

When I think of 'saudade', the impression I get is one of intense longing for a place, of an unattainable, much beloved person or object. It is the kind of deep emotion exiles felt when they were banished from Rome at the apex of Empire. Boehm's *Saudade* is an unsentimental journey that traverses continents with an unsparing eye for detail.

Whether she is describing an escape from an occupied homeland or the consequences of bad relationship choices, the reader feels the immediacy of the moment. *Saudade* is the journey of a lifetime.

**Alan Catlin** editor of Misfit Magazine, poet author of *Asylum Garden: after Van Gogh*

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*Saudade* by Rose Mary Boehm intrigues from the first poem. Boehm draws us into several worlds (both physical places and epochs in her life) each a well-remembered, well-crafted version of a lived moment. Through her poems we live it with her and are catapulted into new experiences, appreciation, and/or moments of wisdom.

I was especially drawn to the poems that deal with fears and with what she learned in mid-life. "Looking Inward" deals with demons one finds in the night, taking us from her childhood fear of night sounds and suspected demons to knowing that "you know this time that everything is of your making." I found that line hopeful, for if our demons are of our own making, demolishing them is also within our power.

From the first steps we take with her in Spain to the last poem, this is a collection that stays with you long after the first reading and calls out to be picked up again and again. You will want to keep it close-by.

**Joan Leotta**

Author, Story Performer

*"Encouraging words through Pen and Performance"*

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In Rose Mary Boehm's latest collection, *Saudade*, she looks back over the decades and pulls out flashes of memory and insight. The poems give glimpses into her experiences, musings, and travels. It is a trove of moments that shine like silver or weigh on the heart like stone.

The poet uses her keen eye for detail to help us travel vicariously. “In the Alpujarras – Andalucía, Spain” describes little miracles, rain in the desert, and flowers that “unfold on sand and stone, / stretching upward, offering their lives / to the pollinators.” Like so many of the pieces in this book, the resonant imagery is a jumping-off point for deeper questions: “The sun will set in an hour, the spectacle / will fold in upon itself. A question shimmers / over the yellow. Why? Life, of course, what else.”

In “A night in Paris,” she writes, “Your hands like the / ends of snake / tails entwined / in the small of / my back.” The words are vivid and loaded, so much packed between the lines. Though Boehm has a knack for tangible writing and paints a scene masterfully, her poems tend to be cinematic rather than static. In “Heat,” a woman sheds her bikini top and summons five Italian men from the sea, moving from discomfort with her “angular English body” to being the embodiment of Venus, receiving offerings of pizza, Chianti, and Limoncello.

Some of the poems feature characters spun from Boehm's imagination and powers of observation. “Quiet night on the island,” for example, is a sketch of a grumpy old man living vicariously through his lothario cat. The poet has a striking ability to find a story behind the people she crosses paths with.

*Saudade* is rich with engaging characters, but there are monsters too. “Would I like my past self?” is a slideshow of the stages of the poet's early life. Writing about painful moments becomes an act of reaching out, the older woman extending affection toward her awkward younger self: “I would have held her close and told her that time would heal. / Isn't this what they say? Isn't it true?” Indeed, Boehm does not shy away from difficult subjects. “Baggage” directly addresses her personal burdens, both the association of Germans with Nazis and her own “childhood made from faulty pieces, / a puzzle with no satisfactory outcome.” The baggage spills forth in a cascade of nouns: “Pockmarked playgrounds, dead rabbits, / rabble, rubble, revivals, renegades, revelations.”

Ultimately, thoughts and memories are brought together in this fine collection as the poet evaluates a life well lived. Rose Mary Boehm uses writing as a way to remember and reframe events and, in the process, spin “a lot of straw into gold.”

**Sarah Carleton**, author of *Notes from the Girl Cave*