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# **HOMESICKNESS AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN, 1492–1923**

Edited by  
José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim  
and João Teles e Cunha



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# Introduction

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*João Teles e Cunha and José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim*

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‘Sodade’, sung in Creole by the Cape Verde singer Cesária Évora, was a hit that took the world by storm in the early 1990s, though very few understood its lyrics and fewer even realized what lay behind its verses. People were caught by its sad slow rhythm and repetitive refrain, where the Creole word ‘sodade’ was omnipresent, perhaps not hinting at its Portuguese origin – ‘saudade’. ‘Sodade’ here means homesickness, as the lyricist reminisces his native island of São Nicolau, but in Portuguese and other languages its meaning can vary. Homesickness’ definition is as variable as the noun employed to express it, making the word often untranslatable to other languages (e.g., Saudade (Portuguese), Heimweh/Heimatweh (German), Mal du pays (French), Añoranza (Castilian), etc.), despite being shared by societies all over the world. Its complexity can be seen in Portuguese, for instance, as Saudade’s explanation evolved to mean simultaneously longing (related to pain), yearning (related to desire or the future), nostalgia (related to the past or absence), and even fog (related to uncertainty) as Marta Borges reflects in her essay. The same complexity can be said for other languages, making it a word whose definition is deeply imbued in the culture of each country and its multiple expressions.

Homesickness is just one facet of the ever-expanding field of the history of emotions that has become mainstream as the publication of books of the ‘que-sais-je?’ and ‘Student Guide’ type reveal,<sup>1</sup> or the creation of centers in universities and research institutes dedicated to its study show.<sup>2</sup> Ambitious collections have tried to gauge its

Finally, 'Heritage, identity and memory' revolves around homesickness as a way to build, preserve, and disseminate collective identity and self-identification varying from the songbooks of the Iberian Jews in the Mediterranean (studied by Vanessa Paloma Elbaz) to Japanese of Brazilian origin living in contemporary Japan (examined by Pauline Charrier), including a case study of three regional houses that cemented ties between expatriates living out of a region or a country of origin by María Zozaya-Montes). Here, homesickness reveals all its complexity. On the one hand, as a term (e.g., *saudade* in the Portuguese case) and its meaning are appropriated out of its original cultural and national frame to be used by people of another ethnicity with a hybrid culture; and, on the other hand, how longing for a lost home (either the Iberian

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Jewish or the Spanish and Portuguese expatriates) construes a memory of belonging that solidifies a community around symbols and forms of conviviality.

Besides a trans-Mediterranean notion of homesickness, a certain sonic projection that surrounds it has become highly mediatic in recent years. In this context, the case of the Cape Verdean singer Cesária Évora, known as the 'Queen of Morna', and her song 'Sodade' (*Saudade* in Cape Verdean Creole) is exponential.<sup>23</sup> Melodically evoking a nostalgic memory of her 'small' native island of São Vicente ('São Vicente pequenino' as in another of her songs in the album *Blue Sea* 'Mar Azul'), the word 'saudade' – most of

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Homesickness Clubs. Collective Discourses of Nostalgia for the Homeland: Spain, Portugal, and

Latin America, 1835–1930

**María Zozaya-Montes (CIDEHUS- University of Évora)**

The rise of political liberalism in Spain and Portugal sparked a social movement that saw the establishment of hundreds of clubs and associations starting in 1835. The names of these organizations often reflected their region of origin, indicating the phenomenon of migration. In the colonies, a new migration trend emerged in the 1870s, and associations were founded outside their region or country of origin. These associations paid tribute to their homeland through their name, thus reinforcing a clear sense of belonging. They commemorated traditions through various cultural and musical events; in general, they recreated the gastronomy of the country of origin. In short, they cultivated a collective nostalgia for the land of birth. Numerous associations, from the Iberian Peninsula to South America, dedicated themselves to reviving the homeland's most critical elements, cultivating a love for the lost place, and promoting their land of origin in other areas: from the Galician Circle in Argentina to the Casa de Asturias in Madrid or the Grémio Alentejano in Lisbon. These associations also initiated a dialogue of resignification with the land itself and with the roots of a specific past with which they wished to be identified, especially in the old colonies.