# Diogo Bernardes's *brandura*

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ABSTRACT: Readers of Diogo Bernardes's (c.1530-c. 1595) poetry have long praised the *brandura* (gentleness) of his work. But what *brandura* meant and how positively this quality was viewed shifted depending on the context of discussion. *Brandura* was associated with the middle style, mastery of *elocutio,* and, by extension, with poetry's ability to move those who listened to or read it. Because of this, *brandura* could, at one moment, provoke moral anxiety, and at another, could signal the height of poetic accomplishment. In quarrels over the relative merits of the different European vernaculars, apologists of the Portuguese language invested in Bernardes's reputation as *brando* (gentle) as he was said to demonstrate the *brandura* of their mother tongue. Yet, later in the seventeenth century, Bernardes's fortunes sank. Though Bernardes is currently little esteemed, his association with the multiple meanings of *brando* and *brandura* implicated him in a series of important political, moral, and aesthetic disputes throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Through renewed attention to style and affect in the context of cultural history, the present essay aims to revive interest in his work in the present.

KEYWORDS: Diogo Bernardes, *brandura*, reception, affect, style, literary canon

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There is an uncanny consensus amongst early readers of the work of the Portuguese poet Diogo Bernardes (c.1530-c. 1595). While contemporary reception histories are often complex, almost all Bernardes's early readers pay him the same compliment: they applaud the *brandura* (softness, gentleness) of his eclogues. What did they mean by this? Where might *brandura* be found in his work? And what might be at stake in foregrounding this quality? What follows is an attempt to answer these questions and to recapture what about Bernardes's poetry got under his readers' skin. Against more canonical and teleological accounts of Portugal's literary history, the story I tell of Bernardes's *brandura* privileges what almost was or might have been; it involves a word and a writer that, at the turn of the seventeenth century, had power and prestige in Portugal, but whose energy soon dissipated, scarcely to be registered in later narratives of Portugal's literary past. My aim, then, is both to explore the impact Bernardes's verse had in the past and to alter its impact and interest in the present.

At first glance, *brandura* appears—to make a pun on shared etymology—a rather bland term. On closer philological inspection, though, *brandura* opens up new perspectives on Bernardes's verse as well as on the fraught political and religious climate it was born of and into. *Brandura* denoted excellence in *elocutio* and thus directs our attention toward (now quite unfashionable) questions of poetic style. *Brandura* and its related verb and adjective also signal poetry's ability to move those who listened to or read it, hinting at an affective aspect of reading long downplayed in reception studies, as Rita Felski (2015: 163) has lamented. The rhetorical and affective power denoted by *brandura*, however, was not always viewed in the same way. In a country that eagerly adopted the Counter-Reformation reforms of the Council of Trent, lyric poetry's *brandura*—which was particularly allied with amorous verse—spelled moral danger for Inquisitorial officials charged with the regulation of books and troubled many in the wider world (see Révah 1960: 8). By contrast, in the impassioned debates of the *questione della lingua,* which intensified during Portugal's annexation to Spain (1580-1640), *brandura* gained a positive and political charge*,* functioning as a marker of Portuguese linguistic superiority, with Bernardes as one of its key exemplars. So, when writers praised Bernardes's *brandura*, they were not only saying something about his poetry, but also positioning themselves in debates that were shaping the status and style of lyric poetry at a key moment in its vernacular history. Below, I therefore loop from exploring what readers, in privileging *brandura,* tell us about Bernardes's skill to what this privileging also tells us about them.

**An Unexamined (After)life**

Although Bernardes has historically been little regarded, he was a remarkable figure for his age. Neither an aristocratic amateur nor a professional hack, without either family wealth to provide him

with a livelihood (as in the case of Francisco de Sá de Miranda) or a career in the Law or the Church (like most of the poets he associated with), he relied on court positions and royal stipends and, as he confesses in his poetry, desired to secure enough patronage to allow him to dedicate himself exclusively to the Muses. Bucking a longstanding Iberian trend of posthumous lyric publication, Bernardes was also the first living poet to print his own books of lyric poetry in Portuguese in his native country. Three books of his were released in the 1590s: *Várias Rimas ao Bom Jesus* (*Varied Verses Dedicated to Goodly Jesus*) in 1594, *O Lima* (*The Lima*) in 1596, and *Rimas Várias Flores do Lima* (*Varied Verses, Flowers of the Lima*) in 1597, the penultimate of which likely left the Lisbon printing house of Simão Lopes shortly before, or just after, Bernardes's death.[1]

Bernardes was also well regarded. His début book was reprinted four times in the first quarter of the seventeenth century (in 1601, 1608, 1616, and 1622).[2] This collection's appeal was likely due to its strong emphasis on devotional verse—always a good sales bet in early modern Europe (Whinnom 1980: 194; Richardson 1999: 137-8)—but this book did, nonetheless, contain a number of secular poems, mostly dedicated to important figures in the Portuguese court. A significant proportion of existing Portuguese manuscript miscellanies from the period, held today in Portuguese, Spanish, and American libraries, contain poems by Bernardes that are frequently attributed to him by the scribe.[3] Library inventories also show that colleges and palaces across the

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[1] The extent of Bernardes's involvement in the production of his books is an issue still open for discussion. Ferreira 2011 argues that *O Lima* was the only one to be organized by Bernardes and points to the structural disorder of his other two volumes. However, as Earle (1986: 232-3) argued some time ago, *Rimas Várias Flores do Lima* contains a sonnet sequence, which might suggest some authorial involvement in its structure. Furthermore, Fardilha's (1998: 58-60) arguments that *Várias Rimas ao Bom Jesus* lacks coherence are questionable. He maintains that because the opening sonnet makes no mention of the poems dedicated to the saints and does not account for the secular poems that come at the end of the volume, these poems must have been used by the printer to pad out the book. This seems suspect as Simão Lopes was a scholarly, careful printer. Furthermore, such *varietas* in subject matter—signalled by the volume's title—was considered a virtue in the early modern period and the presence of "unexpected" secular poems at the end of the volume could also be explained by the fact that many are dedicated to important figures of the court: they establish Bernardes as well connected and thus contribute to his *ethos*.

[2] Arouca's (2001: 257-8) bibliography also lists an edition of *Várias Rimas ao Bom Jesus* from 1604. This is likely an error transferred from earlier bibliographies as the printer given is the same Simão Lopes of the 1594 first edition, who was not active in the seventeenth century.

[3] See the summary in Park (2016: 188-93).

Iberian peninsula held copies of his works.[4] Portuguese writers of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries regularly included Bernardes in their enumerations of the most significant Portuguese poets, whilst, across the border in Spain, Cervantes and Lope de Vega counted amongst those who commended, felt threatened by, or professed to learn something from his poems.[5]

Bernardes's earliest and most enthusiastic readers were those with whom he corresponded. They began to weld his name to *brandura*. André Falcão de Resende opens a verse letter to Bernardes by reminding him of a time when he recited one of his poems and singles out "com que brandura então me ali cantavas/ os versos" (2009, 1: 362, ll. 1-6) (the gentleness with which you sung those verses). António Ferreira talks of his "doce e branda /Musa" (2009b: Epistle XIII. 1-2) (sweet and gentle Muse) and Jorge Bacarrao foregrounds related terms in his praise of the "la suavidad de tu elocuencia" (Epistle XVII. 8) (the suavity of your eloquence) and "la dulzura de tu canto" (57) (the sweetness of your song).

Apart from Resende's poem, these texts occupy an interesting place in Bernardes's reception by their inclusion within his printed books. Whereas the allographic was habitually found towards the covers of other lyric collections from around the same period, several of these poems appeared as responses to Bernardes's epistles within the body of *O Lima*. For instance, posthumous editions of lyric poetry by Sá de Miranda and Camões that were also produced in the 1590s did not include such internal dialogues to the same degree. Bernardes, who had a hand in the preparation of this book for print, perhaps actively marshalled the "value-enhancing" (Genette 1997: 267-8, 283) power of these allographic texts to construct and consolidate his reputation as a poet, and

[4] For a recent overview of the poetic holdings of Golden Age Spanish libraries, see Diez Borque 2010. For more specific details of Bernardes's works found in early modern catalogues of libraries in Spain and Portugal, see Manso Porto (1996: 578), Prieto Bernabé (2004, 2: 318-27), and Bouza (2005: 401).

[5] In contrast with Carroll B. Johnson (1986: 93), I am sure that Cervantes's (1995: 506) allusion to "un pastor lusitano que en las riberas del blando Lima gran número de ganado apacienta" (a Portuguese shepherd who tends to a large herd on the banks of the gentle river Lima) in *La Galatea* is a reference to Bernardes, considering that the latter's poetry is known to have been circulating in Lisbon around 1580-2 when Cervantes was there and Bernardes's association with the river Lima and with bucolic verse is much stronger than that of Sánchez de Lima, the Portuguese writer Johnson puts forward as a candidate for the shepherd who may symbolically steal Galatea—and thus Poetry herself—from the hands of the Castilian characters. Lope de Vega's comments on Bernardes are discussed in more detail below.

particularly as a poet of sweet and gentle pastoral. It might have been indecorous for him to call himself *brando*, but Bernardes could nonetheless curate his image by presenting texts in which other writers attributed this quality to his work. These texts intervened in Bernardes's reception repeatedly by sitting alongside his own poems and contributed to the epithetic ring that *brandura* gained for him.

## Towards *Brandura*

What did these poets mean by *brandura*? Softness, suavity, sweetness, smoothness, and gentleness constituted a synaesthetic cloud of terms for describing lyric poetry that remained relatively consistent between languages and between different theorists in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (see Ramos 1992: 262-3; Wilson-Okamura 2013: 80-4). They formed part of a structuring binary of Renaissance thinking about poetry: the opposition between sweet, gentle lyric and harsh, grave epic (Vega 2004: 30). They, of course, also had an ancient pedigree. It was not enough, said Horace, for poetry to be pretty, it also had to be sweet (*Ars Poetica*, 99-100). *Brandura* clearly belongs to this set of associations, but its precise place within them is harder to pinpoint. It is striking that there are few etymologically parallel terms for appraising poetry in European vernaculars. Furthermore, though both are frequent terms of poetic praise, Iberian vernacular treatises do not give *brandura* and its Spanish sibling, *blandura*, any detailed theoretical treatment.[6]

Early modern dictionaries provide a sense of *brandura*'s range of connotations. Jéronimo Cardoso's *Dictionarium latinolusitanicum* (*Portuguese-Latin Dictionary*) (1569-70) gives *brandura*

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[6] *Blandura* does not appear very frequently in Spanish treatises on poetry, such as Miguel Sánchez de Lima's *El arte poética en romance castellano* (1580) (*The Art of Poetry in Castilian Ballad*) or Juan Díaz Rengifo's *Arte poética española* (1592) (*Spanish Art of Poetry*). It does, however, appear collocated with words like *doçura*, *suavidade* and *ternura* in Herrera's *Anotaciones a la poesía de Garcilaso* (1580) (*Annotations to the Poetry of Garcilaso*), but hardly becomes a central critical term.

as a translation of *mollicia* (pliability, flexibility, suppleness) and *lenitudo* (softness, mildness, gentleness) and lists the adjective *brando* as the Portuguese equivalent for *blandus* (flattering, pleasant, agreeable, charming), as well as for *lenis* (soft, smooth, mild), *mitis* (mild, mellow, ripe), and *vinulus* (delightful, sweet). In his later dictionary, the 1647 *Tesouro da lingua portuguesa* (*Treasure Trove of the Portuguese Language*), Bento Pereira renders *brandura* variously as *lenitas* (softness, mildness, gentleness), *mansuetudo* (tameness, gentleness, clemency), and *laevitas* (lightness, smoothness of speech).

Not exclusively a term for describing poetry, *brandura* was a quality nobles were expected to evince in their behavior. As a personal quality, *brandura* was, like its Latin equivalents, *lenitas*, *mansuetudo*, and the adjective *mitis*, the virtuous middle path between anger and impassivity, often contrasted with "rigor" and meaning moderate, kind, and lenient.[7] However, in Covarrubias's *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (1611: 140v) (*Treasure Trove of the Castilian or Spanish Language*), *blando* is strongly typed as female and is construed as a negative attribute for men. *Blando* was evidently an important word for Covarrubias, as his entry in the *Tesoro* takes up an entire page. He states that this adjective signals weakness, passivity, and trickery in a person or thing; it, and its related terms and phrases, are about exerting control or being controlled. Hence its negative, feminine associations. Such an idea returns in many comments about *brandura*, for a poem's or a person's *brandura* is often linked to their capacity to affect and influence. Yet, surprisingly, the aspect of Covarrubias's definition of *blando* that identifies it as a marker of corrupted masculinity does not surface in Portuguese dictionaries or in the Spanish and Portuguese corpora I have consulted.[8] Bernardes and his contemporaries in Portugal certainly tend to use the

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[7] For *loci* where Seneca praises *lenitas, mansuetudo*, and *mitis*, in *De Clementia* (*On Clemency*), see Stacey (2007: 35 n. 47). See also, Cicero (1976: *Pro Murena*, 64). This association with temperance was also a quality of the middle style.

[8] Uses of *blando* and *blandura* in Góngora, Cervantes, and Lope de Vega are free of the gender-typing promulgated by Covarrubias. See Alemany Selfa 1930, and Fernández Gómez 1962 and 1971. Vocabulary searches for *brando* and *brandura* in the very useful online repository of Portuguese sixteenth-century theatre similarly yield primarily positive uses of these terms to signal courtesy and affability. See: *Teatro de Autores Portuguese do Séc. XVI* (http://cet-e-quinhentos.com/pesquisa/palavra).

adjective positively when attributing it to men. Although this comes as little surprise as these writers tend to apply the term to kings and nobles in praise poetry; they are either commending level-headedness and kindness towards their vassals or encouraging such behavior.[9]

In terms of his poetry, Bernardes's readers often couple *brando* with *suave* (soft, smooth) and/or *doce* (sweet) without clearly distinguishing among them. Broadly, *brandura* is associated with the middle style (e.g. *lenitas*) and maps onto the French *douceur* (sweetness) and Italian *piacevolezza* (pleasingness).[10] It thus appears to be a general marker of lyric/middle style, rather than a more specific expectation of that style.[11] It denoted mastery of *elocutio*, the pleasing effect of sounds, words, and figures carefully arranged. Indeed, writers who praised *brandura* seem largely to be looking beyond subject matter to delight in style for itself, prioritizing pleasure and sweetness above their Renaissance antonym: not epic this time, but usefulness.

Lyric style was supposed to be smooth and highly figured.[12] Rhetorical manuals suggest that particularly pleasing and appropriate for lyric were the Gorgian figures of *similiter cadens* (words ending in the same flectional ending), *similiter desinens* (clauses ending in the same word), *compar* (clauses of parallel length, i.e *isocolon*), and *antithesis*. The Spanish rhetorician, Cyprian Soarez, who taught in Portugal and printed his work there, states in his influential synthesis of ancient rhetorical treatises (first printed in Coimbra in 1562) that Classical writers went to particular effort

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[9] See, for instance, António Ferreira's (2008: 313, l. 17) letter to D. Sebastião or Pêro de Andrade Caminha's poems addressed to Cardinal Henry (Anastácio 1998, 2: 974, l. 122) and to D. Jorge de Meneses (1001, l. 68).

[10] For the wide-ranging meanings of *douceur,* which shares connotations of poetic sweetness, linguistic excellence, and temperance with *brandura,* see Huchon 2003, the other essays in Prat and Servet 2003, and Patterson 2010. *Piacevolezza* (pleasingness) was Bembo's umbrella term for the qualities lyric possessed and he opposed it to the *gravità* (graveness, momentousness) of the epic. Within *piacevolezza* came *grazia* (grace)*, soavità* (suavity)*, vaghezza* (vagueness)*, dolcezza* (sweetness)*, scherzi* (jokes)*, giuochi* (games). For further discussion, see Mace (1969: 69). *Lenitas* was a key word for the middle style, see Quintilian (2002: XII. 10. 58-61).

[11] Wilson-Okamura (2013: 73-4) points to the close connection between definitions of the middle style and the qualities associated with lyric poetry in the Renaissance.

[12] The discussion of lyric style below is based on Wilson-Okamura (2013: 77-86). Taking a comparative approach to lyric style that draws out its associations with the middle style and examines a vast range of ancient and Renaissance sources, Wilson-Okamura offers a clear précis of the expectations of lyric style.

to acquire charm in speaking (*gratiam dicendi*) through these figures (Flynn 1955: 329-30). As I will outline in a reading of Bernardes's most lauded poem, his eclogues teemed with them.

For Renaissance commentators, the lyric's suavity resided not only in its use of figures but in the sound of words and the arrangement of those sounds. Much though today's professors have banned this sort of thinking from undergraduate classrooms, sounds in the Renaissance were thought to have intrinsic qualities. Some variation existed between languages as to which sounds were pleasing or harsh, though *l* and *r* are consistently cited across languages as respectively soft and rough (Ramos 1992: 254-5, 352). Fernão de Oliveira's 1536 grammar of the Portuguese language bears out this tendency. He calls liquid consonants "brando(s)" (Oliveira 2000: 99), counting single *r* and *l*, but also *gu* and *qu* in this category (it was only double *r* that he considered harsh). Oliveira further says that single *s* is a "letra mimosa" (gentle letter) (97). Duarte Nunes de Leão in his *Ortografia da língua portuguesa* (1606) [*Orthography of the Portuguese Language*] also states that the letter *l* was "notavelmente brando" (Leão 1983: 64) (notably gentle). In Spanish, Covarrubias even thought the word *blando* itself was "suave de pronunciar" (sweet to pronounce).

Tied to the use of particular sounds was their arrangement. A predominance of vowels, rhymes on vowels (especially double vowels), internal rhymes, and alliteration of soft consonants produced, it was said, a gentle and charming effect. The highest goal, however, was to conjure through sound effects the subject of one's verse. As Hélio Alves (2011: 238) notes and as I will demonstrate below, Bernardes was a skilful practitioner of such acoustic sorcery.

In terms of genre and theme, *brandura* was associated with poems about love and particularly eclogues. This is consistent with theorisations of the lyric in general, which "privilegia los contenidos amorosos y el programa poético asociado al petrarquismo y a la estilización pastoril" (Vega 2004:30) (privilege amorous content and poetic schemes associated with Petrarchism and with the pastoral style). For instance, in a prefatory letter to the first edition of Camões's *Rhythmas* (1595), Estevão Lopes, who financed the book, lists the qualities Camões evinces in each of the

genres included in the volume. He points out the *brandura enamorada* (1595: n. fol.) (love-struck gentleness) of the eclogues, signalling *brandura*'s association with love—a fact born out by *brando* being a key epithet for *amor* itself in love lyric—and a marker of distinction for eclogues. Similarly, Bernardes's readers almost always singled out his bucolic poetry when referencing his *brandura.*

*Brandura* consists, then, in creating smooth and gentle music through words. Yet, Bernardes's readers were not simply applauding his technical prowess when they attributed *brandura* to his work. They were also confessing to being moved by it. In Portuguese, *brandura*'s intersubjective force emerges via its frequent collocation with the verb *abrandar* (to soften). Softness, in other words, makes soft; gentleness makes gentle. In a funeral elegy appended to *Rimas Várias Flores do Lima*, Bernardes's brother, the friar-poet, Agostinho da Cruz, extols the surprising power of his brother's *brandura* through a striking four-fold polyptoton:

> Fique-se o mundo já desenganado,
> Que não s'abranda a morte com brandura,
> Pois a não abrandou teu peito brando. (Bernardes 2009c: 292)
>
> (The world has now learned better,
> that death cannot be softened with gentleness,
> given that your gentle self could not soften it.)

Jorge Bacarrao also points to how Bernardes's verse affected those who heard it, remarking that "you softened (*ablandando*) those who listened to you" (Epistle XVII. 54). Within his poems, Bernardes stages how the *brandura* of the beloved or of the lover's laments softens their surroundings, as he does here, in his second eclogue, where Melibeu asks of his beloved:

> Quem há que se não renda
> Ao riso doce e grave?
> Ao brando som suave
> Da tua doce fala, que dureza
> Se não abrandará? (2009b: Eclogue II. 199-203)
>
> (Who would not surrender
> to your sweet and solemn laughter?
> By the gentle and soft sound

of your sweet voice, what hardness
would not be softened?)

Gentleness emanates outwards through the voice; lovers, landscapes, and readers succumb to it.

**The Gentlest Poem of All: Eclogue XIV**

One poem, above all, stayed with Bernardes's early readers: his fourteenth eclogue, "Sílvia." Lope de Vega (1630: 26[r]) cites its first line when claiming Bernardes as a poetic prince. Sections appear in the pastoral novel, *Lusitânia transformada* (1607), and it figured in multiple early modern miscellanies (Ferreira 2014: 189-90). It is a masterclass in the stylistic charm of the middle style and demonstrates why readers associated *brandura* with his work. The poem is based on the lover's lament in Virgil's second eclogue:

Cantava Alcido um dia ao som das águas
Do Lima, que mais brando ali corria,
Dizem que por ouvir suas doces mágoas.

Sobr'um curvo penedo que pendia,
Por cima da corrente vagarosa,
Se me não lembra mal, assi dizia:

—Sílvia nestes meus olhos mais fermosa
Que o sol de dia, que de noite a lua
(Não digo lírio já, não digo rosa). (Bernardes 2009b: Eclogue XIV, ll. 1-9)

(Alcido sang one day to the sound of the waters
Of the Lima, which flowed more gently there,
They say, for hearing his sweet laments,

On a curved rock that overhung
The river's wandering course,
If I don't remember wrongly, he said:

Silvia, more beautiful to my eyes
than the sun in the day, and the moon at night

(I shan't compare thee to a lily or a rose.)

These once famous lines stage the power of poetry from the start: the river begins to flow more gently ("mais brando") where Alcido sings. The sibilants at the end of the first line are evidently meant to evoke the gushing of the river Lima. The rhyme on "águas" and "mágoas" brings together particularly gentle sounds, and other rhymes are based on sweet double vowels. While the comparisons of Sílvia's beauty to the sun and moon are conventional, Bernardes shows his lyric skill by weaving *chiasmus* and *anaphora* into his *isocolon*. The repetition of "não digo" in the following line amplifies Alcido's refusal to compare his lover to mere flowers; only the celestial can resemble her loveliness.

As the poem advances, Alcido's complaints begin. He tries to bargain with the absent Sílvia and loses himself in imagining their life together, if only she would return. Gorgian figures, particularly *isocolon,* ornament his song and these parallel structures add to the smooth and steady rhythm of the poem, their symmetry creating a gently rising and falling cadence. One passage which exemplifies Bernardes's mastery of figures and sound is the following:

Quando chamo por ti, que me responde
A mesma voz no vale ond'em vão grito,
Cuido que outrem te chama e que t'esconde.

Ali com nova força, novo esprito,
Com ira vou buscando quem nomeia,
Teu doce nome no meu peito escrito.

Se, com suave, som brando meneia
Um leve e brando vento a folha leve,
Se fere a onda crespa a branca areia;

Ouvir-te me parece; ah gosto breve!
Eis este engano passa, eis n' outro caio;
Quem enganos d'amor estranhar deve?

(When I call out for you and I hear back
the same voice that I shout out vainly into the valley
I worry lest someone else is calling you and hiding you from me.

So with new energy, new spirit,
Angrily, I go looking for the one whose name I call,
your sweet name written in my heart.

If, with soft and gentle sound
A gentle, light breeze rustles the light leaves,
If the rippling waves break on the white sand,

I think I can hear you; what brief pleasure!
As soon as this deception passes, I fall into another;
Who should marvel at the deceptions of love?)

Alcido calls out his beloved's name only to hear back his own voice; it echoes through the valley, just as the *v* of his 'voz' (voice) reverberates through the line and in the very word for valley ("vale"). Struck by the unsettling thought that a rival has called Sílvia's name and swept her away, Alcido, frenzied ("com ira"), renews his search for her "com nova força, novo esprito" (with new energy, new spirit). As he redoubles his efforts, Bernardes doubles up Alcido's words, amplifying his renewal with the repetition (*conduplicatio*) of the adjective and the accompanying *synonymia* (a cluster of synonyms). No sooner has Alcido picked up his search with newfound vigor, though, than the landscape and love conspire against him again. The rustling of the leaves and the sound of the waves breaking on the riverbank trick him into thinking Sílvia is nearby. Again, Bernardes plays with sound: the sibilance conjures the sound of the leaves and perhaps even the first letter of his beloved's name. The twin conditional clauses in this stanza extend into the next and build anticipation in tandem with Alcido's. By contrast, the punishing revelation of his "engano" (deception) comes swiftly: so swiftly that his thought is cut short by the elision between "parece" and "ah".

Alcido's sweetly figured speech sweeps right along to his final plaintive appeal to Sílvia:

Não vês em qual extremo me tens posto?

Não vês que vai a mágoa consumindo
A vida em duvidosas esperanças?

(Can't you see what extremes you've led me to?

Can’t you see that my heartbreak is consuming
my life with doubtful hopes?)

The polysyllabic “duvidosas esperanças” consume the line (as his vain hopes do his life) and elision suggestively eats up the word for his life (“vida”). Alcido is left clueless and alone as the narrator’s voice supplies the final two lines of the poem:

Ah, doudo Alcido, Sílvia está-se rindo,
E tu de chamar Sílvia inda não cansas?

(Ah, mad Alcido, Sílvia is laughing.
And haven’t you tired of calling for her?)

This is a surprisingly cruel ending. In Bernardes’s Virgilian model, Corydon comes to recognize his own folly and the fruitlessness of his cries. He ambiguously comforts himself with the thought that there will be another Alexis out there for him to love (Virgil 1916: Eclogue II. 73). For Alcido, there is no consolation. Sílvia has heard all his wailing and finds it funny. The narrator calls Alcido mad (“doudo”) and wonders why he has not yet realized that Sílvia is just not interested. One might feel a little tricked here. Bernardes constructs the poem so carefully to convey Alcido’s emotions, then, in a final ironic and self-reflexive flourish, finishes by suggesting that his pining is a little ridiculous. Bernardes plays with his Classical source to create something compelling and unexpected. Indeed, in other places in his work, Bernardes flips stories like this with equally surprising effect. He transforms, for instance, Orpheus’s descent to the underworld from a tale of poetry’s triumphant power into one about failed patronage (see Epistle XXXI. 88-151). Whilst *brandura* certainly uncovers the ingredients of Bernardes’s suavity, then, his sweetness could come with a side of something tangier; it could incorporate the jokes (*scherzi*) and games (*giuochi*) Bembo (1955: 63) associated with lyric’s overall pleasingness.

**A Worrying *brandura***

If, for some, *brandura* was the highest of their poetic aspirations, for others it was associated with a deep and generalized anxiety about lyric verse and what it could do. In Portugal, v*ersos profanos* (profane verses), as secular poetry was known, rarely passed the bureaucratic gauntlet governing printed books before the final decade of the sixteenth century.[13] And this was not for want of authors' trying.[14] Indeed, in paratexts to devotional poetry, printers, Inquisitorial officials, and authors themselves register strong concerns over love lyric and promote devotional verse collections as a much-needed distraction from such morally suspect writing. In this context, emphasis was placed on the edificatory role of texts. Only in the 1590s did stylistic qualities begin to be cited for their own sake in recommendations for books to be printed. If Horace said that "omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci" (*Ars Poetica,* 343) (he has won every vote who has mixed the sweet with the useful), in Portugal, the useful, by contrast, always trumped the sweet. Love poetry was firmly on the side of sweetness and delight. For instance, in a dedicatory letter to his 1596 *Discurso sobre a Vida e Morte de Santa Isabel Rainha de Portugal e Outras Várias Rimas* (*Discourse on the Life and Death of Saint Isabel, Queen of Portugal, and Other Various Verses*), Vasco Mousinho de Quevedo (1596: n. fol.) states: "porque […] o doce sem o proueytoso não diz com a obrigacão daquelle que escreue, branduras, desmayos, & deliquios de amor, não seruem maes que de facilitar corações à semelhantes cuydados, leuandonos apos si como Sereas á miseraueês naufragios" (because the sweet without the profitable does not square with the obligations of he who writes, love's sweetness, swoons, and faintings do not serve anything more than to lead hearts to similar concerns, dragging them along like Sirens to terrible shipwrecks). Here, *brandura*'s

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[13] For a survey of printing and an indication of the worries over *versos profanos*, see Révah 1969, Macedo 1975, and Sá (1983: 637).

[14] António Ferreira's son, for instance, reports that his father had tried many times to print his work during his lifetime but to no avail. See his dedicatory letter in Ferreira (1598: n. fol.). Writers, such as Pêro de Andrade Caminha and André Falcão de Resende, whose work remained in manuscript until the eighteenth century, intimate in poems addressed to the *revedor de livros* (book reviewer), Friar Bartolomeu Ferreira, that they had typographical ambitions for their poems. See Anastácio (1998, 2: 694) and Falcão de Resende (2009, 1: 278).

associations with the amorous, the delightful and the sweet gave it a negative edge. “Branduras […] de amor” are quite the opposite of the devout poem (the story of Saint Isabel) at the centre of Quevedo’s book.

*Brandura*’s negative charge creeps into the pages of *O Lima* too, in Agostinho da Cruz’s surprisingly conflicted dedicatory sonnet:

> Do Lima, donde vim já despedido,
> Cavar cá nesta serra a sepultura,
> Não sinto que louvar possa brandura,
> Sem me sentir turbar do meu sentido.
>
> A lã de que me vêem andar vestido,
> Torcendo em várias partes a costura,
> Os pés que nus se dão à pedra dura,
> Nem me deixam ouvir, nem ser ouvido.
>
> O povo cujo aplauso recebeste,
> Vendo teu brando *Lima* dedicado
> A príncipe real, claro, excelente,
>
> Louvará muito mais quanto escreveste.
> De mim, meu caro irmão, menos louvado,
> Louva comigo a Deus eternamente. (Bernardes 2009b: 39)
>
> (Of the Lima, whence I have departed,
> to make my tomb on his barren mountain,
> I do not feel that I can praise the sweetness,
> Without diverting from my course.
>
> The woollen garb that they see I wear,
> Warped and ill-fitting in many places,
> And my feet that unshod touch the hard and stony ground,
> neither let me hear, nor be heard.
>
> The people whose applause you receive,
> Seeing your gentle *Lima* dedicated
> To such an excellent Prince of Royal lineage,
>
> Will praise you more, the more you write.
> Dear brother, though you are less praised by me,
> Let us both give praise to God eternally.)

Contorted like Cruz's habit, the sonnet wrestles with its duty of praise in an extended kind of *praeteritio*. Cruz lauds Bernardes, but only obliquely, making a hermit's retreat in the end, in which he asks his brother to join him. Praise for God eventually displaces praise for poetry. Celebrating the *brandura* of the Lima (the river) and the *brando Lima* (his book, named after the river) perturbs Cruz in the first stanza and threatens to lead him off his spiritual path. This gentleness of poetry and place emerges as the opposite of the hermit's uncomfortable life described in stanza two; it becomes anathema to religious devotion. Within this religious frame, *brandura*—the very quality Cruz himself praised elsewhere—resonates with wider suspicions over lyric poetry and what that sort of poetry distracted from. The kind of poetic pleasure it denoted and the kinds of amorous pleasures with which it was associated gave *brandura*—here, clearly *O Lima*'s signature quality—a more troubling, even sinful flavor. To value *brandura* meant eschewing the word's broader, negative resonance and embracing sweetness of language and theme in and of itself: a potentially radical move in Counter-Reformation Portugal.

**A Platitude Becomes Political**

Another major debate in which lyric poetry and *brandura* became embroiled was the European-wide *questione della lingua*. Competition between Latin and vernaculars, and between vernaculars themselves was a mainstay of the early modern intellectual world, but in Portugal this quarrel became more urgent as the country battled to retain its cultural identity after Phillip II of Spain took the Portuguese throne in 1580. Within this extended linguistic tussle, *brandura* became a quality apologists for the Portuguese language avidly sought to identify with their native tongue because Portuguese was criticized for the "aspereza de su pronunciacion" (harshness of its pronunciation) (Camões 1580: "Al illustrissimo senor Ascanio Colona", n. fol.). Once more, it was *brandura*'s

position within a set of binaries referring to language that gave the term its power. Rodrigues Lobo (1992: 69), for instance, in his reimagining of Castiglione's *Courtier* for a Portugal without a Royal court, insists that Portuguese possesses the best qualities of every language, including the *brandura* of French. The prologue to the pastoral novel, *Lusitânia transformada* (1623), claims that the text to follow will add credit to the Portuguese language, amongst other things, by its "brandura na lingoagem" (gentleness in language) (Oriente 1985: 9). Diogo Camacho, a poet included in the eighteenth-century compilation of Baroque poetry, *A Fênix renascida* (The Phoenix Reborn), wrote humorously:

> Que tem o português propriedade,
> Eloquência, brandura e claridade,
> Amourisca-se muito o Castelhano,
> Tem muitos ches, e chis o Italiano. (apud Spina and Santilli 1967: 19)
>
> (How the Portuguese language possesses propriety,
> eloquence, gentleness, and clarity;
> Castilian tends very much towards Moorishness;
> Italian has lots of "che"s and "chi"s.)

Most defenses of the Portuguese language countered criticisms about the sound of Portuguese or its lexical range (another key reproval of it) by enumerating the intrinsic virtues of the language, including its *brandura*. But a different tactic, and one that impacted Bernardes's reception, was to evade such discussions and to assert instead that it is what people do with a language that matters more than its richness of vocabulary or pronunciation. Fernão de Oliveira's 1536 *Grammatica da lingoagem portuguesa* (*Grammar of the Portuguese Language*) urged readers: "não desconfiemos da nossa lingua porque os homens fazem a lingua, e não a lingua os homens" (let us not lose faith in our language, because men make languages, and not languages men). The famous humanist and historian, João de Barros, follows a similar line in his *Diálogo em louvor da nossa linguagem* (1540) (*Dialogue in Praise of Our Language*): "nas palavras não há coisa tão áspera que o uso não faça brando e suave" (Hue 2007: 51) (there is nothing so harsh in a word that cannot be made sweet and smooth by use).

In order to supplement such arguments, these defenses began to include lists of writers who could serve as practical exemplars of the heights Portuguese could reach. A notable example comes in Pêro de Magalhães Gândavo's *Diálogo em defensão da língua portuguesa* (1574) (*Dialogue in Defence of the Portuguese Language*). Gândavo pits the Portuguese, Petrônio, against the Castilian, Falêncio, in a debate to establish the superiority of their languages. Falêncio's name—a pun on the word *falência* (lack)—points humorously to the deficiencies of Castilian that will be revealed during the discussion. The crux of the dialogue is determining which language is closer to Latin. Unsurprisingly, Petrônio argues successfully for the greater proximity of Portuguese to the prestigious ancient tongue in phonetic, grammatical, and orthographic terms. But, as an additional piece of evidence to prove that the Portuguese language can serve as a vessel for erudition and elegance, Petrônio supplies Falêncio with his list of the best Portuguese writers. His inventory represents an early attempt to establish a canon of Portuguese letters; a feature that would become essential not only in apologia of the Portuguese language, but defenses of the Portuguese nation itself whilst annexed by Spain. The historian, João de Barros, and Heitor Pinto figure amongst the prose writers Gândavo selects for his defense. As for poetry, Petrônio first names Sá de Miranda as the founding father of a new age of Portuguese poetry (he was claimed as the first to bring the decasyllable line to Portugal from Italy). Camões provides confirmation that Portuguese can produce an epic to rival those of any other European language. Continuing the *anaphora* ("vede") that introduces each writer in his catalogue—and which, at this point, has reached the peak of its cumulative effect—Petrônio concludes his enumeration of writers thus: "vede a brandura das (obras) daquele raro espírito Diogo Bernardes, vede finalmente as do doutor Antonio Ferreira de quem o mundo tantos louvores canta" (Hue 2007: 73-4) (consider the gentleness of the poetry of that rare spirit, Diogo Bernardes, consider finally the poetry of Dr António Ferreira of whom the world sings many praises). This is not the first time Bernardes makes it onto the shortlist of

Portugal's premier authors, nor the only time *brandura* is cited as his signature quality in texts engaged in this quarrel.

Manuel Severim de Faria's defense of the Portuguese language in the second of his *Discursos vários políticos* (1624) (*Various Political Discourses*) praises the "brandura das Églogas de Diogo Bernardes" (Faria 1999: 93) (gentleness of Diogo Bernardes's eclogues) and notes that "o insigne Poeta Lope da Vega confessa que os escritos de Diogo Bernardes o ensinaram a fazer versos pastoris" (the esteemed poet, Lope de Vega, confesses that Diogo Bernardes's writings taught him how to compose pastoral poems). In similar terms to those used by Severim de Faria, António de Sousa Meneses underlines Bernardes's "blandura" in a section of his *Flores de España, Excelencias de Portugal* (1631: 239$^{r}$) (*Flowers of Spain, Perfections of Portugal*) that seeks to demonstrate "la aptitud para todos los estilos que tiene la habla Portuguesa" (the fitness of the Portuguese language for every style that exists). Bernardes's sweetness is acclaimed too in the manuscript text, *Cortes Polyticas de Appolo* (dated 1628) (*Political Courts of Apollo*) by Agostinho Manuel de Vasconcelos (Curto 2005: 145).

Bernardes's poetry as an exemplar of *brandura*, then, becomes cultural ammunition in Portugal's battle to retain its identity while annexed by Spain and in the broader early modern competition between vernacular languages. An ability to arrange sounds in harmonious order is the key connotation of *brandura* in this context—Bernardes's was being claimed, to use Barros's words, as someone who could make Portuguese sound sweet and gentle through use. Style, therefore, quite apart from subject matter, became essential to Bernardes's reception and his *brandura* became a political tool.

## ***Brandura* and Bernardes fade**

As this quarrel subsided, particularly after Portugal regained independence, both Bernardes and *brandura* fell from prominence. Indeed, in some respects, whilst writers involved in the *questione della lingua* kept Bernardes amongst the most prestigious cultural figures in Portuguese history, they did little more than this. One can read their references to Bernardes less as the mark of a vibrant afterlife, then, and more as an index to waning interest in his work. Their deferral to the judgment of an illustrious predecessor (Lope de Vega), along with the uniformity and brevity of their comments, suggests a lack of direct engagement with Bernardes's poetry, even if, at the same time, they testify to the endurance of his reputation in this period.

As Mendes (1999: 69-72) and Earle (2013: 103) have both noted, the only Portuguese poets from the sixteenth century to be steadily printed, read, and referenced during the seventeenth were Camões and Sá de Miranda. The 1633 edition of *O Lima* was the last of Bernardes's works to be printed until 1761. Bernardes suffered terrible slander at the hands of the notorious editor and commentator of Camões's work, Manuel de Faria e Sousa, who poached many of Bernardes's works and attributed them to Camões (see Alves 2010). Such thievery represented a backhanded compliment—after all, he thought Bernardes's poems were worth stealing—but marred the critical reception of Bernardes well into the twentieth century. Having *brandura* as an epithet also did not help Bernardes's cause as new critical terminology began to gain traction in the seventeenth century. The rising importance of *agudeza* (wit) as a category of poetic appreciation did not correspond well to Bernardes's (self-confessedly) straightforward poetry. Indeed, the physical meaning of *agudeza* (sharpness) was in stark opposition to the softness implied by *brandura*.[15] A focus on metaphors and conceits, and on valuing complex allegories also jarred with the interest in the kind of stylistic delight connoted by *brandura* (Pires 1982: 48, 51, 64-66). Readings of

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[15] Bernardes complains to Gonçalo Coutinho about poems for which you would need a magic spell or Apollo helpfully nearby to understand them (Epistle XXVII. 43-5). For the rise of *agudeza* (wit) and a denser baroque style in Portugal, see Carvalho 2007.

Bernardes's work do not seem to have changed with the times and this suggests one reason why he became a marginal figure during this period.

There was, however, a recuperation of Bernardes and other, by then forgotten, writers from the sixteenth century in the second half of the eighteenth century. The *Arcádia Lusitana*, instituted in 1756 after the Lisbon earthquake was the epicenter of a neoclassical aesthetic in Portugal that sought to reclaim many writers from Portugal's literary past and challenged the baroque poetics associated with *agudeza*. Chief amongst the Arcadians was Pedro António Correia Garção (1724-73), who listed Bernardes amongst three key *quinhentistas* or "ancients" ("Antigos") worthy of imitation in an epistle to the Count of S. Lourenço: "O bom Sá, bom Ferreira, o bom Bernardes / Foram grandes poetas; qualquer deles / Foi discreto e foi sábio" (Garção 1957: 227) (Good Sá, good Ferreira, good Bernardes were great poets: each of them was discreet and wise). As *agudeza* had overwritten *brandura* in the seventeenth century, in the next, this movement was reversed and older writers long-neglected in Portugal were welcomed back into the canon.

This movement to recuperate writers of the sixteenth century necessarily involved a return to old books, for many of these writers' works—Bernardes's included—only existed in manuscript or in printed editions from a century or more previous. A reference to the Crasbeeck dynasty of printers of the seventeenth century in Garção's (1957: 228) letter on the imitation of "Antigos" (ancients, i.e. sixteenth-century writers) reveals this bibliophilic streak. A consequence of this recuperation—and reprinting—of Bernardes's works is a quality of *déja vu* to his reception in the late eighteenth century. The known bibliophile, librarian of the University of Coimbra, admirer of Garção, and member of the Academia Real das Ciencias, António Ribeiro dos Santos (1745-1818), in particular, echoes many of the adjectives deployed by Bernardes's contemporaries, which were inscribed within the allographic poems of *O Lima*. In a letter recommending which books a friend should read, he includes "o amoroso Bernardes, doce e brando" (Santos 1812: 282) (the lovelorn Bernardes, sweet and gentle). In another poem, addressed to Ricardo Raimundo

Nogueira “on the pleasure of reading Poets in solitude”, Santos (1812: 50) praises Bernardes, who “em brando estilo do seu Lima canta” (sings of his Lima in gentle style). His reuse of the word “brando” seems to indicate that, two centuries later, Bernardes’s strategy of incorporating the allographic into his printed oeuvre continued to work and that *brandura* remained his prime attribute.

Bernardes’s reception in the nineteenth century was mixed and is too complex to elaborate fully here. The continued rise of Camões as the prime figure of the Portuguese canon did not help his cause, though it was during this century that editors challneged many of the erroneous attributions of his work to Camões (see Alves 2010; Aguiar e Silva 2011; Cunha 2002). An association of Bernardes’s poetry with gentleness also persisted. In a not entirely positive passage in his *Bosquejo da história da poesia e língua portuguesa* (1826) [*Sketch of the history of Portuguese poetry and language*], Almeida Garrett (1966: 494), for example, judged that Bernardes was an “excelente poeta; e conquanto sua linguagem é pobre, e em geral pouco variadas suas composições; a suavidade de seu etilo, certa melancholia de expressão que lho requebra e embrandece darão sempre a Bernardes um lugar mui distinto na poesia portuguesa” (an excellent poet; and though his language is impoverished, and his compositions are, in general, not very varied; the suavity of his style, and a certain melancholy in his expression that sweetens and softens it, will forever grant him a distinguished place in Portuguese poetry). Almost a century later, Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcellos (1924: 11-12) repeated this centuries-long association, claiming that Bernardes was “suave e brando” (smooth and gentle) in one of her many attempts to outline a more balanced and philologically-informed picture of Portuguese literary history.

In our own time, reading for *brandura* goes against some of our critical instincts. Recent critiques of “symptomatic” reading have shown how content has consistently been privileged over style, and depth over surfaces (Felski 2015). The value of a word like *brandura* for literary history thus resides in its being “super-ostensive” (Baxandall 1985: 116), in how it directs us away from

our habitual priorities. But *brandura* also reminds us how any critical priorities are always in conversation—or in conflict—with others. *Brandura* was, in Bernardes's reception, a contrastive term: its power derived from the fact that it opposed harshness and roughness, terms used to praise epic and criticise languages. Because *brandura* marked pleasure, its presence could also signal moral danger and the absence of edification.

Although *brandura*'s use developed over time and took on different powers in different contexts, a nationalistic thread runs through Bernardes's reception and its association with this word. In following this thread, one senses a surprising link between claiming *brandura* as a quality of the Portuguese language in the seventeenth century and the so-called *brandos constumes* ("gentle ways") that are still said (even if ironically) to characterize the Portuguese nation. Under the fascist Estado Novo, this supposed gentleness was a political myth propagated to veil the violence of a repressive regime and its extensive empire. Of course, the political propagation of this idea of *brandos costumes* by the Salazar regime is quite different from claiming Diogo Bernardes as an exemplar of the suavity of the Portuguese language, but both these chapters in *brandura*'s word history suggest that it, and the adjective *brando*, have, over the centuries, remained crucial words for coming to terms with being Portuguese as well as speaking and writing the Portuguese language.

(7853 words)

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