Lusophone word. *Saudade* reflects much of the configuration of the Portuguese-Brazilian subjectivity, and opens the possibility of historical, anthropological, linguistic, literary or philosophical explorations of any aspect of its identities that may lead to a change in the way these cultures are perceived worldwide.

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