

ROOTS & RITUALS

The construction of ethnic identities

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editors



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The making of *saudade*

National identity and ethnic psychology in Portugal

JOÃO LEAL

Some contemporary uses of *saudade*

In 1993, Mary Bouquet, an English anthropologist who had taught at a Portuguese University, published *Reclaiming English Kinship* (Bouquet 1993). The book focused on her experience of teaching British kinship theory to Portuguese undergraduate students and on the difficulties she found while trying to explain W.H.R. Rivers' genealogical method to them. One year later, in 1994, the book was reviewed by a Portuguese anthropologist, Antónia Lima, in one of the most prestigious Portuguese journals of social sciences, *Análise Social* (Lima 1994). The review was very favourable and since then Bouquet's book has been used at two courses at the University where she used to teach.

In 1994, one year after Mary Bouquet's *Reclaiming English Kinship*, Katherine Vaz, an American novelist of Luso-Azorean descent, published her first novel (Vaz 1994). The novel, according to her publishers, was 'critically acclaimed' in the United States and soon Vaz would publish a further novel and a collection of short stories (Vaz 1997a and 1997b). Despite the fact that Vaz extensively used her parents' and grandparents' memories of Portugal and Azores in her novels and short stories, she went unnoticed by the Portuguese literary press until 1998, when the weekly newspaper *Expresso* published a small interview with her. Katherine Vaz's books are now being translated to Portuguese and her Portuguese publisher is expecting them to make a great success.

Finally, in the same year Vaz's first novel was published and one year after *Reclaiming English Kinship*, Madredeus, a Portuguese musical group which is currently the main cult band among Portuguese middle class, published a new album, *Espírito da Paz* [The Spirit of Peace]¹, which sold more than one hundred thousand copies in Portugal, an unusual figure in Portuguese record industry. This new album, coupled with an international tour that the band did that year, turned Madredeus into the major international ambassadors of Portuguese music since Amália, the well known *fado* singer.

These are apparently scattered and unconnected events, except for the fact that all the people I have mentioned have been and, in some cases still are, more or less related to Portugal. However, besides this obvious link, there is another connection between them. They all have used the word *saudade* to speak about Portugal and to name the peculiarities of being Portuguese. *Saudade* can be loosely translated as 'homesickness', 'nostalgia', 'missing someone (or something) beloved', 'remembering (and longing for) a past state of well being', etc., and all the people I have just mentioned have used this word - or shall I say concept? - to stress the main features they attribute to Portuguese-ness. According to them, the Portuguese possess a particular feeling, unknown to other cultures, called *saudade*, which is a unique mixture of sadness and passion, of past memories and imagined hopes.

Mary Bouquet used *saudade* to explain the resistance of her Portuguese undergraduate students against Rivers' genealogical method. According to Bouquet, this resistance should be seen as a result of the Portuguese notions of person, kin and social relations, which she claims to be incompatible with British assumptions on the same topics, as reflected in Rivers' method. In order to explore these Portuguese notions, Mary Bouquet used *saudade* as one of her key concepts. After reviewing some Portuguese sources on that topic, the author wrote that among other motifs,

'the motif of (...) the person as a complex combination of *saudades* (...) gives a glimpse of the Portuguese ethos (...). My suggestion is that (this) Portuguese notion of person (...) may have been one of the obstacles (that would explain the difficulties encountered by Portuguese anthropology students in 'applying' the genealogical method)' (1993: 165-166).

The same attraction towards *saudade* can be found in Katherine Vaz's first novel. Actually called *Saudade*, the novel, inspired by her parents' and grandparents' memories of Azores and by her own experience among Azorean-Americans living in California, is centred on the lives of two Azorean-American characters - Clara and Helio - and their efforts to overcome loss. *Saudade* stands in the novel as a means for describing the singular way in which Vaz's Azorean-American characters deal with the past. According to Vaz,

'I just wanted to write about a feeling that is uniquely Portuguese, (a feeling) that I wanted to understand better and that I wanted to deal with and (...) put into English so people could understand the term because they think it's so crucial to the (Portuguese) sensibility.'¹²

The use of *saudade* by Madredeus is comparatively far more systematic. 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. According to Pedro Magalhães, the leader of the band, *saudade* lies at the heart of the

Madredeus project and can be understood as the Portuguese contribution to the universal catalogue of contemporary 'world music':

'*Saudade* is that state of mind in which we cannot remember neither the moment we have begun to feel happy nor the moment we have begun to feel sad. It's when we learn to love melancholy as much as we love happiness, because both of them make us feel alive. Madredeus wants to create a musical genre able to express this state of mind (...). (The aim of the band) is to create a plastic image of *saudade* (...). *Saudade* is a source of poetic inspiration because it agrees with the content of the songs that a Portuguese can write. *Saudade* is that moment of waiting which allows for fantasy. In Portugal it has been addressed as a philosophy, as a poetic' (Pedro Magalhães, in Pires 1995: 113, 114).

To sum up, *saudade* seems to be a concept used, in various contexts, by different people more or less related to Portugal to refer to something that is perceived as an unique Portuguese characteristic, a trope for speaking about being Portuguese.

The Nation as a Collective Individual

The aim of this paper - which is part of a wider on-going research on Portuguese national identity - is precisely to map out, in a preliminary way, the historical process which gradually turned *saudade* into one of the most important rhetorical tools to assert Portuguese national identity. It will also address issues related to the contemporary uses of *saudade*.

The history of *saudade* is, apparently, very old. Indeed, the first references to *saudade* in Portuguese culture can be found in a fifteenth century literary text, King Duarte's book *Leal Conselheiro* [Faithful Councillor or Advisor]. In the following centuries, other Portuguese writers and poets like Camões, Duarte Nunes de Leão, D. Francisco Manuel de Melo, Almeida Garrett, etc., returned again to the topic of *saudade* (Botelho & Teixeira 1986). Some of the properties of the feeling of *saudade* were defined in those literary texts, and, in some of them, there were also some references to the exclusive Portuguese nature of *saudade*. On the whole, however, those references were very scattered and the nationalist rhetoric of *saudade* was yet very incipient.

In fact, these pre-modern precedents notwithstanding, *saudade* actually started its process of development in Portuguese culture in 'the age of nationalism'. Although Portugal has been defined as one of the 'old, continuous nations' (Seton-Watson 1977) of the West, the Portuguese political, cultural and ideological agenda in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was largely structured, as in other European countries, around the construction of national identity. In that process, Portuguese intellectuals tried in different ways to meet the international criteria for a modern, fully-fledged nation:

'a common language, a common past and destiny, but also a national folk culture, a national character or mentality, national values, perhaps even some national tastes and a national landscape (...), a gallery of national myths and heroes (and villains), a set of symbols, including flag and anthem, sacred texts and images, etc.' (Lôfgren 1989: 9).

Among these criteria, one was particularly relevant: Portugal, as other modern nations, should be regarded as a group of people united by a common 'national character or mentality', reflected on a unique way of being. The existence of this collective soul, rooted in a specific ethnic psychology, was indeed considered one of the main arguments for the naturalisation of arbitrariness, which laid at the core of national ideologies.

The importance and meaning of ethnic psychology in the modern development of nations and nationalism has been addressed by several authors (cf., for instance, Llobera 1983 and Nipperdey 1992). However, it is in Dumont's essay 'Une Variante Nationale. Le Peuple et la Nation chez Herder et Fichte' (1983), that this issue has been more comprehensively addressed.

According to Dumont, German national ideology, as articulated by romantic philosophers as Herder and Fichte, showed a weird mixture of holism and individualism, of egalitarian and hierarchical values. According to these German philosophers, the individual only existed as a member of a given national culture, whose culturally defined ways of thought and action he reproduced. In this sense, the German national ideology showed a very strong holistic bias. However, upon closer inspection, the German national ideology was also characterised by a powerful individualistic inclination, since national cultures, the overall entities which encompassed the individual, were viewed as collective individuals:

'les cultures sont vues comme autant d'individus, égaux, malgré leur différences: *les cultures sont des individus collectifs*. (...) L'individualisme (est transféré) au plan d'entités collectives jusque-là méconnues ou subordonnées' (1983: 119).

The same combination of contradictory tendencies applied to egalitarian and hierarchical values. Defined as collective individuals, all national cultures were viewed as equal in their differences. In a second moment, however, there was a move towards hierarchy: in each given period of history, it was a precise national culture that was representative of humankind.

As Richard Handler has suggested in his book on nationalism in Quebec (1988), it is against this background that it is possible to consider the importance of ethnic psychology in nationalist discourse. Through ethnic psychology, national cultures are literally seen as individuals 'that can be said to have a soul, spirit or personality' (Handler 1988). At the same time the view of the nation embodied in ethnic psychology is also strongly hierarchical. The spiritual and psychological qualities of the nation defined as a collective individual

are not only qualities that speak of the nation's singularity, they are also qualities that add worthiness and pre-eminence to the national group.

Early attempts to define Portuguese ethnic psychology

In the Portuguese case, the first systematic attempts to assess Portuguese ethnic psychology were made by late nineteenth century ethnologists. Portugal was then going through a crisis in its constitutional monarchy that would lead to the establishment of Republic in 1910 and the dominant discourse on national identity was mostly conducted by intellectuals who were sympathetic towards the republican cause. Among them were the founding fathers of Portuguese anthropology, which, despite the existence of an empire and the absence of a national problem in the classical sense, had developed as a 'nation-building anthropology' (Stocking Jr. 1982), that is, as an anthropology that not only favoured the study of local folk traditions, but also conducted that study as part of a search for Portuguese national identity (Leal 2000).

This search for national identity was conducted according to what one could label, after Anthony Smith (1991), the ethogenealogical conception of nation building. Such conception put a great emphasis on the nation as a community of ethnic descent, viewing folk culture as one of the main tokens of the nation's unique and ancient putative ethnic past. On the other hand, it stressed the nation as an entity unified by a unique spiritual make up, reflected on a peculiar ethnic psychology. This specific *Volksgeist* could also be found in folk customs and manners, and was viewed as the present testimony of those ties of common descent uniting all fellow citizens.

The first Portuguese ethnologist to address issues related to this spiritual make up of the nation was Teófilo Braga, whose major ethnological works were published between 1867 and 1885. His first approaches to Portuguese ethnic psychology developed around a nationalist interpretation of folk literature, one of his favourite topics of research. According to Braga, who viewed the nation as a collective individual mainly in terms of positively evaluated shared emotions and feelings, Portuguese ethnic psychology, as reflected in folk literature, was characterised by such traits as 'an intensely passionate and naively affective character', 'a powerful spontaneity and a strong inclination towards vibrant emotions' (Braga 1867). Later, in a more ambitious study of Portuguese folk culture published in 1885, which is usually considered his *opus magnum* (Braga 1995 [1885]), Braga offered a more detailed view of the Portuguese national character. That view again stressed the emotional side of the Portuguese collective individual, emphasising as its positive attributes 'an extreme pride', 'an imitative and affective genius', 'a weak propensity towards speculation', 'a powerful fatalism', and, especially in the northern half of the country, 'a particularly developed softness of character', and 'a special inclination towards overseas exploration'.³

Another Portuguese ethnologist who stressed the importance of ethnic psychology was Adolfo Coelho, who published several ethnological works between the 1870s and the 1910s. In some programmatic essays written in the 1880s and 1890s, Coelho already mentioned ethnic psychology as one of the main fields for ethnological research (Coelho 1993a [1880], 1993c [1896]). But it was in an essay published in 1890 that the issue of ethnic psychology was fully addressed (Coelho 1993b [1890]).

In contrast to Braga's positive evaluation of Portuguese ethnic psychology, however, Coelho's views on the topic were very pessimistic. Indeed, Coelho was writing after the English *Ultimatum*, which had drastically limited Portuguese colonial claims on Africa and had given rise to a series of sceptical reflections on the nation's viability, built around the idea of national decline. According to Coelho, one of the main expressions of that decline was the prevalence of a number of negative traits in Portuguese ethnic psychology, such as 'irresoluteness', 'progressive incapacity for work', 'predominance of egoistic feelings over collective ones', 'immoderate spirit of imitation', 'pessimism', 'hypochondria' and 'social fatalism' (Coelho 1993b [1890]). This pessimistic approach to Portuguese ethnic psychology can also be found in a later essay by Coelho (1993d [1898]). There, after establishing an inventory of the positive moral qualities of the Portuguese character - such as 'frankness', 'loyalty', 'tenacity', 'coherence between thought and action', etc. - Coelho asserted that, albeit those had been the traditional qualities of the Portuguese, in recent times they were vanishing from Portuguese culture due to the general decline of the country.⁴

Those early attempts to define Portuguese ethnic psychology were characterised by two main features. First of all, they did not develop into a systematic approach of the subject. Indeed, despite stressing the importance of studying Portuguese ethnic psychology, the remarks and comments made by these Portuguese ethnologists on the subject were dispersed in essays that were centred on other topics. Secondly, there were major disagreements on how to handle the subject. For instance, while Braga stressed feelings as the core element of Portuguese national soul, Coelho's 1898 essay emphasised moral qualities. But the major disagreement was on the modes of evaluation of Portuguese ethnic psychology. Was it built around positive values, as Braga had defended? Or was it mostly characterised by negative aspects, as Coelho had written?

Following Dumont's theoretical suggestions, one could say that nineteenth century Portuguese ethnologists agreed in addressing Portugal as a collective individual, but were strongly divided, first, about the precise mode of defining this collective individual, and, secondly, about the consequences of viewing Portugal and the Portuguese in such a way. This last point should be stressed. Herzfeld (1997) has proposed the concept of disemia to analyse discourses on national identity. According to him, besides an affirmative, public discourse on national identity, there is also a non-official, more intimate and often negative discourse on the same subject. It is seductive to look at these two divergent approaches to Portuguese national identity as an expression of this disemic quality of discourses on national identity.

From ethnology to poetry: the invention of *Saudade*

The invention of *saudade* can be seen as a major breakthrough in these early discussions on Portuguese ethnic psychology. This breakthrough, however, was not made by ethnologists but by poets.

Indeed, while Coelho was publishing his negative judgements on Portuguese ethnic psychology, Antonio Nobre was writing - according to his own words - 'the saddest book ever written in Portugal'. Influenced by the new symbolist aesthetics, which the author had assimilated while studying in Paris, the book was first published in France and was a collection of poems called 'So' [Alone]. Written and arranged in an autobiographical mood, the poems were saturated with sadness, sorrow and an acute feeling of loss. One word was frequently used to describe those states of mind: *saudade*. According to the decadentist sensibility of symbolism, revised by his nationalist concerns, Nobre used *saudade* to describe not only his personal sense of acute loss, but also to trace a parallel between his own personal destiny and that of the Portuguese nation. In both cases, *saudade* was a way to describe nostalgia for a past state of well being, the childhood of the poet and the nation's lost *grandeur*.

Despite getting the credits for putting *saudade* on the poetic agenda of late nineteenth century Portuguese culture, Nobre did not fully develop the nationalist implications of this move. *Saudade* was seen as a way of linking the personal and the national, but it had not yet been transformed into a key concept to describe the spiritual intricacies of Portugueseness.

It was in 1912 - two years after the end of the Monarchy in Portugal - that another poet, Teixeira de Pascoaes, the founder of a movement called *saudosismo*, made this decisive move. The newly established First Republic was regarded as an unique chance for the regeneration of the country, and, accordingly, Portuguese cultural and ideological life became dominated by a widespread nationalist rhetoric aiming at building Portugal as a new Republican nation (cf. Ramos 1994). *Saudosismo* was precisely one of the most important cultural nationalist movements of that period, which ended in 1926, with the establishment of Estado Novo, the dictatorial and conservative regime led by Salazar.

Saudosismo can be portrayed as a literary and artistic movement of reaction against 'cosmopolitanism'. Its main objectives were to restore the Portuguese cultural and general life to its lost splendour, replacing foreign influences - held to be responsible for the decline of the country since the Age of Discoveries - with a cult of 'Portuguese things', reflecting the true 'Portuguese soul'. This cult of Portuguese things and Portuguese soul proposed by Pascoaes was, as its name suggests, structured around the key concept of *saudade*, which was viewed for the first time, not only as a specific Portuguese literary theme, but as the central topic of an 'objectified' (Handler 1988) Portuguese ethnic psychology: something non-replaceable that 'the Portuguese' possessed and 'others' did not, something truly 'ours' that defined 'The Portuguese' as different from the 'rest'.

In viewing *saudade* as the true essence of the Portuguese soul, Pascoaes was proposing a new paradigm of Portuguese ethnic psychology that brought to an

end the disagreements prevailing among nineteenth century ethnologists. According to this new paradigm, Portuguese ethnic psychology was, first of all, structured - following Braga's ideas - around feelings. The nation as a collective individual was thus regarded as an emotional entity. Secondly, it should be viewed as a factor of positive hiérarchisation of Portuguese culture.

Pascoaes indeed regarded *saudade* as something that defined the peculiarity of Portuguese ethnic psychology in terms of feelings. Based on Duarte Nunes de Leão and Almeida Garrett, Pascoaes defined *saudade* as 'the desire for the beloved thing or being, together with the grief for its absence. Desire and Grief melt together in a unique feeling' (Pascoaes 1986 [1912]: 25) which combined a carnal or material element - desire - with a spiritual one - grief -, and an orientation towards the past - grief and remembrance - with an orientation towards the future - desire and hope. Thus *saudade* was regarded by Pascoaes as a special and contradictory feeling linking universes which were usually viewed as disconnected - the material and the spiritual, the past and the present.

Secondly, *saudade* should be viewed not only as the peculiar essence of the Portuguese soul, but also as the positive driving force behind some major Portuguese historical events, such as the founding of Portugal by King Afonso Henriques, the Portuguese victory over the Castillian army at Aljubarrota in 1385, the Discoveries, the '*Lusíadas*' (the Portuguese national epic written by Camões), *Sebastianismo* (the belief that King Sebastião - whose death in the battle of Alcácer Kibir had caused a short-lived political unification of Portugal and Spain - would eventually return to re-establish Portuguese independence), the recovery of independence from Spain in 1640, the Republican Revolution of 1910, etc. To restore its centrality to Portuguese life would also mean the return of Portugal lost glory.

Pascoaes' *saudade*, although based mainly in literary sources, was much more than a simple literary device. The great innovation Pascoaes introduced in the handling of *saudade* was a sort of 'spontaneous ethnography' of the topic: an ensemble of ethnoculturally oriented statements, wherein ideas and concepts about folk, ethnic roots and culture played a major role (cf. Handler 1988). Thus *saudade* was viewed, in a ethnogenealogical mode, as the collective and remote creation of the Portuguese folk. Its existence went back to the mythical times of the Lusitanians and was said to reflect the specific ethnogenesis of the Portuguese nation, with its allegedly dual Semitic and Aryan origins. *Saudade* as grief reflected the importance of the Semitic stock in the formation of the Portuguese nation, and *saudade* as desire expressed the Aryan roots of the Portuguese nation. On the other hand, arguing about the Portuguese nature of *saudade*, Pascoaes extensively used Portuguese folk culture, especially folk poetry and folk religious rituals such as *Encomendação das Almas* (a specifically Portuguese ritual which took place at Lent time and was centered around the remembering of the dead) as major evidences. The folk was the most accomplished poet of *saudade* and the urban poets should follow his example.

A fierce discussion followed the publication of Pascoaes's views on *saudade*. One of Pascoaes's major antagonists was Antonio Sérgio. Committed to a

'rationalist' and 'anti-nationalist' point of view, Sergio, in his attempts to oppose what he described as 'Pascoaes's nationalist fancies', raised the allegedly untranslatability of *saudade* as the central issue. Indeed, according to Pascoaes, the Portuguese were

'the only people who can say that there is an untranslatable word in their language which synthesises their collective soul (...). The only people who feel *saudade* are the Portuguese people (...). Other European peoples naturally experience some kind of *saudade*, which in French is *souvenir*, in Spanish *recuerdo*, etc. However, among these people, that feeling doesn't have the flesh and soul it has in the Portuguese way of feeling. *Souvenir* or *recuerdo* are only one element of *saudade*, whose profile is unique. That is why it is expressed by a Portuguese word which has no equivalent in other languages.' (Pascoaes 1986 [1912]: 31).

For Sergio, one of the main reasons for disagreeing with Pascoaes over the centrality of *saudade* in Portuguese ethnic psychology, was that *saudade* was far from being an untranslatable word. According to Sérgio,

'the word *saudade* is translatable. Several nations have a special word for it: the Galician has *soledades*, *soedades*, *saudades*; the Catalan, *anyoransa*, *anyoramento*; the Italian, *desio*, *disio*; the Romanian, *doru*, *or dor*; the Swedish, *saknad*; the Danish, *savn* and the Icelandic, *saknaor*.' (Sérgio 1986 [1913]: 61).

Carolina Michaelis de Vasconcelos - a Portuguese philologist and ethnographer of German extraction - was also very cautious about Pascoaes's claims on the untranslatability of *saudade* and tried to show that in some European languages one could find equivalents of *saudade*. 'The idea that other nations don't know this feeling {*saudade*} is inexact. The statement that the term *saudade* (...) is unknown to foreign tongues is also illusory' (Vasconcelos 1986 [1914]: 145). According to Vasconcelos, four Iberian idioms had equivalents of *saudade*: Castilian - *soledad*, *soledades* -, Asturian - *senhardade* -, Galician - *morrinha* - and Catalan - *anyoranza*, *anyorament*. Besides, there were also other European languages in which it was possible to find terms similar to *saudade*: German - *sehnsucht* - and Swedish - *langtan* or *langta*. What was different about Portuguese *saudade*, was its more frequent use - for instance in the Age of Discoveries, or in literature - and its importance in the configuration of the 'Portuguese soul'.

Despite this controversy, the receptivity to Pascoaes's ideas was, on the whole, very good. As Oscar Lopes, one of the leading Portuguese literary historians has written, 'Pascoaes's main ideas were in consonance with the general climate of Portuguese culture' (Lopes 1994: 129) of the first decades of the twentieth century. Thus, *saudade* quickly became a fashionable tool to speak about Portugueseness among Portuguese cultural elites of that period.

Saudade after Pascoaes 1

Besides their immediate success, Pascoaes's ideas were also to exert an important influence on later approaches to issues linked to Portuguese national identity and ethnic psychology.

One of the most important of these approaches came almost thirty years after Pascoaes first essay on *saudade*, from Jorge Dias, one of the leading twentieth century Portuguese anthropologists. Holding a PhD in Ethnology from Germany, Dias was particularly sensitive to issues concerning *volksgeist*. His first approach to the subject was a small paper called 'Acerca do Sentimento da Natureza entre os Povos Latinos' [On the Feeling of Nature among Latin People] written in 1942. There, Dias suggested that the Portuguese feeling of nature was a very peculiar one, due to its 'introverted character'.

However, it was in 1953 that Dias fully addressed the subject of Portuguese ethnic psychology, in an essay that has been considered one of his major works: 'Os Elementos Fundamentais da Cultura Portuguesa' [The Fundamental Elements of Portuguese Culture]. According to Dias, Portuguese personality was very complex and paradoxical, being based on a series of conflicting psychological traits. It combined, for instance, 'a remarkable capacity of adapting to different surroundings' - allegedly expressed in a process of colonisation, through assimilation or miscegenation, distinct from that of other European countries - with 'a strong capacity for keeping its own character'. Other oppositions present in Portuguese character were 'a strong capacity of dreaming' vs. 'a powerful will of action', 'an intrinsic goodness' vs. 'violence and cruelty', 'a strong feeling of individual freedom' vs. 'powerful values of solidarity', 'a lack of sense of humour' vs. 'an intense irony'.

Dias's attempts to address issues concerning Portuguese ethnic psychology were very innovative. His 1953 essay suggested a completely new approach to the subject, influenced by the 'national character' studies of the American school of 'Culture and Personality' (Leal 2000).⁵ However, they cannot be fully understood without taking into account Pascoaes's views on *saudade*. In his 1942 essay, Dias viewed *saudade* as one of the most important products of this introspective feeling of nature characteristic of the Portuguese. In 'The Fundamental Elements of Portuguese Culture', the central idea of the essay - the particularly paradoxical and contradictory character of Portuguese ethnic psychology -, was illustrated resorting to Pascoaes' views on *saudade*. Indeed, Dias viewed *saudade*, with its allegedly 'unique merging of the lyricism of the dreamer, the obstinacy of the man of action and a strong fatalism', as the most powerful expression of this paradoxical 'national character' of the Portuguese.

Pascoaes's views on *saudade* were also very influential among certain intellectual circles closely related to *Estado Novo*, the *regime* that in 1927 replaced the democratic First Republic with a dictatorship that would last until 1974. Although this period has meant an important political rupture with the First Republic, there were strong continuities in cultural and ideological terms between both *regimes*. Indeed, the nationalist rhetoric of *Estado Novo*, usually

regarded as one of the main aspects of the new *regime*, was built upon some of the nationalist ideas that had developed during the First Republic.⁶

Among those ideas, *saudade* was particularly important. For instance, Antonio Ferro, the main *ideologue* of the new *regime* and the head of its propaganda department, used extensively the concept of *saudade* in a collection of essays dedicated to the celebration of the renewed 'ties of friendship' between Portugal and Brazil (Ferro 1949). Called '*Estados Unidos da Saudade*' (literally 'United States of *Saudade*'), the collection developed the idea of *saudade* as a key symbol for the common cultural make up of both nations.

But it was particularly in the so called 'Portuguese Philosophy' that *saudade* became most relevant. Built around Leonardo Coimbra, Delfim Santos and other philosophers and essayists, Portuguese Philosophy was a cultural and ideological movement centred around the attempt to develop a purely Portuguese philosophy. From the beginning, *saudade* was seen by the major protagonists of the movement, who had close ideological links to *Estado Novo*, as a key concept in their endeavour of providing Portugal with a specific philosophical tradition.

***Saudade* after Pascoaes II**

While Antonio Ferro published '*Estados Unidos da Saudade*' and the 'Portuguese philosophers' were developing their own version of *saudade*, other major developments concerning *saudade* were also taking place in a more diffuse way. One of them was related to *fado*, an urban folk song genre that would eventually become Portugal's national song *par excellence*.

The invention of *saudade* in the beginning of the twentieth century had been simultaneous to the discovery of *fado* by Portuguese cultural elites. From the beginning, *fado* was seen as a musical expression of *saudade* (cf., for instance, Pimentel 1904, Arroio 1909 and Pinto de Carvalho 1982 [1909]). Despite being a musical phenomenon that had originated and developed in lower class neighbourhoods of Lisbon - and despite having been considered by some Portuguese intellectuals a decadent musical genre because of its social origin and contents (cf. Moita 1936) - *fado* began to win a national audience during the 1930s, favoured by the development of radio and the record industry (Brito 1994). As a result, by the 1940s, *fado* was already viewed as the Portuguese national song, both for external and internal purposes. Amália, one of the greatest interpreters of *fado* was turned - along with Eusébio, the famous Benfica football player and Our Lady of Fátima⁷ - into a national heroine and *fado* was celebrated as one of the main expressions of Portuguese genius. Particularly in Lisboa, *fado* began to be sung in *casas de fado* (literally 'houses of fado', usually 'typical' restaurants for tourists; see Alves & Klein 1994) and rapidly turned into one of the major Portuguese attractions for tourists.

Being one of the main themes of *fado*, *saudade* also benefited from its process of transformation into a national song. At the same time that *fado* was

becoming the particular and unique expression of Portuguese musical genius, *saudade* was slowly becoming - particularly in the urban centres - a widespread stereotype for describing the intricacies of the Portuguese soul.

Another important step in the diffusion of *saudade* as a Portuguese theme occurred in the 1960s and 1970s and was related to the development of Portuguese emigration towards France, Germany, USA and Canada. During those two decades, almost one million of Portuguese, coming mostly from the overpopulated rural areas, established themselves abroad. There, they kept close links to their places of origin. Emigration was viewed as a temporary endeavour: the objective was to earn enough money, win a higher standard of living and then return to Portugal. Moreover, the majority of emigrants had relatives living in Portugal and paid frequent visits to them, often keeping a strong participation in local social and religious life. They were at the same time members of the new communities in which they now lived and members of the local Portuguese communities where they were born and with which they kept ties of strong loyalty (cf. Trindade 1976, 1989 and Leal 1996).

The preservation and strengthening of those ties were favoured by the policies adopted by Portuguese governmental agencies, especially after 1970 (Monteiro 1994). At an ideological level, emigrants were viewed as full members of the 'transnational'⁵ Portuguese society, a kind of modern replica of the navigators and settlers of the Age of Discoveries. This ideological discourse was of course meant for internal use: it sought to transform an event which basically reflected the extremely poor conditions prevailing in Portugal into a new epic of Portugueseness. But it also had some practical purposes. Portuguese political authorities were interested in making sure that the emigrants would actually transform their savings into remittances deposited in Portuguese banks, allowing the economy of the country to directly benefit from the emigrants' remittances. In fact, the Portuguese economy from the 1960s to the present has depended on the latter.

The practices and discourses centred on the preservation of the links between the emigrants and their homeland, produced either by the emigrants themselves or by the State authorities, used *saudade* as an important ideological tool. *Saudade* was the feeling which kept alive the links between the emigrants and their homeland. While being abroad, the emigrant was constantly *com saudades*, that is, homesick, longing for its homeland and remembering it as a past state of well being to which he would like to return. *Saudade* was thus transformed into a metaphor for Portugueseness among Portuguese emigrants.

So, both the gradual transformation of *fado* into the ultimate Portuguese national song and the development of Portuguese emigration during the 1960s and 1970s made an important contribution to the diffusion of *saudade* as a key word for Portugueseness in Portuguese culture and society

The 1974 Revolution somehow changed this situation. With the major exception of State discourses directed towards Portuguese emigrants, which entered a decisive stage in their process of affirmation and development (cf. Feldman-Bianco 1992 and Monteiro 1994), *saudade* was internally viewed by

the new political and cultural ruling elites as closely associated with Estado Novo, and therefore considered 'politically incorrect'.

For instance, one of the most influential books published in Portugal after 1974 on the topic of national identity was Lourenço's *O Labirinto da Saudade* [The Labyrinth of Saudade] (Lourenço 1978). But *saudade* stood there not as a positive symbol of Portuguese identity, but as a negative symbol of discourses on national identity which Lourenço viewed critically. *Saudade* was indeed seen by Lourenço as a product of what he considered to be the 'prodigious unrealism' which had characterised the relationship between the cultural elites and the country inscribed in the discourses on national identity produced by the former. *Saudade*, mainly viewed as a value attached to the nostalgia of Portugal's lost *grandeur*, was seen as an obstacle to the new relationship that should be built between Portuguese cultural elites and the new democratic and post-colonial reality of the country.

***Saudade*: a successful 'invented tradition'?**

Since 1974, as the examples given in the first section of this paper show, the situation has changed and *saudade* seems to be back to Portuguese life and culture. But can we conclude that, despite some difficult times after 1974, the history of *saudade* is a successful one and that we are dealing with a triumphant 'invented tradition' (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983)?

To answer this question one must look at some specific social and cultural contexts to which *saudade* is currently linked. The examples given at the beginning of this paper provide a very good starting point.

The first example concerned the use of *saudade* in Mary Bouquet's book *Reclaiming English Kinship*. As we have pointed out, Bouquet used *saudade* as a conceptual tool to analyse the cultural reasons for the resistance of Portuguese undergraduate students against Rivers' genealogical method. This is, I believe, a correct way of describing the overall argument of her book. But the subject of the book is a wider one.

Addressing this specific issue, Mary Bouquet was also trying to come to terms with her own personal experience of Portugal and the Portuguese, of her friends and colleagues, and of people she occasionally met in the streets or in the shops: for instance, the way they behaved in everyday life, the reason why they engaged so easily in long casual conversations despite being late for important appointments, or why they put so much stress on warmth as a core value of social relations. It is in this wider context that Mary Bouquet turned to *saudade*, mainly using Jorge Dias' essay on 'The Fundamental Elements of Portuguese Culture'. As a good anthropologist she was turning to what she considered a legitimate piece of 'indigenous discourse' to make sense of something that was puzzling to her. The authority of this piece of 'indigenous discourse' was increased by the fact that it came from a Portuguese anthropologist who conveyed an aura of admiration and respect among some of Mary

Bouquet's Portuguese colleagues. For all these reasons, *saudade* appeared to her as a useful tool to speak about the idiosyncrasies of the Portuguese and to deal with their (relative) 'otherness'.

The situation of Mary Bouquet was of course a peculiar one: she was a foreign anthropologist who lived and worked in Portugal for a long period of time, and who used her personal and professional experience in order to reflect upon Portuguese culture in an anthropological study. But in her own way, she was having the kind of experience that foreigners living in Portugal for shorter periods of time are familiar with: how to make sense of the different cultural conventions that seem to be peculiar to a foreign country like Portugal?

I would like to suggest that those kind of experiences, based on travel and displacement, constitute the first context where *saudade* is, indeed, a successful 'invented tradition'. For a non-Portuguese travelling or temporarily living in Portugal, *saudade* is actually one of the main discourses available on Portugueseness. In the case of Mary Bouquet, this discourse was available on the shelves of a specialised library. In other cases, this discourse is made available by a series of culturally prescribed ways of dealing with outsiders, such as inviting them to a *Casa de Fado*, informally introducing them to some allegedly particularities of the country, or asserting the uniqueness of the Portuguese by contrasting 'our' melancholic temperament with the 'awkward exuberance' of the Spaniards and other Latin people. *Fado* or *saudade*, or both of them, can at any moment jump into the conversation.

Saudade can thus be seen as an objectified trait (Handler 1988) of the version of Portuguese culture that some Portuguese themselves produce for foreigners. It is not the only one, but is surely one of the most important.

Let me turn now to my second example: Katherine Vaz's novel *Saudade*. Vaz, as we have seen, is a descendant of Luso-Azoreans living in California, where the Luso-American community in the beginning of the 1980s amounted to 21,000 people (Monteiro 1987: 796).⁸ Albeit some of the original Luso-Azorean emigrants arrived in the 1920s, it was in the 1960s and 1970s that Luso-Azorean emigration towards the USA reached its peak, with almost 100,000 Azoreans leaving the Azores.

Azorean emigration towards the USA was part of the more general pattern of Portuguese emigration during the 1960s and the 1970s. The tendencies that we have previously outlined were also present in this case. The Luso-Azorean emigrants kept close contact with the Azores, and that contact was also constructed around the idea of *saudade* as the feeling which kept alive the links between the emigrants and their homeland, as the anthropologist Bella Feldman-Bianco has shown (Feldman-Bianco 1992; Feldman-Bianco & Huse 1995; see also Monteiro 1994). *Saudade* was celebrated in the personal memories of emigrants; it was sung by folk singers at formal gatherings and celebrations of Azorean emigrants taking place in the USA; it was used to baptise the new market that Azorean emigrants provided to Portuguese and Azorean products, the so called *market of saudade*; it was enthusiastically evoked by cultural and political leaders of Azorean-American communities at the Congresses of

Azorean emigrants organised and sponsored since 1976 by the Azorean regional government. Finally, it was also celebrated by Luso-Azorean writers, novelists and poets closely linked to the Azorean-American community (cf. Rosa & Trigo 1994: 83-94). At first, those writers were members of the first generation of Azorean emigrants and used to write in Portuguese for a Portuguese audience. But a second wave of writers of second and third generation Azorean emigrants seems to be now emerging.⁹ Although writing in English for an American audience, this new wave of American-Azorean writers keep on celebrating *saudade* as a privileged trope for the evocation of Portuguese roots, as the case of Katherine Vaz suggests.

Thus Katherine Vaz's novel *Saudade* does not stand as an isolated phenomenon, but as an example of a much wider pattern: the importance of *saudade* as a key symbol of Portuguese national identity among Luso-Azorean emigrants in the USA. This second context where *saudade* seems to have a very strong cultural efficacy is familiar to anthropologists. As several of them have stressed, the processes of displacement, deterritorialisation and transnationalization of national communities are linked to what Benedict Anderson called 'long distance nationalism' (Anderson 1992). Geographically cut from their national backgrounds, emigrants not only reconstruct home away from home, but they do so in a much more vigorous way than their fellow citizens at home would dare to. As Greek- and Macedonian-Australians have been more prone to wage battle on Macedonia than their fellow citizens at home (Danforth 1995), Azorean-Americans make a more systematic use of *saudade* as a key symbol of national identity than Portuguese living in Portugal. As one Azorean emigrant told me while I was doing field work in the Azores ten years ago, *tern que se sair de Portugal para se saber o que é que são saudades* ('one has to leave Portugal to know the meaning of the word *saudade*').

What strikes the most in these first two contexts for the contemporary use of *saudade* as a key symbol of Portuguese-ness is the way in which an ethnic symbol like *saudade* - ascribed from outside, as is the case with foreign observers of Portuguese culture, or self attributed, as is the case with Luso-Azorean emigrants - seems to work rather well in the kind of contexts - of mutual interaction between different cultures and cultural boundary making - that Barth addressed almost thirty years ago in his seminal essay on ethnicity (Barth 1969). Current processes of transnationalisation, travel, displacement and deterritorialisation seem to have multiplied this type of contexts, thus contributing to an almost generalised ethnicisation of the world. In the case we are addressing, this process of ethnicisation turned *saudade* from a rather bizarre 'invention' of a Portuguese poet who strongly disliked cosmopolitanism into a widespread device for travellers, emigrants and cosmopolitans alike - true or false (Hannerz 1993) - to deal with issues of home and dislocation.

That does not mean, however, that the cultural efficacy of *saudade* applies only to contemporary situations of travel and displacement with which we have been dealing. Let me turn now to my third example, the one concerning the uses of *saudade* by Madre Deus. The Portuguese success of Madre Deus is

basically a middle class success. And indeed, it is among Portuguese middle class that we can locate a third context where *saudade* as a metaphor for Portugueseness seems to work rather well.

In that social and cultural context, *saudade* can be seen as an element of what Lofgren (1986:13-15) called the 'national cultural capital' which he viewed as a decisive part of national identity. That does not mean that every middle class Portuguese is ready to accept *saudade* as a symbol of Portugueseness. But, at least, every cultivated middle class Portuguese is ready in certain contexts to accept that *saudade* is at least viewed by some of his fellow citizens as an emblematic feature of what is to be Portuguese. He can be ironic, or disemic (Herzfeld 1997), or even completely critical about it, but ultimately *saudade* stands as a possible symbol of Portugueseness. Like *bacalhau* or *sardinha assada* (codfish and grilled sardine, usually viewed as two of Portuguese most 'typical' dishes), the Age of the Discoveries, King Afonso Henriques, or Portuguese hospitality, *saudade* can engender everyday discourses, 'inside jokes' (Lofgren 1989: 15) and ironic or fierce arguments on Portugal and the Portuguese. People may not adhere to what is sometimes termed as the 'mystical' discourse of *saudade*, but they can still recognise it as very Portuguese indeed. In those cases, what is Portuguese is not *saudade* itself but the way some people keep on talking about *saudade* as a Portuguese thing.

However, if we are looking for *saudade* as a consensual symbol of Portugueseness among the majority of the Portuguese population, we must look somewhere else. *Saudade* (or *saudades*) is of course a common word in Portuguese everyday language. But its use by the majority of the Portuguese population does not convey, except for the social contexts we have been addressing, a consistent perception of the Portugueseness of that feeling. The feeling is there, but in most cases it is not symbolically appropriated as strictly Portuguese. *Saudade* can therefore be considered a successful 'invented tradition' only in reference to some specific social and cultural milieus where a particular version of Portugueseness has developed.

From this point of view, *saudade* should be regarded as an example of a more widespread tendency present in other processes of construction and circulation of national symbols and stereotypes: although directed towards the whole national population, they are in fact selectively appropriated by specific cultural and social groups who reproduce them as particular symbols of their own sense of a more general feeling: that of 'being national'.

Notes

- 1 *Ainda*, the latest album by Madredeus was published in 1996 and sold also one hundred thousand copies in Portugal. The same figure applies to *Existir* published in 1991. Those three albums sold one million copies outside Portugal.
- 2 From an interview published by the *The Portuguese Post*, September 17, 1994.

- 3 Some of these specific topics were again developed by Braga in 1894, in a book called *A Pátria Portuguesa. O Território e a Raça* [Portuguese Fatherland. The Territory and the Race]. The overseas vocation of the Portuguese was viewed as linked to their capacity of adapting to different surroundings and to their cosmopolitanism and openness towards foreign ideas. The topic of the affective tone of Portuguese temperament was also expanded, and was connected to the alleged tendency towards suicide present in Portuguese culture (sic), to nostalgia as a kind of Portuguese peculiar illness, and to sadness, passion and subjective lyricism as important features of national temperament.
- 4 This pessimistic approach to Portuguese ethnic psychology can also be found in the writings of Rocha Peixoto, one of the most important Portuguese anthropologists of the turn of the century, whose ideas were very close to Coelho's. Also worried with what he thought to be the decline of Portuguese culture, Peixoto developed a violently negative characterisation of Portuguese national soul (cf., for instance, Peixoto 1897 and 1967 [1904]).
- 5 On the North-American studies on national character see Neiburg & Goldman 1998.
- 6 The Portuguese situation presents striking similarities to the French one; as in the Portuguese case, in France there is no major rupture between nationalist movements that had developed in the Third Republic after World War I and the nationalist rhetoric of the Vichy Regime; see Faure 1989, Thiesse 1991 and 1997, Golan 1995-
- 7 In the 1960s, Estado Novo was ironically known among the left as the *regime* of the tree Fs: *Fado*, football and Fatima. These were considered informally by the opposition to the *regime* as their major ideological tools.
- 8 The strongest Luso-American community in the USA is located in Massachusetts, where the Portuguese emigrants in the beginning of the 1980s amounted to almost 47,000 people (Monteiro 1987: 796).
- 9 On the relationship between migration and literature in the us, see, for instance, King, Connel & White (eds.) 1995.

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