

# Sehnsucht versus Saudade

The “Sehnsucht” is a noun of the German language of female gender generally translated into French/English by “vague with the soul/Blues”, “aspiration”, “ardeur/ardor” or “langueur/langor”. It is similar to Portuguese “saudade”, Welsh “hiraeth”, Romanian “Romanian”, Slovak “clivota” or “cnenie”, Amharic “tezeta” or Tamacheq “assouf”, and even “blues” for African-Americans in the United States. However, it is almost impossible to accurately translate this German term, the meaning of which describes an intense emotional state.

Die Sehnsucht's meaning is neither a fundamentally negative nor a positive feeling: it represents an object of unattainable desire which it is not necessarily desirable to attain. It is an emotion related to a certain incompleteness or imperfection. It has been described as a thirst for life or an individual quest for happiness colliding with the reality of unfulfilled wishes.

It may be a melancholy desire for a distant country, but not a tangible or identifiable country, rather a familiar environment. In this sense, die Sehnsucht is a kind of nostalgia, in its first sense, that is to say homesickness, nostalgia for a lost paradise. It can also be a desire of a person or a thing. But in the majority of cases, the person sehnsüchtig (adjective) is not aware of what he covets, and the feeling is so intense and deep that he can only experience the emotion without realize that this reflects a lack or a desire. In Greek mythology, Himeros is the personification of a loving Sehnsucht.

The poetic and musical expression of Sehnsucht is extremely rich.

**Saudade** [sodad] (in Portuguese: [sew'ðaði]; in Brazilian [saw'dadi] or [saw'dadzi]) is a Portuguese word, from the Latin *solitas*, *atis*, which expresses a complex feeling which combines melancholy, nostalgia and hope. Saudade is considered a Portuguese word difficult to translate, to the point that the creation of a French neologism has even been considered. The French Larousse dictionary defines it as "feeling of delicious nostalgia, desire for elsewhere" but there is no exact word that corresponds to Saudade in French Saudade is a "tension between opposites": on the one hand the feeling of a lack, on the other hand hope and the desire to find what we lack. The object of lack can be a happy past, a person or a place. During the Portuguese conquests in Africa, the saudade expressed in particular the desire of the colonists to find their country. This feeling brings into play a certain relation to time: it is a way of "being present in the past, or being past in the present".

In Brazil, the day of saudade is officially celebrated on January 30.

For Luís de Camões, saudade is "happiness outside the world". For Fernando Pessoa, it is "the poetry of fado". Amália Rodrigues describes her as a "bitter and sweet thorn". In France, the musician Pierre Barouh defines it as an "inhabited lack".