

Entry

Saudade as a Cultural Concept

Susana Amante 

School of Technology and Management, CI&DEI, Campus Politécnico, Polytechnic University of Viseu, 3504-510 Viseu, Portugal; susanamante@estgv.ipv.pt

Definition

Saudade is a cultural concept expressing a profound sense of longing, nostalgia, or melancholy associated with absence, loss, or unattainable experiences. Emerging in medieval Portugal and shaped by historical, social, and literary developments, it has evolved from an individual emotion into a collective cultural construct reflecting the identity, history, and aesthetic sensibilities of Lusophone communities. Drawing on peer-reviewed scholarship and interdisciplinary research in cultural studies, this entry examines how *saudade* is expressed in the literature, music, and philosophical discourse, and its role in national memory, emigration, and cultural imagination. While sometimes described as untranslatable, its uniqueness reflects deep historical and cultural embedding rather than a linguistic limitation. *Saudade*, therefore, functions as a multilayered symbolic category, revealing the interplay between emotion, language, and cultural identity in Lusophone contexts.

Keywords: *saudade*; Portuguese culture; *fado*; cultural identity; cultural construct

1. Introduction

The significance of *saudade* in Lusophone cultural identity and national imagination has been broadly acknowledged. The term is widely used in everyday language and artistic expression, where it often serves as a way of expressing a specifically Lusophone sensibility and relationship to the past [1].

However, one must note that its relevance is not exclusive to Portugal; *saudade* is also a common and culturally meaningful experience in other Portuguese-speaking countries, notably Brazil, where it is sufficiently emblematic to be officially commemorated with a national day dedicated to *saudade* [2]. In medieval Galician–Portuguese lyric poetry, particularly in the *cantigas de amigo*, it appears in an archaic form (*soidade*) in works attributed to King Dinis I [3]. In Portugal and Galicia, it is indeed a recurring theme in the literature, from the works of Luís Vaz de Camões to Rosalía de Castro [4,5], but, in musical forms, it is no less important in Amália Rodrigues’s *fado*, and in the Cape Verdean *morna*, famously performed by Cesária Évora, who similarly evokes the feelings and lived experiences commonly associated with *sodade*, as exemplified in the song by the same name, whose rhythms, lyrics, and vocal delivery convey longing and emotional depth [6]. In Brazil, *saudade* likewise plays a central role in poetry and popular music, including the work of Vinícius de Moraes [5]. The sentiment is especially prominent in musical traditions such as *choro*, often described by the musicians of Choro Aventuroso as a precursor or the “grandfather” of Bossa Nova. It is also found in several forms of Samba, particularly the Samba-Canção, often considered the “child of *choro*”, whose slower tempo and lyrical emphasis frequently foreground themes of longing, memory, and emotional distance.

Historically, scholarly interest in the concept has been closely linked to the collective experiences of separation, such as maritime expansion, emigration, and exile, which have



Received: 24 February 2026

Revised: 13 March 2026

Accepted: 17 March 2026

Published: 23 March 2026

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contributed to its enduring presence in narratives of national memory and identity [7]. Only in recent decades has *saudade* attracted systematic attention in the social sciences, including psychology, expanding its analysis beyond artistic representation to encompass social, emotional, and cultural practices.

One of the most frequently cited features of *saudade* is its reputed “untranslatability”, a claim that has played an important role in shaping its symbolic status in cultural and linguistic debates. The widespread nature of this perception is illustrated by a 2004 report from *Today Translations*, which identified *saudade* as “the seventh most difficult word to translate” [8] (p. 1). Although it is commonly rendered in English through terms “such as longing, yearning, missing, homesickness, or nostalgia” [2] (p. 41), none of these equivalents fully captures its semantic and cultural scope as understood by Portuguese speakers. Russell et al. also claimed that *saudade* has frequently been characterised as one of the emotions that “exist but go nameless in English” [9] (p. ix). This perceived resistance to translation has contributed both to the mystification of *saudade* and to its prominence in comparative linguistic and cultural debates. Rather than seeing its untranslatability as a limitation of language, many scholars view it as reflecting the concept’s deep roots in culture and history, qualities that cannot be fully captured outside the social and symbolic contexts in which it emerged and developed.

This entry provides an overview of *saudade* from a humanities perspective, drawing in particular on cultural studies. Its purpose is to clarify, situate, and comparatively examine the concept under discussion through engagement with established academic scholarship. The analysis draws primarily on peer-reviewed studies indexed in major international databases, including Scopus, across disciplines such as cultural studies, philosophy, linguistics, and sociology. Where appropriate, historical, literary, and other primary cultural materials are considered insofar as they are addressed and interpreted within the scholarly literature. Methodologically, the entry is informed by a historical-cultural perspective and by conceptual and comparative analysis. This approach makes it possible to outline how meanings have been defined, debated, and reinterpreted across different linguistic and cultural contexts.

The following sections examine the origins and historical development of *Saudade*, its role in the literature and the arts, philosophical interpretations, related concepts and comparative perspectives. The entry concludes by summarising the enduring cultural significance of *saudade* and its relevance for understanding Lusophone cultural identities.

2. *Saudade*: An Overview

2.1. *The Origins and Linguistic Significance of Saudade*

Despite considerable scholarly attention, the etymological origins of *saudade* remain contested. While the Latin word “solitas” (solitude) is the most widely accepted root, it is certainly not the only theory discussed by linguists. Because the word is so central to the Portuguese identity, its origins have sparked significant academic and cultural attention. Beyond the “solitas” root, several alternative etymological theories have been proposed. The “salute” theory suggests influence from the Latin “salute”—meaning “health” or “salvation” [10] (p. 205). Alternative interpretations trace the term to the Arabic “saudah”, as Magalhães [11] reminds us, suggesting possible intercultural influences in the Iberian Peninsula, and referring to black bile or a melancholic disposition. Proponents argue that the Arabic linguistic influence on the Iberian Peninsula contributed to the specific bittersweet and melancholic flavour that distinguishes *saudade* from simple loneliness.

Early linguistic attestations of *saudade* can be found in medieval Portuguese and Galician-Portuguese texts, where the term is already associated with experiences of absence, separation, and emotional distance. As Luisa Emanuele [12] notes, in the 15th century,

King Duarte of Portugal understood *saudade* as a complex emotion rooted in the heart rather than in reason, combining sadness, longing, and pleasure. She further observes that, in his work *Leal Conselheiro* [*The Loyal Counsellor*], he emphasised the absence of any equivalent in Latin or other known languages, thereby highlighting its perceived linguistic uniqueness. Nonetheless, a broader comparative perspective further situates *saudade* within a network of related Iberian emotional vocabularies. According to Vieira [13], although often assumed to be uniquely Portuguese, this term shares an etymological ancestry with the Spanish “soledad”, both ultimately deriving from Latin, as noted above. Despite this shared origin, their semantic trajectories diverged: whereas “soledad” primarily denotes solitude or loneliness—closely corresponding to the Portuguese “solidão”, itself evolving from “solitude”—*saudade* evolved into a more complex affective state characterised by the simultaneous experience of absence and emotional presence. Spanish expressions such as “extrañar” (to miss or to long for) convey aspects of this sentiment, while the Galician “morriña”, often associated with homesickness, has been described as a culturally proximate equivalent. This semantic proximity across languages complicates claims of absolute exclusivity yet does not diminish the distinctive symbolic weight *saudade* holds within Portuguese-speaking contexts. Indeed, its cultural resonance has been widely recognised beyond Portugal itself: the Real Academia Española has incorporated *saudade* into its dictionary, defining it as a composite experience encompassing solitude, nostalgia, and yearning (“añoranza”), as the same scholar goes on to observe. At the same time, longstanding discourses within Portuguese cultural thought continue to frame *saudade* as a defining element of national identity, as we will explore later in our discussion of the Portuguese literary tradition.

Linguistically, the word *saudade* is not merely a standalone noun; it forms the heart of a complex web of fixed expressions and grammatical structures that amplify or colour the experience of longing. This deep-seated presence in the language has given rise to related terms, such as “saudoso”, describing someone who is feeling *saudade* or is inspired by *saudade*, and “saudosismo”, which extends the concept beyond personal emotion into the realm of philosophical and literary thought. In early 20th-century Portugal, “saudosismo” even emerged as a dedicated movement, demonstrating that *saudade* is more than a fleeting mood, instead being a cornerstone of Portuguese historical and cultural identity, as we will see below. Because Portugal and Galicia share a common linguistic and emotional ancestor, the ideas of “saudosismo” crossed the Minho River almost instantly. Galician intellectuals, particularly the Xeración Nós group, similarly embraced *saudade* as a metaphysical, creative force. Figures such as Vicente Risco and Otero Pedrayo drew on Rosalía’s pioneering sentiment of the land [14] to link the Galician landscape, culture, and spiritual life to a shared Luso-Galician sensibility.

2.2. Forging *Saudade*: History, Myth, and National Identity

The consolidation of *saudade* as a culturally significant category is closely tied to Portugal’s historical experience of maritime expansion and sustained patterns of emigration. From the 15th century onwards, the country’s geographic position at the Atlantic edge of Europe and its engagement in long-distance navigation produced enduring conditions of separation that affected broad sectors of society [15]. Overseas voyages often involved prolonged absence, uncertain communication, and high mortality, shaping everyday life both for those who sailed and for those who remained ashore. In this context, during the Age of Discoveries, experiences of waiting, loss, and emotional attachment became socially widespread rather than purely individual. The sea, while materially a site of navigation and conquest, also became symbolically charged, representing danger, sacrifice, and emotional rupture. Within this framework, suffering and affective loss were incorporated into

narratives that emphasised maritime courage and sacrifice, contributing to the gradual construction of *saudade* as a form of affective heroism and a distinctive emotional trait associated with the Portuguese.

As Eduardo Lourenço observes, the experience of departure became a structural element of Portuguese historical consciousness, fostering a collective sensibility oriented toward absence rather than presence [16]. The emotional aftermath of imperial maritime expansion—characterised by waiting, loss, and longing—facilitated the cultural internalisation of *saudade* as a shared mode of feeling.

This affective orientation was further intensified by episodes of political catastrophe, most notably the defeat at the Battle of Alcácer Quibir (Ksar el-Kebir) in 1578 and the disappearance of King Sebastião of Portugal. The subsequent development of Sebastianism transformed a historical loss into a durable myth of suspended return. In the national imagination, the absent monarch was not definitively dead but expected to reappear, reinforcing a temporal structure organised around waiting and hope [17].

Over time, this orientation toward a glorified and irretrievable past became a recurring feature of Portuguese national discourse, allowing historical discontinuities to be integrated into a coherent collective identity. In this sense, *saudade* functions as a second-order signification: an affective mechanism that mourns loss while simultaneously conferring meaning and continuity upon it.

From the 19th century onward, successive waves of emigration extended these dynamics beyond the Iberian Peninsula. Portuguese communities established in Brazil, Africa, Europe, and North America maintained strong affective and symbolic ties with the homeland, embedding *saudade* into everyday practices such as language, music, ritual, and memory [7]. As Leal [18] further highlights, citing an interview with Onésimo Almeida published in *Público* (10 June 2008), a leading national daily newspaper in Portugal, expressions of intensified patriotism among Portuguese emigrant communities have frequently been interpreted through the lens of *saudade*, understood as the need to preserve a sense of collective distinctiveness across geographical separation. In the words of this prominent Portuguese-American intellectual:

The Portuguese immigrants feel more patriotic than those who live in Portugal because (...) they feel the need to stick to what they sense as being particular to them, to what they share not only with other immigrants who live nearby but also to those who have stayed behind. (...) We usually call this saudade. (Onésimo Almeida cited in [18] (p. 204)

At a broader historical level, the concept has also been mobilised to interpret Portugal's trajectory following the decline of imperial power. Perceptions of lost centrality in Europe and shifting geopolitical relevance contributed to a collective narrative that revisits the past as a source of symbolic stability [16,19].

Saudade can thus be understood as both a historical product and an enduring cultural structure. As seen, forged through centuries marked by maritime expansion, separation, myth-making, and migration, it developed into a shared sensibility through which Portuguese communities have interpreted absence, belonging, and temporal distance [20]. Rather than reflecting a single event or period, the concept crystallises a long-term historical experience that contributed to shaping collective understandings of identity and continuity.

2.3. Its Literary and Philosophical Codification

The earliest literary manifestations of *saudade* can be traced to the medieval Galician–Portuguese lyric tradition, particularly the *cantigas de amigo*, where longing for an absent beloved constitutes a recurring poetic theme [21]. In these compositions—many associated with King Dinis (1261–1325)—emotional experience is shaped by distance, restraint, and deferred reunion [3]. Although the term appears in varying forms in medieval lyric poetry,

the recurring constellation of absence, desire, and expectation already defines the semantic field that subsequent thinkers would examine more explicitly.

A more systematic philosophical reflection emerged in the 15th century with King Duarte (1391–1438)'s *Leal Conselheiro*, as mentioned above, where, in chapter twenty-five, he approached *saudade* through a quasi-phenomenological lens, attempting to distinguish the term from related affective states [22]. He described it as a condition that combines sensory displeasure—arising from the loss or absence of what is desired—with a simultaneous intellectual or reflective satisfaction derived from the sweetness of memory [12,22]. This formulation established a durable interpretive framework in which *saudade* is understood as an intrinsically ambivalent experience, simultaneously painful and pleasurable. By treating the emotion as a specific mode of consciousness grounded in lived experience rather than purely abstract reasoning, the king provided a conceptual foundation that subsequent literary and philosophical traditions would repeatedly revisit.

During the Renaissance and early modern periods, *saudade* emerged as a central motif in both lyric and narrative literature, evolving from a personal emotional state into a more socially and culturally mediated concept. Luís Vaz de Camões played a decisive role in this process by embedding experiences of longing, exile, and separation within broader reflections on exploration, national identity, and historical memory [23]. For Camões, *saudade* was inseparable from the vicissitudes of life: exile, distance from the homeland, and the loss of loved ones. He explored the paradox of presence and absence, showing how memory renders the object of desire present in thought while physically absent. In his lyric poetry, particularly in the sonnet “Alma minha gentil, que te partiste” [24] (p. 147), *saudade* functions as a thread linking life and death, sustained through memory. In other compositions, memory also functions paradoxically as a source of both pain and consolation.

In *Os Lusíadas* [25], the epic exemplifies the collective dimension of *saudade*: episodes such as, for instance, the one related to Inês de Castro and the departure of navigators from the Velho do Restelo depict both individual and communal suffering. Collective scenes of farewell foreground the suffering of those who remain on land—particularly women, mothers, and spouses, as well as communities confronted with uncertainty, fear, and the possibility of irreversible loss [15]. This strategy, which emphasises the emotional cost of historical achievement, would reappear centuries later in Portuguese literature, notably echoed by Fernando Pessoa in “Mar Português” [26].

In fact, in the 19th century, Romantic writers further intensified the introspective and symbolic dimensions of the concept. Almeida Garrett, widely regarded as a founding figure of Portuguese Romanticism, played an instrumental role in integrating the concept into debates about national identity. Shaped in part by his periods of political exile in England and France, Garrett framed *saudade* as both a personal emotional experience and a collective cultural resource through which attachment to the homeland could be articulated [27].

Across his work, Garrett reconfigured *saudade* as an intrinsically ambivalent state combining loss with the sustaining power of memory. In the poem “Camões” (1825), frequently regarded as inaugurating Portuguese Romanticism, he invoked the figure of Luís de Camões to symbolise longing for a lost national grandeur, opening with the well-known line “*Saudade! Gosto amargo de infelizes*” (“*Saudade! Bitter pleasure of the unhappy*” (my translation).), as cited by Gonçalves and Williams [27]. These two scholars go on to note that it functions analogously to the epic invocation. In their words:

These lines summon up ‘saudade’ (the feeling of suffering and pleasure for that which has been lost) fulfilling, in the place where they appear, the role reserved for what, in the epic poem, would be the ‘invocation’. At the same time, they anticipate the final feeling every Portuguese reader will be forced to face upon closing the book: the longing and nostalgia

for an ideal Portugal of which Camões, as both poet and soldier was, in the past, the real builder. [27] (p. 21)

Actually, the poem anticipates the reader's eventual encounter with nostalgia for an idealised Portugal, embodied in Camões as both poet and historical agent, thereby transforming *saudade* from an individual sentiment into a mediating category between literary representation, cultural memory, and national self-interpretation.

In *Viagens da Minha Terra* (1846) [28], the concept becomes more historically reflexive, expressing nostalgia for a Portugal perceived as eroding amid political upheaval and modernisation, while *Folhas Caídas* (1853) [29] explores its more intimate, lyrical, and affective dimensions. By doing so, Garrett helped establish a conceptual bridge between earlier heroic or classical forms of nostalgic remembrance and the Romantic emphasis on interiority, feeling, and the expressive self, further consolidating *saudade* as both a personal and collective mode of cultural meaning, in line with earlier observations.

In the early 20th century, Joaquim Teixeira de Pascoaes formalised the philosophical and aesthetic dimensions of *saudade* within the *saudosismo* movement [7,30–32]. In his seminal work *A Arte de ser Português* (1915) [33], Pascoaes presented *saudade* as a temporal bridge that unites the past with aspirational futures [34]. He argued that it is a metaphysical mechanism through which ancestors live within the present, and through which the Portuguese landscape itself becomes a mirror of emotional and spiritual experience [35]. Fernando Pessoa subsequently built upon Pascoaes's framework to reconceive the role of *saudade* in modern Portuguese poetry. Through the creation of heteronyms, he fractured the unity of the self to explore forms of longing rooted in a modern awareness of ontological incompleteness, in which identity is experienced as plural, unstable, and perpetually unfinished. This ontological reconfiguration of *saudade* coexists with, and illuminates, Pessoa's cultural vision. He envisioned the nation's literary and cultural project as "supracamões" oriented towards unrealised potential and the continual reinvention of national identity rather than the repetition of past greatness [36]. This forward-looking orientation finds its most explicit formulation in *Mensagem*, where *saudade* operates as the symbolic principle of cultural regeneration, sustaining the mythopoetic horizon of the Fifth Empire conceived as a spiritual and cultural, rather than political, destiny [30,37,38]. Pessoa also envisioned *saudade* at the level of subjectivity.

Later in the 20th century, Eduardo Lourenço offered a critical and philosophical reading of *saudade*, analysing it as a double-edged cultural dynamic: while it fosters historical continuity and imaginative depth, it can also function as a compensatory mechanism that idealises the past and mitigates confrontation with contemporary limitations. Lourenço described it as a "mythical compensation", a psycho-cultural strategy that enables the Portuguese to manage collective feelings of marginality, loss, and unfulfilled national ambition [16,39].

Across these periods, *saudade* evolved from an intimate emotional experience into a literary motif and philosophical principle, demonstrating its centrality in Portuguese cultural thought and its capacity to articulate the intersection of emotion, history, cultural memory, identity, and metaphysical reflection.

2.4. *Saudade* in Music, the Arts and Other Contemporary Uses

Among the artistic forms most closely associated with *saudade*, *fado* occupies a particularly prominent position within Portuguese cultural expression. The word itself is commonly linked to the Latin *fatum*, meaning 'fate,' an origin that resonates with the genre's persistent engagement with themes of inevitability, loss, and longing [40].

Its early performers, the *fadistas*—sailors, merchants, fishermen, labourers, the unemployed, prostitutes, and freed Black servants—sang and played in taverns, brothels,

and prisons, forming a socially and culturally diverse milieu in which different musical traditions could meet. The genre absorbed rhythmic and melodic elements from African and Brazilian music brought by returnees and immigrants, while also drawing on local Portuguese poetic forms. Scholars [10] have noted thematic echoes of medieval lyric, particularly the *cantigas de amigo*, in *fado's* preoccupation with longing, separation, and desire. Over time, these varied influences coalesced into a distinctive expressive form, through which marginalised communities articulated everyday joys, sorrows, and aspirations, creating a shared cultural and emotional voice within Lisbon's working-class society [41].

As the 19th century progressed, Fado gradually moved beyond its original milieu. Its incorporation into theatrical venues and elite cultural circles contributed to the professionalisation of the *fadista*, transforming the performer from a socially marginal figure into a recognised artist. During the Estado Novo period (1926–1974), this institutionalisation intensified, and *fado* came to function as a symbolic national song within an ideological framework often condensed into the triad Fado, Fátima, and Football [7]. Within this context, *saudade* came to be encouraged as a shared way of understanding hardship—an emotional stance tied to endurance, humility, and acceptance. At the same time, Amália Rodrigues, the so-called Rainha do Fado or Fado Queen, helped elevate the genre by bringing the work of major Portuguese poets into its repertoire, deepening its lyrical richness while keeping *saudade* at the heart of its expression [42].

Following the Carnation Revolution in 1974 [43], *fado's* visibility diminished temporarily due to its association with the previous regime. However, the late 20th century saw renewed engagement with its musical and affective legacy, accompanied by reinterpretations that reconfigured the emotional framing of *saudade*. The work of Madredeus is particularly illustrative of this shift. Rather than reproducing traditional performance conventions and settings, the group developed a deliberately stylised atmospheric environment that displaced the genre's earlier associations with tavern spaces and urban hardship. As Leal [7] argues, their music mobilises *saudade* as a structuring aesthetic principle while simultaneously translating it into a more ethereal, plastic, cinematic and exportable register capable of circulating within transnational 'world music' circuits. In his words,

One of the main purposes of the band is to construct a modern version of Portuguese music, based on a rather erudite recycling of fado. This nationalist musical project is interwoven with a cult of other allegedly national characteristics of Portuguese culture, in which saudade plays a crucial role. (...) [S]audade lies at the heart of the Madredeus project and can be understood as the Portuguese contribution to the universal catalogue of contemporary 'world music.' [7] (pp. 268–269)

Recent popular music continues to reinterpret the concept for contemporary audiences. The international reception of MARO's *Saudade*, during the 2022 Eurovision Song Contest, illustrates how the term can operate as a visible cultural marker even when its semantic density remains inaccessible to non-Portuguese listeners. Although the word itself is left untranslated, its emotional component is rendered intelligible through context, performance, and reference to widely shared experiences of loss and separation. The song's minimalist arrangement and ensemble vocal staging replace the traditional image of the solitary, dramatic *fadista* with a more intimate and communal mode of expression. Here, *saudade* appears as an ongoing relational presence that sustains memory without immobilising the subject in loss [3].

Comparable transformations occur across other Lusophone musical traditions. In Brazilian Bossa Nova, composers such as João Gilberto and Tom Jobim preserved themes of longing while reshaping their emotional tonality through lighter rhythmic structures and harmonic brightness [44,45]. Lyricist and poet Vinicius de Moraes further reconfigured this sensibility, translating *saudade* into intimate, sensuous, and often understated poetic

forms. Although Bossa Nova emerged in the late 1950s, it flourished during the 1960s under the military dictatorship following the 1964 coup. In this repressive climate, the genre's subdued tone and reflective lyricism offered listeners a subtle emotional refuge, an implicit longing for better days that rendered its melancholy both politically resonant and aesthetically pleasurable.

In Cape Verdean *morna*, especially in the work of Cesária Évora, *sodade* is reshaped into a diasporic register grounded in migration, labour mobility, and geographic separation, as Martin [6] reminds us:

Mornas (. . .) most often touch on the subject of sodade. sodade is a Cape Verdean Creole, or Kriolu, word related to the Portuguese saudade. It refers to feelings of longing, nostalgia, homesickness, or regret. Through morna, Cape Verde's composers and lyricists have expressed the sadness and happiness of Cape Verdean life—immigration, drought, poverty, social inequality, family ties, love—evoking strong emotional responses in listeners. (. . .) Research, still inconclusive, suggests that early mornas drew on influences from some or all of the following: Portuguese fado, Brazilian modinha, . . .

Here, longing is oriented toward the possibility of return and collective memory, functioning less as individual lament and more as a shared Atlantic experience structured by movement and displacement.

The contemporary circulation of *saudade* extends beyond music into visual culture, media, and commercial discourse. In cinema, which has increasingly assumed the role once occupied by literature as a privileged medium of Lusophone self-reflection, filmmakers such as Manoel de Oliveira, Pedro Costa, and Miguel Gomes interrogate a national consciousness long shaped by an excess of mythic self-projection. Rather than perceiving the nation as a providential “destiny”, burdened by narratives of past grandeur and resentment, their works gesture towards a reconfiguration of Portugal as a historical “destination”: a concrete, situated reality subject to critical examination. Paradoxically, however, this is achieved through silence, temporal layering, and marginal spaces to evoke what may be described as an aesthetic of absence, one that exposes the fissures between mythic continuity and lived historical experience [46]. Comparable dynamics can be observed in Brazilian cinema, where *saudade* often informs a melancholic engagement with memory, place, and history. Documentarian Eduardo Coutinho's intimate portraits of everyday lives, in *Cabra Marcado Para Morrer* (1984) [47] and *Edifício Master* (2002) [48], reveal longing and social absence, while Walter Salles's *Central do Brasil* (1998) [49] and *Ainda Estou Aqui* (2024) [50] explore personal and collective histories framed by nostalgia, displacement, and historical rupture. Filmmakers such as Karim Aïnouz, in works like *Madame Satã* (2002) [51], *O Céu de Suely* (2006) [52], and *Viajo Porque Preciso, Volto Porque Te Amo* (2009) [53], employ solitary journeys through marginal landscapes to dramatise emotional and social isolation, creating spaces of reflection analogous to Portuguese cinematic practices. Similarly, Kleber Mendonça Filho's *Aquarius* (2016) [54] and *O Agente Secreto* (2025) [55] revisit historic and cultural legacies, lamenting the loss of earlier forms of modernity in Brazil's Northeast while entwining personal and political memory. Across both Portuguese and Brazilian cinemas, *saudade* thus functions as a lens for articulating historical consciousness, negotiating absence, and foregrounding affective and spatial marginalities.

Simultaneously, tourism campaigns and branding strategies mobilise *saudade* as a commodified sign of authenticity, presenting Portugal as a site of emotional depth while offering diasporic audiences symbolic pathways of reconnection. National motifs, such as folklore, maritime heritage, Fado, wine, and picturesque urban settings, are selectively curated to produce an atmosphere of intimacy and temporal suspension that can be consumed by international visitors. Traits once associated with economic peripherality or developmen-

tal delay are thus reframed as markers of charm, affordability and cultural integrity [56]. Hence, *saudade* becomes an emotional promise and a marketable differentiator.

In its current configurations, *saudade* thus operates simultaneously as a lived emotion, a cultural symbol, and a mediated myth. Its continued reinterpretation across artistic and commercial fields demonstrates how a historically specific emotional concept can circulate internationally while retaining its function as a condensed expression of collective memory and belonging.

3. Conclusions

This entry has examined *saudade* as a culturally and historically constructed concept rather than as an ahistorical or exclusively psychological state. From its emergence in medieval Galician–Portuguese lyric to its philosophical elaboration in early modern thought and its subsequent aesthetic codification in the literature, music, and broader cultural discourse, *saudade* reveals itself as a product of specific historical trajectories. Processes such as maritime expansion, prolonged separation, political upheaval, emigration, and imperial decline provided the experiential conditions through which the term became closely associated with absence, memory, and desire. Over time, these experiences were symbolically condensed into a term that functions as a privileged mode of affective and temporal awareness within Portuguese-speaking cultures.

At the same time, *saudade* exceeds the register of private emotion. It operates as a shared cultural idiom through which individual experiences of longing are inscribed into wider historical and symbolic frameworks. Across literary, philosophical, and musical traditions, most prominently in Fado, as noted, it functions as an organising aesthetic principle, structuring representations of loss, expectancy, and unattainable presence. Its recurrent portrayal as “untranslatable”, although often ideologically charged, reinforces its status as a signifier of cultural specificity and as a reservoir of collective memory. Rather than denoting a fixed emotional state, *saudade* can therefore be understood as a flexible cultural form mediating between past and present, subjectivity and history, intimacy and national imagination.

A comprehensive understanding of *saudade* necessarily draws upon multiple disciplinary perspectives. Linguistic analysis helps clarify its semantic density and historical transformation; literary and philosophical approaches reveal its metaphorical, phenomenological, and metaphysical dimensions; historical inquiry situates it within concrete structures of departure, loss, and imperial experience; and anthropological and sociological studies illuminate its circulation within diasporic, artistic, and contemporary contexts. Only through such an interdisciplinary lens can the concept’s layered meanings be fully apprehended.

Finally, *saudade* remains highly relevant for contemporary cultural analysis. In an era marked by mobility, migration, mediated memory, and global circulation of cultural symbols, *saudade* continues to be reinterpreted in popular music, media discourse, tourism, and transnational identities. Its persistence attests not only to the durability of historical affect but also to the capacity of culturally embedded concepts to adapt to new contexts while retaining their symbolic power. As such, *saudade* offers a paradigmatic example of how emotions are culturally shaped, historically transmitted, and aesthetically reimagined across time.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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