

Conflicting Images of Womanhood in the Novels of Alice Ogando

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Abstract: The now largely forgotten Portuguese writer Alice Ogando (1900-1981) wrote several novels during the 1930s and 40s criticizing the limited, powerless role assigned to women by the Estado Novo. She contests it by presenting alternative, less idealized portraits of contemporary women of Lisbon in her feminist novels. At the same time, Ogando's feminist message is counterposed by her more formulaic romance novels, in which she upholds traditional images of femininity and of idealized marriage.

Keywords: Portuguese women – Alice Ogando – Mary Love – Estado Novo – Feminism

At the time of the establishment of António Salazar's Estado Novo in the 1930s, women writers began to publish in large numbers in Portugal for the first time. Nevertheless, almost all the women writers publishing in the 1930s and 40s have been largely forgotten and excluded from literary history.¹ Even though these writers were the first group of Portuguese women to publish in significant numbers and within the same time period, they have received little critical attention. Their omission from the literary canon may have occurred because none of them belonged to a recognized and organized literary movement. In addition, since these writers focused primarily on women's issues and struggles, their works may have seemed inconsequential to critics who felt that they lacked universal value – a supposed flaw often attributed to women's writing.² Their preoccupation with the problems faced by women was likely conditioned by the

¹ The only female writers of the 1930s and 40s considered canonical are the novelists Irene Lisboa (1892-1958), Agustina Bessa-Lúis (1922-), Natália Correia (1923-1993) and the poet Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen (1919-2004).

² See Ana Paula Ferreira's introduction to her anthology of forgotten Portuguese women writers of the 1930s and 40s, *A Urgência de Contar: Contos de Mulheres dos Anos 40*. Ferreira explains that when women's literary works are not associated with or organized in an ideological or literary group, and, furthermore, when they are written by women and consumed by non-valued readers, their literary worth will be greatly diminished (26). See also Nancy K. Miller's essay, "Men's Reading, Women's Writing: Gender and the Rise of the Novel," in which she explains that literature penned by women is often relegated to a specific genre category that diminishes its importance (48).

subservient, traditionally feminine role to which women were relegated by Salazar's regime (Ferreira, A 'literatura feminina', 19).

Like many of her female contemporaries, Alice Ogando wrote several novels during the 1930s and 40s criticizing the limited, powerless role that women felt pressured to accept, and thus challenged the idealized image of womanhood constructed by the Estado Novo.³ In several novels, such as *Pena Maior*, published in 1935, and *O Meu Sonho de Papel*, from 1938, she contests this regimented image by presenting alternative, less idealized portraits of contemporary women of Lisbon whose values, mores, and economics limit and structure their daily existence and their very identities. Indeed, Ogando challenges and subverts the Estado Novo's ideological premises through several strategies. Yet, at the same time, Ogando's attempt to express what could be termed a "feminist" message, is counterposed – and even undermined – by her more formulaic romance novels, in which she generally upholds traditional images of femininity and affirms the values consolidated in the concept of an idealized marriage, as is the case with *A Mulher Comprada*, published in 1942.

These more conservative, formulaic works, many of which were published under the pseudonym of Mary Love, closely adhere to the classic romance formula, while several of the novels penned under Ogando's own name are critical, pessimistic works that examine the darker side of women's experiences in contemporary Portuguese society. In *A Mulher Comprada*, one of the more traditional novels, the female protagonist typically meets and falls in love with her masculine ideal, and the story ends in marriage. Any problems encountered by the protagonist are resolved, and her original career goals become unimportant as she finds true self-fulfillment through marriage. In the traditional novels, marriage to a wealthy man frees women from the dual bonds of unhappiness and poverty. As a result, the message of these novels reinforces the feminine ideal of the Estado Novo.

In contrast, *Pena Maior* and *O Meu Sonho de Papel* are novels that can be termed more realistic or critical of women's conservative social role, as Ogando portrays the reality of marriage for typical Portuguese women, who are often forced into unhappy unions for socioeconomic reasons. In these more realistic novels marriage itself becomes the point of conflict. An unhappy marriage is the prison from which women must free themselves. Their despotic and insensitive husbands stifle the development of

³ Little information is available to the public about Ogando. An article about her was published in the Portuguese newspaper *Expresso* in November 2000. Despite her extraordinary success as a writer, Ogando's works are virtually unknown today and have not been reedited. She was an incredibly prolific writer and likely wrote several hundred books. She was a playwright for radio and the stage, a theater critic, a children's author, a writer of popular books of different genres, from the detective novel to the romance. Ogando wrote many of her novels under pseudonyms, including Pilar Kay, Jane Luck, Henry Marcel, Marge Gray and Sérgio Duval. Under the name Duval alone, Ogando published almost 100 titles. Ogando also translated into Portuguese the works of Stefan Zweig, Edgar Allan Poe, Guy de Maupassant, Octávio Feuillet, Máximo Gorki and George Sand, among others (Paiva Boléo 2-3).

their identities and prevent them from achieving happiness. For these reasons, the female characters seek adulterous relationships, divorce, or careers, as a means of escape. These critical novels, then, represent a denunciation of the fascistic feminine ideal of womanhood.

Thus, though Ogando explores marriage-related themes in both types of novels, she comes to different and even contradictory conclusions about women's social circumstances. Love's *A Mulher Comprada*, for example, is about a woman who is forced to marry a nobleman in order to pay for her young sister's medical treatments, but ends up falling in love with him. Despite this happy resolution, and the woman's ultimately noble motives, the husband and wife are in conflict because he believes that she willingly married him only for his money. Similarly, the protagonists in *Pena Maior* and *O Meu Sonho de Papel* are both forced by their families to marry and likewise face similar circumstances. In *Pena Maior*, the protagonist is pushed into marriage by her mother, and in *O Meu Sonho de Papel*, the protagonist is forced into an ill-fated union by her aunt. In both novels, the women feel desperate and trapped, and seek a way to escape their marriages. Neither novel ends with a happy resolution, as the protagonist in each case views divorce as her only solution, even when true love is present.

While the Estado Novo relegates women to the narrowly defined role of wife and mother within the home – denying women any desired alternative –, Ogando highlights in her novels the importance of a woman's individual happiness, emphasizing the uniqueness of each woman's circumstances. According to the Estado Novo's ideology, women must be self-sacrificing, and must dedicate themselves to caring for the family, and by extension, the state. The caretaker role in women is considered natural, and represents the essence of womanhood. In order to fulfill this role, women must sacrifice their desires and ambitions. Salazar suggests that if women deny their desires, they will be truly happy, as these desires are actually irrational. Salazar states his belief that, "As mulheres não compreendem que não se atinge a felicidade pelo prazer, mas sim pela renúncia" (qtd. in Belo et al, 266).⁴ In the Estado Novo, therefore, happiness is equated with self-sacrifice.

Like other Southern European dictatorships, the Estado Novo gave primary value to women's return to the home, the glorification of motherhood and the fundamental importance of the family model, while still allowing some women a limited role in the political sphere (Cova and Costa Pinto 71). The regime's position on the role assigned to women is delineated in the Constitution of 1933, which declared the equality of citizens before the law, but with a notable caveat: Women were declared equal but different as a result of their nature, which made them essentially suited to the roles of wife and mother. Salazar's ideology reinforced the notion that women were part of the realm of nature and men of culture, effectively excluding women from the public

⁴ Translation: "Women don't understand that one does not achieve happiness through pleasure, but in reality through renunciation."

sphere. These values in turn were mirrored in the Catholic encyclicals published at the turn of the century that declared women naturally predisposed to domestic life and the care of children. Salazar added that women should be devoted to the fatherland and the care of the domestic sphere (Cova and Costa Pinto 72).

It is within the previous framework of the Estado Novo that we shall analyze Ogando's more critical novels. In *O Meu Sonho de Papel* and *Pena Maior*, Ogando deconstructs the apparent logic of the regime's discourse by breaking down the binary pairs that structure it. A clear, oppositional line is drawn in this system between the public and the private and the corresponding modes of moral and immoral behavior that each sphere should facilitate. The Estado Novo's ideology functioned on the basis of binary oppositions that extended this structure, such as health / illness, unity / fragmentation, good sense / irrationality, virtue / vice (Martins 77-8).

According to Moisés de Lemos Martins, the basis of Salazar's ideology is that anything that does not respect the "simples bom senso" of reason or logic falls into the realm of chaos and violence. Whatever falls into this realm must be prevented, as it is considered an abnormality within society and is potentially disruptive to the regime's desired values. The "casa portuguesa" as an intimate and isolated space prevents public interaction, which is inevitable in the workplace, for example, and at the same time becomes a space of economic production: "É pelo isolamento celular que a mulher vai então escapar às más influências, regressar ao lar e aí descobrir 'o caminho do bem'" (qtd. in Lemos Martins 77-9).⁵

In *O Meu Sonho de Papel* and *Pena Maior*, Ogando breaks down these constructed oppositions, and thus exposes the Estado Novo's ideology as a series of fallacies. For example, the conflicts she examines reveal that the forced unity of the family through an undesired marriage creates fragmentation and disorder within individual families, which reflects the dysfunctionality of Portuguese fascistic ideology and society. It is precisely in the "casa portuguesa" that the novels' conflicts take place, collapsing the line between the public and private spheres, and transforming the home into a place of alienation and sickness.

In the ideology of Salazar's regime, the well-being of the nation is attributed to women's role in the home, but Ogando challenges this idea, not by attempting to prove women's equality or by simply denouncing injustices against them, but instead by demonstrating the falseness of Salazar's ideology. Ogando challenges the idea of the self-sacrificed female by suggesting that the well-being of the family cannot be achieved by forcing women to remain in the private sphere. Instead, each woman must be free to marry for love, search for self-fulfillment and form her own identity, and only if this is achieved can the family be harmonious and healthy.

⁵ Translation: "It is through individual isolation that a woman will then avoid negative influences, return to the home and there discover the path of goodness."

Ogando suggests that an unhappy woman who has been forced into an undesired marriage will be at the center of an unhappy family and a violent and oppressive home. Furthermore, Ogando turns Salazar's discourse back on itself by suggesting that the family is indeed an economy with the wife at its center, but that she in fact works as a type of prostitute, as she provides services to her husband, such as sex and the bearing and the raising of children, in exchange for economic support. Ogando's texts illustrate the idea that, like prostitutes who are forced by unfortunate circumstances to sell themselves, women feel forced to marry because society offers them no alternative way to support themselves. Ogando emphasizes the fact that families pressure women to marry men they do not love for economic and social reasons, and that they discourage them from working outside the home. Marriage can be authentic only when women are able to marry freely, without concern for economic need, and solely for love and personal satisfaction. The alternative is a home of exploitation and violence to the bodies and minds of women. Ogando attempts, then, to remove women from public circulation and economic exchange and back to an individual – albeit, often private – space, but one that they have constructed for themselves. In contrast, Salazar makes marriage a public and economic policy by dictating to masses of undifferentiated women, while Ogando attempts to reclaim marriage as an act that is in accordance with each woman's personal desire and individual agency.

One of the most significant oppositions Ogando examines is virtue / vice, as it is fundamental in defining women within Salazar's ideology. Ogando sets out to prove, most notably in *O Meu Sonho de Papel*, that the greatest virtue is truth and love, and that a woman cannot be virtuous if she is living a lie or is economically dependent on her husband. In this novel, Maria Clara uses her simple, innocent "bom senso" to reason that women are bought and sold through marriage, which is therefore a violation of women's bodies. By making a series of logical comparisons, she arrives at the rational conclusion that, in her role as wife and mother, the woman is exactly like a prostitute. Woman's virtue is thus revealed to be vice, thus demonstrating that the Estado Novo's ideology is fundamentally flawed.

Ogando's ideas share affinities with the theories of Luce Irigaray in "Women on the Market." In this text, Irigaray elaborates on her postulations on woman as other and on the economy of specularization in relations among individuals. This is relevant to Ogando's novels because she confronts the values and ideology established by Salazar's regime, in the Constitution and in his speeches. In the Estado Novo, women are assigned a value and a function within the economy and society. This value is established in the Constitution within the roles of wife and mother. The purpose of women is to be exchanged among men as a useful commodity that perpetuates the male ego; through women, men are able to perpetuate themselves in the offspring they produce. Women are bought and sold to reinforce social norms and the power of the father. Thus, they are needed to reproduce fascist ideology by having and educating

children, but not by participating in public life and the state. As objects of exchange, women are denied subjectivity and individual agency.

Society's organization, according to Irigaray, depends on this exchange of women as objects, and the use of their bodies. The power to exchange and participate in other social processes belongs to men. Women are not granted the power to do the same with men because society is organized on the basis of men's desires and needs (174-5). Women "represent a natural value and a social value" (184). The value of women's labor in general, and specifically within marriage and motherhood, is limited by its "natural value" because women are perceived as simply doing what is expected or traditional within society. Their labor cannot be granted an additional value, because this would undermine the logic of the very system that their exchange sustains. Attributing an additional value to their labor would imply that women could or should be valued for nontraditional work.

In *O Meu Sonho de Papel*, Ogando exposes the exchange of women as the basis of the Estado Novo's ideology, and criticizes it as a form of exploitation and repression that denies women their individual agency. Ogando's novel exemplifies Irigaray's assertion that women are the other of patriarchal society and that they are the fundamental objects of exchange in the economy. Ogando exposes how women are not really given an equal but different role in Portuguese society. She denounces their economic exploitation within the home, which is the foundation of the Estado Novo's economic and moral order. Ogando reveals that women are indeed the center of the Portuguese economy, as Salazar states, but as an unpaid, socially oppressed reproductive workforce. Their exploitation is purportedly necessary for the stability of society, but they do not share in the power and benefits of the socioeconomic system.

In *Sonho*, the protagonist, Maria Clara, defies the role into which she is forced. Orphaned as a child, she is made to marry at the age of fifteen by her aunt, who intends to integrate her into the correct social role as a wife and mother. Eventually, however, Maria Clara defies society's values by living her own truth. Although she is about to get married, she continues to play with paper dolls that constitute, in her fantasy world, her dream husband and family. The idealized man and family she desires will never materialize in reality, as she later discovers. She does not love her husband, and he falls far short of her fantasy image of perfection.

Maria Clara's experience illustrates that the individual's attempt to define her own identity and live her life is often opposed to the role assigned to her by society. Despite Maria Clara's innocence and young age, for example, marriage, not her own process of self-realization, transforms her into a woman in the eyes of society. Due to her married status, she is granted the freedom to do as she wishes in her daily life, despite her lack of life experience. Women are attributed a symbolic value within the social order, which Maria Clara constantly defies in her effort to live out her own idealized vision and leads her to rebel against Portuguese societal norms.

Ogando criticizes Portuguese society throughout the novel by utilizing the concept of defamiliarization, Viktor Shklovsky's important concept of *ostranenie*, which is a method for questioning society's most fundamental beliefs and values.⁶ As he explains, "...as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic." Thus, people no longer perceive or question the reality of objects or situations, but instead take them at face value. This acceptance extends to values, behaviors and beliefs, as they simply accept what they are taught, conforming to social norms. Given that one of the purposes of art is to question fundamental ideas and beliefs, Shklovsky explains that its purpose "is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known." In this manner, the onlooker or reader is forced to examine the revealed nature of the object or idea.

In this manner, then, Ogando, through the character of Maria Clara, exposes the hypocrisy of Portuguese society. Maria Clara's innocent and sensitive perspective forces her to confront society's beliefs regarding women. Her defiance of her assigned social role becomes clear when she encounters a woman in a store who wants to kiss her infant daughter. This episode turns out to be a turning point in her life when her husband chastises Maria Clara for allowing the woman in the store, a known prostitute, to kiss her daughter. Because she has led a sheltered life, Maria Clara is unaware of the existence of prostitution, and is baffled by her husband's reaction. Rather than judging the prostitute for her supposed immorality, Maria Clara empathizes with her as a woman, and cannot understand why she should judge her for admiring her daughter. Instead, she believes that mercy and tolerance are appropriate. She defamiliarizes society's mores through her incomprehension, and reveals society's cruelty to the unnamed prostitute. In her innocent manner, Maria Clara concludes that she is herself also a "mulher perdida." She realizes, "Eu, que amava a verdade, vivia na mentira sem o saber" (29).⁷ It is at this precise moment that Maria Clara awakens to a new consciousness of being, one that embraces all the social roles of women as oppressed individuals, and one that makes her repudiate her "decent role" as a married and honorable woman of her society. Ogando subverts the Estado Novo's binary system of thought by collapsing a series of opposing terms on which it is constructed. As Salazar bases his fascistic ideology on "simples bom senso," Maria Clara does the same. Her simple good sense leads her to this conclusion, and she instinctively rejects her forced marriage. Through her innocent perspective, she equates the term "wife" with the term "prostitute."

Maria Clara is unable to accept what she interprets to be her immoral circumstances as a wife. Her life is a lie because she has sold herself to her husband and does not love him. Maria Clara and the prostitute are both selling themselves and are

⁶ Shklovsky explains this concept in his essay "Art of Technique," which appears in his seminal work *Theory of Prose*, published in 1925.

⁷ Translation: "I, who had always loved truth, was living a lie without knowing it."

equally immoral. Yet what is most striking is that the prostitute knows she sells herself for money, while women like Maria Clara live a life of deception. In this case, the marriage contract is as invalid as any other law that inhibits an individual from living his or her truth. The only law for Maria Clara is her conscience and her own personal truth. By extension, then, her personal philosophy defies the established order that relegates women to the forced status of wife and mother. The Constitution states that this role is natural for women, but the only desirable role for the individual, according to Ogando, is one that is self-created. The role of wife and mother is not legitimized by the marriage certificate, but by the love that a woman feels for the husband that she has freely chosen, without financial considerations. Otherwise, the relationship is a contract, an exchange of sex and other services for financial support. In this manner, Ogando exposes the true nature of women's economic dependence and the cruelty and violence engendered by such a relationship – violence to the minds as well as to the bodies of women. Maria Clara offers her analysis of the situation:

Vendia-me, vendia-me sim... porque não tinha amor a esse homem de quem usava o nome; suportava-o apenas quando ele era meu amigo como essas desgraçadas suportam talvez os homens que as procuram e não as desprezam muito... Éramos iguais na imoralidade e na amoralidade (30).⁸

In her search for personal truth, Maria Clara defies society's values by divorcing her husband, raising her children alone, and searching for an authentic love. In order to create her new life, she moves to Lisbon, where she faces a series of tribulations, often caused by the hypocrisy that surrounds her. She encounters philandering men and women, and loses her first job because she refuses a married man's advances.

Although the hypocritical people she encounters live cloaked in respectability, their homes legally constituted, they are, in reality, extremely unhappy. Once again, through this contrast, Ogando emphasizes the falsity of the state's laws and the hypocrisy of society. Maria Clara is virtuous because she is unwavering in her authenticity and commitment to truth, but, in the eyes of society, she is immoral, selfish, and destructive, because she divorced her husband and has lovers. In contrast, others are considered moral simply because they remain married and live in accordance with social expectations.

In spite of the judgments made against her, by her own standards she is a virgin spirit who lives an authentic life. Society's morals and standards of behavior are

⁸ Translation: "I was selling myself, yes, selling myself ... because I didn't love that man whose name I bore; I barely tolerated him when he treated me well, just as those poor women tolerate the men who seek them out and don't look down on them too much... We were equals in immorality and in amorality."

irrelevant to her. She must always live the truth and search for what she wants: “Para bem viver, com calma e tranqüilidade, é preciso abdicar de toda a beleza da alma, da verdadeira e única verdade, e eu não posso” (186).⁹ Likewise, Maria Clara’s concept of motherhood also defies the State’s construction of the maternal identity. In order to be a real mother, Maria Clara believes, she must be able to support her children herself. As Isabel Alves Ferreira explains about the role of the mother in Salazar’s state: “A sua vida deveria ser de entrega total aos serviço dos filhos” (209).¹⁰ As a reproducer of Salazar’s ideological system, the mother’s duty was to inculcate her children with the correct values. In Maria Clara’s opinion, women who are dependent on others for financial support can never be true to their own values and are therefore unable to transmit those values to their children. Ironically, then, a woman’s subservient role in marriage prevents her from being the moral center of her family, as she should be according to fascist ideology, because she will inevitably come to be a hypocrite and a liar. Ogando, then, equates individual power and agency with morality and subservience with deception, hypocrisy and immorality.

Despite her determination to be true to herself, Maria Clara’s economic and social difficulties at times threaten her resolve. Without skills, she has a difficult time finding employment. Her circumstances worsen when her infant daughter becomes ill and she considers marrying a banker to pay for the necessary medical treatment. Once again, her situation causes her to feel like a prostitute: “intrinsecamente honesta, viera ao mundo para me prostituir legalmente...” (78).¹¹ At the last moment, she is able to sell a novel she has written and has enough money to hire the best doctor. As such, Maria Clara is the model of womanhood that both challenges and reconfigures the female subject within the Estado Novo.

Yet, despite the critical aspects of the novel that represent an attack on women’s conservative social role, several plot points reinforce traditional notions of femininity. The first is that Maria Clara’s primary goal in life is to find true love, which she believes will make her complete and truly define her as a woman. As a result, female identity is defined by the love relationship, thus retaining much of the traditional notion of femininity. In the end, then, she falls into the greatest trap for women in patriarchal society – the myth of romantic love as the ultimate realization of selfhood for women.

Ogando’s novel does, in fact, follow a familiar literary formula, which is the confession. The novel is actually a farewell letter to Maria Clara’s current lover on the final night of her life, as she is about to commit suicide. After searching throughout her adult life for true love, she eventually meets the man of her dreams, but is tormented by

⁹ Translation: “In order to live well, with peace and tranquility, it is necessary to give up the beauty of the soul, of the real and only truth, and I cannot do that.”

¹⁰ Translation: “Her life should be of total dedication to serving her children.”

¹¹ Translation: “Essentially honest, I came into the world to prostitute myself legally.”

the fact that she does not feel completely loved and the fear that the relationship will end. She decides to kill herself because reality cannot live up to her exceedingly idealized dreams, and she cannot tolerate the hypocrisy of society. Her search seems to be for an absolute, perfect love, whose existence she questions when others seem to find it. At the same time, her suicide is vengeance against her lover for not loving her enough. Perhaps her dream is impossible to realize because every relationship she has is somehow contaminated by the influence of society. She refuses to participate in an exchange or to enter into a relationship of relative value; its value must be absolute, beyond the reach of society. She attempts to explain her reason for writing her confession:

Eu, que nunca assinei um livro, ponho com prazer o meu nome debaixo destas linhas mal alinhadas, escritas ao correr da pena, numa noite decisiva. É um retrato psicológico da alma feminina. O que eu deixo, é pouco talvez, mas tem a da verdade, a coragem de uma suprema confissão (254).¹²

This suicide letter is the only thing that she has ever written that is true, and therefore the only book she signs with her own name. She implies that the only truth she deems worth telling is about passion, to a lover. She undermines the value of her nine novels – all published under a pseudonym – by implying that they do not express an important personal truth. As a result, she affirms the importance of love and romance over her intellectual and professional life.

Some of the novel's shortcomings as a feminist text may arise from the fact that Ogando's intention is to create a portrait of a woman, as Maria Clara herself explains, with all of her failings and limitations, not to posit an ideal woman of the future who might not be able to exist in reality. Nevertheless, Ogando does affirm that women should have the freedom to choose their husbands, which necessitates women's financial independence, and she emphasizes the importance of sexual and emotional fulfillment. Maria Clara is able to search for a man who will make her happy, precisely because she is not forced to marry out of economic necessity. She also does not have to tolerate a husband's unwanted sexual advances, as she did when she was married. Love is what she wants most, but it must be freely chosen. As she explains, "Para mim o amor é o mais belo e o mais livre dos sentimentos"¹³ (168).

¹² Translation: "I who had never signed a book, put my name with pleasure below these underlined words, written with the flow of the pen, on a decisive night. It is a psychological portrait of the feminine soul. What I am leaving is very little perhaps, but it has the greatness of truth, the courage of a supreme confession."

¹³ Translation: "For me love is the most beautiful and the freest of emotions."

Another novel that is just as critical of women's economic status within marriage is *Pena Maior*, in which Ogando apparently exalts motherhood as a woman's ultimate, and perhaps inevitable, form of personal fulfillment. The dedication presumably presents the theme of the novel: "A todas as mulheres a quem só a maternidade revelou o amor – o maior amor."¹⁴ However, even though Ogando seems to privilege motherhood in this manner, she chooses to conclude her novel in an open-ended way, transmitting to the reader an ambiguous message.

Pena Maior illustrates the process through which women mature into society's standard of normative female sexuality and femininity. In addition, Ogando exposes "the missing links of economics, class ideology, and historical-cultural context in conditioning this process" (Ferreira, "Loving," 113). In circumstances that Ogando suggests are typical of Portuguese society, Clara, the protagonist, a recently graduated eighteen-year old, is forced by her mother to marry a man old enough to be her father and who has made his fortune in Africa. Clara's mother, who is unable to earn a living, uses Clara as an object of exchange to improve their economic status. Clara rebels against this forced marriage, however, and searches for an escape.

Ogando exposes the destruction caused within the family by women's dependence on men for financial support, and suggests that rather than facilitating familial unity, this dependence undermines it. Clara's mother is not a true parent because of her apparent selfishness, disregard for her daughter's happiness, and inability or unwillingness to communicate with her. Despite this criticism, Ogando eventually reveals that Clara's mother feels forced to exploit her daughter in order to improve her own economic circumstances. She is a widow, and she would have married Clara's husband herself, but he preferred a woman who was young and beautiful and could bear him children. Clara, then, becomes the currency she uses to negotiate a better position for herself within society. Ogando once again returns to the theme of woman as an object of exchange, to be bought and sold "como se ela fora apenas um corpo, um corpo sem alma nem coração" (16).¹⁵ This point is reiterated several times, as when the narrator explains: "Há certos pais para quem os filhos são capital seguro, que dará um dia proveitoso lucro" (16).¹⁶ Clara despises her husband and wants to leave him, but soon she finds herself pregnant. She decides to seek an abortion, rejecting the child because she does not love her husband. Clara is the sacrificial lamb of the socioeconomic system, in which motherhood is exposed as a form of currency, rather

¹⁴ Translation: "To all of the women to whom only motherhood revealed love – the greatest love."

¹⁵ Translation: "as if she were just a body, a body without a soul nor a heart."

¹⁶ Translation: "There are certain parents for whom children are assured capital, that will one day provide great profit."

than a process of self-fulfillment: “A maternidade não seria para si uma revelação sublime, mas uma expiação odiosa, pena maior a que o Destino a tivesse condenado” (39).¹⁷

Clara’s mother uses her in this manner because society forces her to exploit her own child, as she is ultimately as powerless as her daughter: “A pobreza é muitas vezes incompatível com a virtude e ela queria a sua filha pura como um anjo...” (19-20).¹⁸ The irony revealed is that finding a husband is often a matter of chance, and powerlessness actually imperils the virtue of women, as it can cause them to compromise their values. Ogando expounds on this common predicament of women in the novel when she explains that “...um casamento rico é hoje uma preocupação constante para todas as mulheres” (20).¹⁹ Additionally, this powerlessness threatens to destroy the mother/daughter relationship, rather than reinforce it through the shared experience of marriage and motherhood. Again, as in *O Meu Sonho de Papel*, marrying out of economic necessity threatens family unity rather than creating a cohesive, moral unit, the foundation of the Estado Novo’s vision of society.

The marriage is revealed to be an act of prostitution when her mother warns her that she must have sex with her husband or he will likely divorce her. Clara’s mother tells her: “justo era que pagasse os sacrifícios que tinha custado” (35).²⁰ Clara reacts to her mother’s demands by saying, “Pagar! Custar! Estas palavras martelavam lugubrememente os seus ouvidos. Pagar! Custar! Então aos pais também se paga?!” (35).²¹ Economic necessity and greed lead to dysfunctionality and abuse within the family, as one individual is dehumanized. Ogando, then, reveals that this unjust treatment of women undermines the Estado Novo’s ideal of family unity.

Ogando counters the State’s concept of family and its inherent imbalance of power by privileging personal truth over the law. Love is greater than the law of the State, to which individuals should not be subjected. The only valid principle is truth and a commitment to one’s own beliefs, conscience, and desires. Clara validates the privileging of personal desire when she decides: “Filhos, só do amor – legal ou ilegal,

¹⁷ Translation: “Motherhood would not be for her a sublime revelation, but a hateful expiation, the greatest regret to which Destiny had condemned her.”

¹⁸ Translation: “Poverty is many times incompatible with virtue and she wanted her daughter as pure as an angel.”

¹⁹ Translation: “...today a financially advantageous marriage is a constant preoccupation for all women.”

²⁰ Translation: “it was only fair that she pay for the sacrifices that she had cost.”

²¹ Translation: “To pay! To cost! These words hammered mournfully in her ears. To pay! To cost! So parents must also be paid?!”

bendito ou amaldiçoado – mas do amor” (38).²² The “pena maior” seems to refer to the regret of having a child born without love. This is contrasted with the “maior amor” of motherhood, in the novel’s dedication, which, presumably, can only be experienced within a relationship based on love, not practical needs. At the same time, as Ferreira explains, “pena” is also the “pain” or “sentence” of compulsory female heterosexuality and motherhood, through which women attain, “(according to Freud) the masochistic characteristics of femininity. As if in reply to official messages proscribing women’s work outside the home, Clara’s story indicates that in addition to traditional patriarchal myths imposing motherhood as a woman’s only role – and glory – in life, her ‘worst pain’ is directly related to economics and to class ideology” (“Loving,” 113-4).

As in her other novels, Ogando does not question the identity or role of women in society in a fundamental way, since Clara, like all of Ogando’s protagonists, defines herself through love, and motherhood is exalted as the most fulfilling moment of a woman’s life. Clara’s only aspiration is to marry her lover and have children with him. When Clara does finally give birth at the end of the novel, the child dies, leaving her free to dream about divorcing her husband and marrying her lover. At the same time, the child’s death could be interpreted as symbolic of the destructiveness of her marriage; without love, the child literally cannot sustain life.

Based on the previously discussed novels, *Pena Maior* and *O Meu Sonho de Papel*, one would define Ogando as a feminist, yet she proves to be ideologically contradictory through the novels she publishes under the literary persona of Mary Love. In the novel *A Mulher Comprada*, published under the pseudonym Mary Love, Ogando utilizes the same theme of forced marriage as a form of economic exchange. As often occurs in such formulaic romance novels, the protagonist, Peggy, is a fragile and passive young woman who is a victim of her circumstances. This novel shares several similarities with *Pena Maior*, as the protagonist is forced by her penniless mother to leave her private school to marry a wealthy man whom she does not love. In this particular novel, Peggy is forced to marry a handsome Polish nobleman, in an arrangement made between her mother and the nobleman’s uncle. At first, she refuses, because, like Maria Clara, she is noble and honest, and would never marry for money. However, she discovers that marriage is the only way to acquire the money to pay for her ill sister’s medical treatments.

Forced to marry the Polish duke and live in his castle in the Black Forest, Peggy writes a series of letters to her former nanny, Catarina, in which she explains her dilemma: She is falling in love with her husband, Everard, who despises her because he mistakenly believes that she allowed herself to be bought. Eventually Peggy learns that he has also fallen in love with her, but he does not trust her because his first wife married him for financial reasons, which he discovered when she was having an affair.

²² Translation: “Children, only from love – legitimate or illegitimate, blessing or curse – but from love.”

He eventually realizes that Peggy is an honorable woman, and asks her for a divorce because he respects her too much to regard her as property. Peggy suffers in silence until she eventually becomes gravely ill. While she lays in bed unconscious, the conflict is resolved through an act of serendipity, when the duke receives the irrefutable proof of her love that he seeks: Catarina brings him a letter she received from Peggy, in which Peggy declares her love for the duke.

With her more conservative novels, penned under the name Mary Love, Ogando undermines the message of her critical novels. In *A Mulher Comprada*, she denies the economic and moral reality portrayed in *O Meu Sonho de Papel* and *Pena Maior* in various ways. Like Maria Clara in *Sonho*, Peggy alludes to the suffering she expects if she is forced to have sex with a man whom she does not love: “É ali dentro que o meu pobre corpo se vai amortalhar sem ter vivido...” (57).²³ However, until the end of the novel, Everard never demands sex from her, which allows Ogando to avoid the unpleasant topic of forced sex. In the more critical novels, however, Ogando repeatedly addresses it.

Also, because Peggy and Everard fall in love, the denouncement of marriage as a contract or an economic exchange is nullified. Everard sees her as an individual and as an equal, not as a dutiful wife, a development that allows them to avoid possible conflicts. Instead of having to fight for truth, as Maria Clara does, Peggy’s truth is revealed through the letter, which she does not even deliver herself (as she lays unconscious in bed), and she never has to fight for the resolution of her unhappy circumstances. In this utopian vision of life, love is the only truth; it dissolves all conflicts and social realities. The wrong man happily turns out to be the right one, and he is handsome, understanding and moral. Happiness comes easily, and Peggy is not forced to defy society’s rules, unlike the protagonists of *Sonho* and *Pena Maior*. In the more realistic novels, by contrast, personal desire and convictions are in conflict with traditional social values, so happiness can be achieved only through a defiance of convention.

Another difference between the two types of novel is that in the idealistic, more conservative novels, the virtuous protagonist is always rewarded for her sacrifices with a marriage of love. This outcome reinforces the State’s message that the self-abnegation of women will allow them to achieve happiness. In her more critical novels, though, Ogando contradicts this, by revealing that self-sacrifice only leads to suffering, and that women must act on their desires in order to fulfill themselves and be good mothers. For this reason, Ogando’s critical novels can be considered an attack on Salazar’s fascistic ideology.

It is difficult to know what effect Ogando’s novels would have had on their female readers, especially considering the contradictory themes they include. Ogando’s willingness to write for vastly different audiences, as illustrated by her use of a wide

²³ Translation: “It is in there that my poor body will be shrouded without having lived...”

variety of literary genres, her many pseudonyms, and her desire to be commercially successful, make it difficult to ascertain a consistent and prevailing message in her body of work. Given the fact that Ogando had a regular program for women on the State-owned Emissória Nacional, it is even more difficult to fully define her work. Taken as a whole, though, her romance novels illustrate the conflicting messages of womanhood to which the female Portuguese elite was exposed in the 1930s and 40s, perhaps allowing female readers to feel more comfortable choosing among these contradictory images, while turning their backs on, or at least being suspicious of, the Estado Novo's singular vision of femininity.

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