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GENDERED POLITICS OF FOOD IN LILIA MOMPLÉ’S *NEIGHBOURS* AND MANUEL RUI’S *QUEM ME DERA SER ONDA*

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by
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Abstract

Gendered Politics of Food in Lília Momplé’s *Neighbours* and Manuel Rui’s *Quem me dera ser onda*

by Serena J. Rivera

The period shortly after independence was won in both Mozambique and Angola was characterized by infrastructural deficiencies and widespread instability across various facets of life for Mozambican and Angolan citizens. Lília Momplé and Manuel Rui were two authors that attempted to encapsulate through their work the frustrations of the Angolan and Mozambican people during these times of clear socioeconomic inequality. Momplé’s *Neighbours* (1995) and Rui’s *Quem me dera ser onda* (1984) not only call attention to these deficiencies but also specifically center on their characters’ relationship to food, gendered food practices, and the connection between food and gender inequality and state-level politics. Through a comparative reading of these novellas, I explore the semiotics of food and analyze how the transition into independence affected ideologies of feminine domesticity as well as the symbolic significance of gastronomic choice for men.

After Angola and Mozambique became independent in 1975, authors from both countries set out to construct, within their literary works, new forms and ideals of national identity. Now that both countries were able to exist as nation-states separate from Portugal, claiming a “Moçambicanidade” and an “Angolanidade” was paramount to
sociopolitical stabilization. Writers during this period essentially attempted to capture the ambiguous sentiment that characterized the transition into independence through literary works of political satire, irony, and allegory in the effort to construct a pathway towards the improvement of socioeconomic and political conditions. Patrick Chabal in, *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa*, notes that “political literature is most effective when it can appeal directly to human emotions” (38), and Momplé and Rui’s novellas do just that. Momplé’s *Neighbours* is based on actual events that occurred on May 29, 1987 in Maputo, Mozambique and explores the profound histories and intricate lives of the group of neighbors involved in the violence that befell them that night. Manuel Rui’s *Quem me dera ser onda*, on the other hand, through allegory, deconstructive irony, and two childrens’ close relationship to a pig that is both pet and food, exposes hypocrisies characterizing governmental leaders and the frustrations felt by Angolan families by unequal distribution of food during this time in Angola.

Through a close reading of the texts, it is clear that mentions of food frequent the pages of both novellas as metonymic reminders of the unstable realities of Angola and Mozambique at the time. While Rui takes a more direct approach in connecting food inequalities with the shortcomings of the Marxist governmental regime implemented post-independence, Momplé utilizes food in a more subtle manner; it is seen as a linkage between relationships and in its preparation a means to escape from or call attention to the realities of drought, famine, monotonous food choice, along with other factors affecting food distribution in Mozambique at this time.
What is also at hand within these novellas are the unique relationships between gender and food. For many of the male characters, food is a site of anxiety, a reminder of their patriarchal role as provider. The lack of food varieties questions ideals of masculine identity while food’s abundance correlates with alpha male status. Women are conversely seen in roles of inbetweenness in regards to food and often solely as submissive satisfiers of the gastronomic desires of their abusive and neglectful husbands. Gastronomic choice for men, in both novellas, essentially lies parallel with the fashioning of national identity and by the same token, the role of women as sustenance providers also functions as a crucial facet in the construction of nation post-independence. In essence, food—variety and lack thereof, preparation, consumption, availabilities—and its connection to gender are central tenets to these novellas that have yet to be discussed in a comparative context.
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Introduction

Although critical analyses of the works of Lília Momplé and Manuel Rui exist, the works of both authors have yet to be put into a comparative context. This essay will compare and contrast Lília Momplé’s *Neighbours* (1995) and Manuel Rui’s *Quem me dera ser onda* (1984) in regards to the authors’ approach to food and gender relations.

*Neighbours*, based on actual events, delves into the lives of a group of neighbors in Mozambique’s capital city of Maputo. Food makes an apparent statement throughout the story: as Momplé weaves through the histories of the characters, various episodes center on food preparation, the connections of certain foods to distant memories, food anxieties, black-market food-barter systems, and the highlighting of the contrast between the limited access to food varieties for the lower classes and the lavish diversity of foods available to the affluent. *Quem me dera ser onda*, on the other hand, places a more particular focus on food and its availability and consumption. Rui also touches upon food anxieties and the uneven distribution of food caused by faulty governmental regulations. In doing so, Rui utilizes the antagonist of his novella, Diogo, to highlight the frustration felt within Angola’s capital city by the shortcomings of the newly implemented Marxist government. What remains central to the story is the antagonist’s insatiable hunger for food varieties and most importantly, the pig (who is later given the name “Carnaval da Vitória”) that Diogo brings into his Luanda flat for consumption during the Carnival festivities.

As noted, while published analyses of these particular works exist, little has been written on the literary representations of food in post-independence Angola and
Mozambique. Even less material can be found concerning female authors and characters in Mozambican and Angolan literature. With this in mind, I intend to bring to light the intricate relationships surrounding food and gender as portrayed within these works, in order to open for academic discussion such issues as the connection between food and historical context, food anxieties in relation to gender, and the ways in which both authors approach gendered food practices.

Food is an important facet in the recent history of post-independence Mozambique and Angola. The decolonization process, along with the outbreak of civil wars and the occurrence of natural disasters, caused a great disruption in food production, which then led to issues of scarcity and unequal distribution. Food shortages and the shift in focus to mass production for consumption in urban areas in order to increase profitability allowed for a great divide in consumption between the affluent and the lower classes. Those with strong financial backgrounds were able to procure desirable and diverse foods, while the lower classes struggled to attain meager and monotonous alimentation. Often, food was purchased through nefarious means in order to bypass government regulations. Food became essentially, for most, a necessary commodity of limited availability.

Such issues related to the availability of food demonstrate the politically and socially charged semiotics of food as it appears within Momplé’s and Rui’s texts. This essay will highlight the connections between food and the historical context of post-independence Angola and Mozambique in order to elucidate the effects the transition into independence had on food consumption and practices as they are portrayed in Neighbours
and *Quem me dera ser onda*. Bringing these issues to light will aid in the discussion of the connections between food rituals and gender relations within both texts, as this essay will focus on contrasting and comparing how the authors approach such issues. In the comparing and contrasting of the texts, I also intend to extrapolate the ways in which the authors fashion gender roles in terms of distinct male and female relationships to food practices. This essay will essentially highlight the connection between the politics of food and the politics of gender, as the countries of Angola and Mozambique, in dealing with the decolonization process, attempt to establish their respective nations during the post-independent period and how these issues play out in *Neighbours* and *Quem me dera ser onda*. 
Neighbours and Quem me dera ser onda

Lília Momplé’s *Neighbours*, based on actual events, takes place within a period of twenty-four hours as the narrative navigates through the lives of a group of neighbors in Mozambique’s capital city of Maputo. The story centers on the inhabitants of various houses within the neighborhood, jumping between chapters taking place “Em casa de Narguiss,” “Em casa de Leia e Januário,” and “Em casa de Mena e Dupont.” Momplé gives historical background to the main characters who reside in or frequent these houses as a means to weave together their lives through similar histories of struggle, loss, abandonment, tragedies, and also the anxieties caused by the pressures of living up to specific cultural standards for gender roles. In the initial chapter, “Em casa de Narguiss,” Momplé places particular emphasis on Narguiss, the matriarch of the household and how dealing with her absent and philandering husband, Abdul, has affected her mode of thinking—once confident and now broken—, her relationships with her daughters, and even her body. Momplé also focuses on Narguiss’s studious daughter Muntaz, and Muntaz’s absent-minded sisters Râbia and Dinazarde, as juxtaposed reminders of the implications of culturally inscribed gender roles. “Em casa de Leia e Januário” provides a refreshing look at an honest couple with a healthy relationship despite their weak financial state. Throughout the novella, Leia and Januário stand out as the only couple to not succumb to societal pressures of greed and infidelity. Januário remains faithful, loving, and understanding to Leia. Although Leia longs to provide her husband with more than the monotonous meals she is forced to serve to him every day, she is grateful for his understanding. “Em casa de Mena e Dupont” holds a different story—Dupont mirrors
Abdul’s philandering ways as Mena mirrors Narguiss’s resulting physical and mental degradation. Although Abdul plays an absent role and is never actually present in the action of the story, Dupont’s abusive and untrustworthy presence has a similar effect on Mena. Overall, Dupont and Abdul as husbands and Narguiss and Mena as wives appear to highlight the normative cultural roles for gender in Mozambique at the time.

Amidst the impending tragedy that befalls the night in which Narguiss, Leia, Januário, and Dupont are murdered during a terrorist raid of the neighborhood, instances involving food appear frequently throughout the novella. Correlations between food and the state of the country are apparent as less fortunate characters lament the monotony of their nutrition or humbly accept their circumstances, while others are overtaken by greed and involve themselves in nefarious means for the sake of financial stability. Scenes of food preparation often highlight the distinct gender roles, as women are seen as occupied in kitchen politics and conversations revolving around obtaining a suitable husband, specifically in the house of Narguiss. All of these aspects of the novella materialize through a connection to images of food, an interesting facet that has yet to be discussed in critical analyses of the text.

Manuel Rui’s novella Quem me dera ser onda (henceforward QMDSO) centers on the controversies that arise when a pig, who later earns the name “Carnaval da Vitória,” is brought to the seventh floor apartment in a building located in Angola’s capital city of Luanda. Smuggled into the apartment by main character and patriarch Diogo, the pig’s presence causes a rift between Diogo, his wife Dona Liloca, and their children Ruca and Zeca as the novella exposes the hypocrisies and inefficiencies of the
Marxist governmental system implemented in post-independence Angola. Diogo accuses “Carnaval da Vitória” of exhibiting petty-bourgeois ways and, in turn, resents the pig’s existence. Throughout the novella, Diogo alludes to the pig’s impending death and consumption, as he grows increasingly frustrated by its presence. Ruca and Zeca feed “Carnaval da Vitória” a variety of bagged meat scraps from a local hotel. The pig’s alimentation infuriates Diogo as it is seen in juxtaposition to the monotonous food (mainly fried fish) provided to him by his wife, Dona Liloca. Incorrigibly unappeasable, Diogo takes his frustrations out on the pig, which upsets Ruca and Zeca, who are seen throughout the novella attempting to defend “Carnaval da Vitória” and ultimately keep the pig from the hungry wrath of their father. Caught in between the fight for “Carnaval da Vitória”’s life is Dona Liloca, who struggles with simultaneously pleasing her husband and protecting her children. Ultimately, the underlying issues of the novella center on food frustrations: consumption, monotony, government-controlled alimentation, which then highlight the inadequacies of the post-independence Marxist government. Subtle but significant are the connections between gender relations and food politics, as the female characters are always caught in a state of inbetweenness amidst their male counterparts.
The Semiotics of Food

Angola and Mozambique struggled to find socioeconomic and political balance during the decolonization process that involved the mass exodus of Portuguese immigrants after the two countries won their independence from Portugal in 1975. Those running the colonies at the time essentially fled Angola and Mozambique, leaving the countries to pick up the pieces and establish a stable political and economic infrastructure. This proved difficult as those left in control had little experience in such positions of power (Chabal 207). As a result of the instability during governmental transition, civil wars broke out within the countries between rival factions competing for political power. The wars, coupled with natural disasters and political and economic instability, defined the reality of both Angola and Mozambique during this period. After their independence was won, the temporary governments of both countries (Angola’s MPLA, Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola, and Mozambique’s FRELIMO, Frente de Libertação de Moçambique) sought to implement socialist policies as a means to stabilize the countries; however, such policies proved flawed, as debilitating inadequacies in the economic and political infrastructure of both countries became apparent (Chabal 194).

One of the most prominent inadequacies of the socialist regimes, along with other uncontrollable factors such as droughts, was the impact of their policies on food production and distribution in both countries. It is important to note that these difficulties began before the Portuguese lost power over their colonies, but were exacerbated by the Portuguese fleeing the countries during the unstable transition period, leaving in charge
poorly educated leaders lacking experience and resources (Galli 20). In Angola, once the Portuguese fled the country, new leaders attempted to resolve the issues of unequal food distribution by focusing on state farms and large-scale production. Instead of prioritizing feeding the nation as a whole, however, new leaders neglected areas that appeared less profitable (Galli 21). Focusing on mass production for consumption in the urban areas without sufficient labor to do so failed to produce the quantity of food to truly sustain the entire population (Galli 30-32). Manuel Rui, in *Quem me dera ser onda*, attempts to highlight the societal implications of the governmental failures to produce sufficient and diverse foodstuffs.

The alimentation of Mozambique suffered in a more profound manner, as the neglect of state- and urban-focused governmental policies concerning agriculture was coupled with devastating droughts between 1981 and 1984. Rosemary E. Galli notes in her article, “The Food Crisis and the Socialist State in Lusophone Africa,” that by the end of 1983 “it was estimated that about 100,000 people had died of famine, mainly in the southern provinces” (37). Maputo being located in the southern region of the country, we can assume that the population of this capital city was also greatly affected by the consequences of the droughts. This is of particular importance for my reading, as Momplé’s *Neighbours* takes place within Maputo and the profundity of the alimentary struggles is illuminated within the novella.

Governmental shortcomings, natural disasters, and civil wars were important implications in the food crisis that affected and disrupted the lives of the people in both Angola and Mozambique on many different levels. Andrea Adolph in her article,
“Austerity, Consumption, and Postwar Gender Disruption in Mollie-Panter Downes’s *One Fine Day*,” elaborates on the aftermath of World War II in regards to the disruption of government food controls and rationing and how this affected gender roles and domesticity, a similar theme to that of the food disruption experienced in post-independent Angola and Mozambique. Making a point that is pertinent to my discussion, Adolph states in regards to the societal implications of faulty governmental regulations of food in post-war England that:

> In the realm of the quotidian, these policies become cultural synecdoche for the war itself: even if the war did not invade the security of “home” via personal tragedy or mass media, there was no escaping the fact that for the majority of Britons, meals were smaller, monotonous and difficult to procure. (19)

Although post-war England seems like a far cry from post-war, newly independent Angola and Mozambique, such societal backlashes as Adolph delineates here mirror the implications of the civil wars and the shortcomings of the socialist policies governing food in these African countries. Isabel Rodrigues further dismantles the implications of governmental inabilities to provide an equal distribution of food in her article “From Silence to Silence: The Hidden Story of a Beef Stew in Cape Verde,” which focuses on food vulnerabilities in Cape Verde. In this article, Rodrigues examines the psychology of authoritarian figures attempting to silence the people’s cries for food equality and explains:

> Food deprivation is not a mere metaphoric device, but a basic need that undermines human existence and the sustainability of social order. Thus, to
openly acknowledge food failures is an incisive way of undermining the basis of political legitimacy and dismantling the bonds of social life. (347)

Rodrigues highlights here that not only is the government failing to provide sufficient alimentation to the country, but also using such dependency on the government to provide food as a means to control and ultimately silence any riotous outcry or behavior that might ensue. The narratives within QMDSO and Neighbours demonstrate that such issues are prevalent in Angola and Mozambique as well. Galli, Adolph, and Rodrigues’s discussions call attention to the societal implications of the disruption of food production and unequal food distribution in a post-war context. These societal implications mirror the issues of food and food politics in Angola and Mozambique as highlighted within both novellas.

Shifting focus to the texts in question, one of the most apparent differences between them is that Rui in QMDSO places food as a central tenet to the construction of his novella. The pig, “Carnaval da Vitória,” which eventually becomes a meal at the end of the novella, occupies the majority of the attention within the text. The novella essentially centers on the drama of the question: to eat or not to eat? This is of particular importance because throughout the novella “Carnaval da Vitória” is seen as eventual food—“quarto fogareiros crepitantes e as febras, bem ajindungadas … sobre as brasas vermelhas” (65)—for Diogo and his neighbor’s consumption during the carnival celebration at the end of the novella. As Diogo states in the beginning of the novella, upon the pig’s arrival in his family’s apartment: “vamos criar. Engordar. Depois é muita carne” (10). QMDSO revolves around this idea of “Carnaval da Vitória”’s impending
consumption, as Diogo’s children, Ruca and Zeca, procure various ways to save their new pig pet and expose the hypocrisies of the seemingly uneducated authorities.

When commenting on the instability of the present government, food shortages and governmental control of food also play a central role in the commentary. Diogo makes frequent remarks on the hypocrisies of the government officials concerning the control of food and the lack of variety. The reader gets a glimpse of the tension between Diogo and the ideology of the authorities in the first scene of the novella, when Diogo enters the elevator with the “leitão” who comes to be named “Carnaval da Vitória”. An argument ensues as Faustino attempts to tell Diogo that transporting a pig in the elevator is unlawful, since only “pessoas” and “coisas” are allowed. Diogo argues, “Mas leitão é coisa?” (7), to which Faustino responds and is again contested by Diogo. This first scene ultimately sets the mood for the rest of the novella:

—Nada disso. Bichos ficou combinado cão, gato ou passarinho. Agora se for galinha morta depenada, leitão ou cabrito já morto, limpo e embrulhado, passa como carne, também está previsto. Leitão assim vivo é que não tem direito, camarada Diogo, cai na alçada da lei.

—Alçada como? Primeiro o monta-cargas está avariado. Um dia inteiro que a sua mulher andou a carregar embambas para cima e para baixo. E depois o monta-cargas, está a ver? Em segundo o leitão, não anda de cima para baixo e baixo para cima. E foi este leitão que trouxe catolotolo aqui no prédio? (7-8)

The scene then ends abruptly as Diogo exits the elevator and enters his seventh-floor apartment, greeted by his children who are excited by their father’s surprise animal guest.
This preliminary scene between Diogo and Faustino foregrounds the ongoing frustrations Diogo exhibits in regards to the laws that govern food control. Diogo’s frustrations are heightened throughout the novella as the authorities attempt to enforce restrictive food laws without necessarily following them themselves.

Overall, QMDSO places particular emphasis on issues concerning food—control, availability, consumption, desire for variety, satiation, etc. The final scene, where the feasting on the slaughtered pig takes place, appears to bring everyone together and allow for temporary solace, although not necessarily for the forlorn Ruca and Zeca. Diogo, who argues with Faustino and Nazário throughout the novella, surprisingly acts in a manner that is pleasant and inviting: “Olhe, camarada Nazário, nem vale a pena apresentação. É tudo família” (64). Diogo informs Nazário that all of the members of the “comissão de moradores” along with all of “os camaradas que fizeram serviço ontem e hoje à porta do prédio” should be invited, an unexpected change of heart from the attitude Diogo displays throughout the novella. Nazário, who is normally characterized by an unpleasant demeanor, complies in an ironic gesture, “dou a minha moção sem reservas. É preciso unir os moradores do prédio porque a unidade deve começar da base” (65). Dona Liloca attributes Diogo’s entire shift in attitude to the presence of “carne”: “Diogo é assim. Tanta coisa com o porco e se calha fica contente se os vizinhos lhe acabarem hoje com a carne” (65). The ironies of this culminating scene ultimately highlight the larger notion that these issues surrounding food stem from an inadequate governing system—that greed is at the basis of Angola’s regeneration.
While food plays a central role in Rui’s novella, Momplé approaches food in *Neighbours* in a subtler manner. Instances of food being procured, prepared, or served generally remain in the background, outside of the main action, and are often connected to women as food preparers. In the house of Narguiss, food appears abundant but is only compensation by her husband for his absence and infidelity. Food is also abundant in the house of Mena and Dupont but is clearly procured by Dupont through illegal means in order to placate his conspiring guests. The crisis of food availability in Mozambique is most clearly demonstrated in the house of Leia and Januário who live meagerly and, mainly to Leia’s discontent, are often seen consuming monotonous food items such as usha and cabbage.

The novella begins with the chapter “Em casa de Narguiss” and offers a glimpse of the aesthetic surroundings which then abruptly focuses towards Narguiss’ sentiments of hurt and pessimism before turning towards Narguiss’s relationship to food: “É um céu limpo de Maio, pontilhado de estrelas de brilho tão intenso que dão a impressão de estar muito próximas. Mas nada de lua, o que deixa Narguiss desapontada e inquieta” (11). The novella quickly offers a further investigation of the pessimism that characterizes Narguiss as the first instances of food appears, coupled with the corporeal image of Narguiss as large and grotesque: “Como porém nenhuma resposta lhe vem de um céu tão agressivamente magestoso, decide iniciar os preparativos para o Ide e, rebolando o corpo imenso, vai para a cozinha onde já se encontra a filha mais nova a preparar as chamuças” (11). As Narguiss’s youngest daughter Muntaz attempts to comfort her mother by informing her that the moon is shining in South Africa and therefore to celebrate Eid at
this time is not to be sinning, Narguiss’s response demonstrates an initial instance of social commentary in connection to food: “Mas nós não estar no África do Sul. Por isso ser obrigados cozinhar toda noite” (11). The scene’s continuation highlights that this family is particularly lucky to have so much to cook, despite the plights of most concerning food in the country: “É, de facto, surpreendente que, numa época de extrema carência no país, no frigorífico de Narguiss não falte a carne de vaca e de cabrito, o peixe graúdo, a manteiga, os refrescos… E, na despensa, não falte também o arroz, o açúcar, a farinha de trigo, a aletria, as especiarias” (12). We see here that food serves as an introductory pathway into the personal problems that face the characters rather than a focal point for the action of the story, as this mention is then followed by the insinuation that Narguiss’ husband, who provides this food, would be a perfect husband if not for his philandering ways.

Throughout the novella, scenes centered on food often call attention to the bigger problems at hand—unfaithful husbands, turning towards nefarious means to procure foodstuffs as almost obligatory, and the societal pressures inflicted upon men and women. Whereas food shortages function as a metonymy for the overall sociopolitical instability in *QMDSO*, Momplé appears to use food to introduce the reader to not only the food inequalities that plague Mozambique at that time but also the blatant issues of gender inequality, all of which lead up to the culminating tragedy that ends the novella.

Despite the call to attention Momplé provides in her approach to food and its shortages in *Neighbours*, lack of food variety appears to evoke a more profoundly angered sentiment, as seen in the character of Diogo in *QMDSO*. Diogo grows
increasingly frustrated and hostile throughout the course of the novella in regards to food, while neighbors like Faustino store illegal food items in their apartment. As Niyi Afolabi states in the chapter of *The Golden Cage* entitled “Manuel Rui and the Construction of Angolan Regeneration,” “Diogo consoles himself by promising the pig that its very flesh will be served as food during its funeral…” (20). However, despite his attempts at consoling his anger with the promise of the pig’s consumption, he still is characterized by his short temper and insatiability. Manuel Rui appears to use Diogo and his frustrations towards the existence of the pig as a means to expose the shortcomings of the government. Afolabi, in his analysis, connects the pig’s existence with the exposure of “social ills of the new nation” such as “greed, corruption, illiteracy, food shortage, water shortage, disturbing bureaucracy, malfunctioning elevators and telephones, long lines to buy food,” etc. Ultimately, food seems to remain at the center of the orbit of “infrastructural deficiencies” (105) in *QMDSO* and Diogo’s vehement frustrations concerning food provide a literary linkage to these “deficiencies.”

In contrast to food functioning as a central tenet in *QMDSO*, Momplé in *Neighbours* offers a greater variety of characters and therefore multiple opinions, outlooks, and reactions towards food. Momplé offers the reader a detailed and in-depth glimpse into the three households and their inhabitants and visitors. “Em casa de Narguiss” centers on the matriarch Narguiss and her overwhelming feeling of societal obligation towards food preparation and her daughters, Rábia and Dinazarde, who appear disconnected from reality as they cling to their roles in the kitchen, while the other, youngest daughter Muntaz simply goes through the motions in order to placate her
mother. Muntaz often avoids hurting her mother’s feelings by enveloping herself in cooking: “Muntaz não responde, continuando a picar a cebola e a malagueta para o recheio das chamuças” (12); “Esta continua silenciosa, trabalhando agora a massa das apas” (13). It appears that these female characters use their occupation of the kitchen as a means to escape any potential woes—whether in regards to detaching oneself from the issues plaguing the country at the time, placating a suffering mother, or escaping the thoughts of one’s husband with other women.

The home of Narguiss is replete with food provided by her absent husband Abdul through means that Narguiss never attempts to uncover: “tudo conseguido através de ‘esquemas’ que ela nunca procurou aprofundar. Aliás, Abdul sempre sustentou a família de modo a esta não passar privações…” (12). However, in the home of Leia and Januário, issues of food present themselves in an opposing light, as evidenced by the first paragraph of their chapter: “‘É bom estar aqui… é tão bom estar aqui,’ diz Leia para si mesma, com a sua imensa capacidade para viver intensamente as pequenas alegrias da vida e tirar vantagem até das contrariedades” (16). It becomes apparent that this couple is the exception to the rule of discontent, that despite their privations Leia does not lead an unhappy life: “pouco a pouco, foi aprendendo viver com mais esta restrição, tal como se habituou a ter apenas dois vestidos e nunca comer carne ou outro peixe que não seja carapau congelado” (16). In this chapter, the reader is introduced to a couple characterized by an uncharacteristic gratitude for the little they own—“Leia ama estas cortinas baratas, a mobília de formica, a loiça de vidro vulgar, o recanto de violetas…” (17)—which differs greatly from the sentiments in the home of Narguiss, where the
women have all the material comforts they need but still are unhappy.

The home of Leia and Januário also differs greatly from the home of Mena and Dupont, as we discover when the chapter “Em casa de Mena e Dupont” begins with the misogynistic and machista banter of Dupont’s nefarious visitors. What seems to characterize this couple is Mena’s concern for the undeserving Dupont whose sole concern is to impress his rude guests. “Comes com o meu dinheiro, não é? O resto é comigo” (23), Dupont argues with Mena. As evidenced by these preliminary chapters, Momplé approaches food in the stories of these couples and families in varying ways.

Both QMDSO and Neighbours focus on the means to procure food while also touching upon its availability. In QMDSO, Dona Liloca, Ruca and Zeca are seen attempting to placate Diogo by gathering meat scraps from a local hotel and disguising the scraps as diverse meals. Doing so proves a stressful task both for Diogo’s wife and his children and, ultimately, Diogo is still never satisfied as he waffles between his preferred food choices. Finally receiving meat after shouting to Dona Liloca, “nem chega uma vez por mês!” (40), that they eat meat, Diogo calls for fish again: “Liloca, vê se amanhã fazes um bocado de peixe. Com um mar de Angola tão rico como é que a gente come sempre carne?” (52). This proves short-lived, however, as his desire for the salty and ample meat of the pig reemerges.

On the other hand, Neighbours mainly illuminates the contrast between the food available to those who are privileged and to those living meagerly, rather than focusing on the insatiability of one particular character. However, there exists a fine line between those who are privileged and those who pretend to be so, as Momplé highlights the fact
that although those with money are able to obtain food variety, many procure food illegally:

Com efeito, a farinha de milho e o repolho e, por vezes, o carapau congelado, têm sido, durante os três últimos anos, os únicos produtos acessíveis no Mercado de Maputo. Quanto ao resto, ou não existe ou é vendido na candonga e na Interfranca a cooperantes e a uns tantos moçambicanos privilegiados ou ladrões. O trabalhador comum tem que contentar-se, diariamente, com a infalível ushua e o repolho que, na gíria popular, se tornou conhecido pelo agradecido nome de “se não fosses tu.” (34)

Momplé here implies that many often steal or buy items through a black market barter system, just as Ruca and Zeca in QMDSO do so in order to feed “Carnaval da Vitória.” In either case, food outside the realm of the mundane is a precious commodity.

Food hierarchy and its correlation with social hierarchy resonate in similar ways in both texts. Chabal, in *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa*, notes that such politically charged literature often “refers to the large ‘evil’ of world exploitation or discrimination deemed responsible for the poor conditions under which Mozambicans, Africans and blacks generally had to live” (38). In the cases of Neighbours and QMDSO, ushua and cabbage, the lack of meat, *peixe fritismo* versus the abundance and diversity of food eaten by others portray an apparent disparity within society and an inequality in not only food politics but politics of the nation. As Gang Yue explains in *The Mouth that Begs: Hunger, Cannibalism, and the Politics of Eating in Modern China*, “social disparity is often defined in terms of unequal food distribution” (151) and that,
essentially, “consumption is where the personal and the political are ineluctably intertwined in shaping the narrative of the hungry revolution” (156). This begs the question of whether the abundance of food and festivity indicates a detachment from the prevalent unstable political life occurring outside the home. Does food abundance equate with safety and social and political exemption? Essentially, are the characters in QMDSO and Neighbours “depoliticized” by food’s abundance and conversely politicized by its scarcity?

As Hilary Owen states in Mother Africa, Father Marx concerning the characters of Narguiss and her daughters in Neighbours:

Narguiss and her daughters, who are seen preparing food and decorations for the beginning of the Eid festival, are uninterested in what is going on around them . . . their comfortable middle-class life in the city seems built on denial of what is happening in the rest of the country during the Post-Independence War, as they believe themselves to be distant from the attacks and massacres they hear about on the radio. (148)

This is evidenced by a particular scene in the kitchen of Narguiss, where Muntaz attempts to listen to the news on the radio. Muntaz, interested in the happenings of the community listens to the news in the kitchen. Her sister, Dinazarde, disagrees with Muntaz’s interest in the news while in the kitchen: “lá está ela com o noticiário! É sempre a mesma coisa não sei por quê ouvir tanto noticiário” (71). Rábia and Fauzia chime in exclaiming that the news is neither interesting nor relevant, that it only mentions “guerra e fome, estes aborrecidos acontecimentos que, pensam elas, nada têm a ver com as pessoas,” (71) this
comment demonstrating, in the midst of an abundance of food, a detachment from the harsh realities of “guerra” and “fome” occurring outside their home.

Conversely, in *QMDSO* the lack of variety and sufficient alimentation is played out as a constant reminder of political instability. Diogo, frustrated with the monotony of fried fish with rice, frequently castigates “Carnaval da Vitória” for the pig’s bourgeois existence: “estás-te a aburguesar—dizia o chefe da família Diogo.—Quem te viu e quem te vê. É a luta de classes!—e os miúdos partiam o coco a rir até a pai se irritar por causa do peixe frito com arroz” (23). Diogo’s idea of the pig as a representation of bourgeois characteristics pervades the novella: “estás-te aburguesar mas vais ver o que te espera—e com a mão no pescoço mostrava-se aos filhos na forma de como se corta uma goela—faca! é o fim de todos os burgueses!” (26). When Diogo is finally given other meats to eat he starts to detach himself from his fight against the “burgueses”—“pouco a pouco era só um xingamento pequeno mas sem aquele ódio que Diogo despejava nas revoltas contra o peixefritismo” (52)—but quickly his resentment returns as the novelty wears off: “merda para esta vida! Um homem farta-se de trabalhar, sábados vermelhos não falta e nem sequer há um bocado de cerveja…” (55). What is seen here is a detachment from reality when satiated by variety in alimentation, while the lack of variety leads to the notion that the government is inadequate. This idea culminates in the final scene of *QMDSO* where all the neighbors amicably convene to feast on the pig, without the slightest indication of their argumentative histories.

*QMDSO* uses a deconstructive irony while *Neighbours* maintains a humanistic approach with its offering of in-depth histories of the characters. Afolabi analyzes Rui’s
intentions by stating that “Angolan regeneration is called into question through the incisive power of satire where degenerative post-colonial images conflict with lofty expectations and dreams of an ideological Angola fighting for liberation from Portugal” (78). Fernando Arenas explains Rui’s intentions further in Lusophone Africa: Beyond Independence, stating that Rui “bring[s] attention to the significant deficit as far as political democratization and socioeconomic justice are concerned despite the recently gained peace” and that he “expose[s] the oligarchization of Angolan society that has led to the entrenchment of internal colonialism as well as the deployment of pernicious forms of coloniality and power” (172). On the other hand, Owen in Mother Africa, Father Marx describes Momplé’s approach as a third-person narration that “assumes a didactic position analyzing the conflicted national ‘unconscious’ of Mozambique through a review of the characters’ life choices in relation to the course plotted by national independence culminating in the threat to national sovereignty perpetrated by the murder at the end” (147). It is evident that issues of food play a large role in both novellas in calling attention to the infrastructural deficiencies of both Angola and Mozambique during these regenerative times.

In both QMDSO and Neighbours, the gathering act of food consumption plays a role in the gloomy outcome of both novellas. Right before the murderous scene at the end of Neighbours occurs the emotionally charged scene in the home of Mena and Dupont. Tensions between Dupont and his guests—Rui, Zaliua, and Romu—reach a foreboding pinnacle as Mena attempts to thwart Dupont’s next moves. This is the last of the dinner scenes where Dupont pressures Mena to provide a lavish meal with money he gives her.
from an unknown source. Mena follows her husband’s detailed commands for the dinner she must provide for Dupont’s shady guests but she stays attuned to their ulterior motives. Her uneasy feelings are solidified by Dupont’s hurried orders to clear the table: “Mena repara que as mãos do marido tremem e advinha-lhe, na voz, um travo de medo… vai deitar, vai—diz-lhe Dupont, empurrando-a, nervosamente, para fora da sala e convidando depois os sul-africanos a sentarem-se à mesa, já livre de pratos e talheres” (88). Shortly after, Mena attempts to warn the police about the future whereabouts of the men but to no avail.

Meanwhile, *QMDSO* ends with the consumption of the pig that plagued Diogo throughout the narrative: “a mulher limpou as mãos ao avental e, antes de sair, olhou amarradamente os olhos na varanda: no sítio onde vivera ‘carnaval da vitória’ estavam agora quarto fogareiros crepitantes e as febras bem ajindungadas, estalavam sobre as brasas vermelhas” (65). The neighborhood is unified in the pig’s consumption as in the presence of the cooked pig the relations between the neighbors appear harmonious, each bringing different utensils and dishes to the festivities. This contrasts greatly with the image in *Neighbours* where the final meal essentially sets the stage for the disbandment of the neighbors through violence and death. However, in both scenes of the final meal, the reader is left with an uneasy feeling. The final meal in *Neighbours* leads to the tragic scene of murder while the main, but voiceless, character in *QMDSO* is murdered for neighborhood consumption. Although *QMDSO* appears to have a definitive end, the pig’s consumption and the children’s lamentations signify an undetermined outlook towards the future.
Food and Femininities

It is clear that food politics play a large role in these two novellas, but there also exists a strong connection between food and gender. Women throughout the novellas are seen as cultivators and food laborers, working to bring sustenance to the men of the nation. They play mediating roles with unheard voices, as the kitchen appears as their main stage. Looking at this notion in both novellas, as this section will explore, will help answer the question: are women essentially feeding the nation? This section will also investigate the female characters’ specific relationship to food in regards to the cultural context and the constructions of gender in Mozambique and Angola.

One of the most interesting connections between food and gender within these two novellas is the powerful sense of inbetweenness that overtakes the female characters (e.g., Narguiss, Mena, Dona Liloca, Sofia). This sense of inbetweenness stems from the feelings of obligation to please their husbands but to also protect their children, all the while adhering to society’s cultural expectations for women. These notions are most often coupled with the presence of food and its preparation as part of women’s societal duty to please their husbands.

In the chapter entitled “I Studied with the Nuns in the Mission, Learning to Make Blouses” in Pounders of Grain, Kathleen Sheldon explores the recent history of women in Mozambique, including their limited access to education and the types of education they received, which fashioned women to become domestic engineers and proper housewives. These culturally embedded expectations strongly play out within both novellas. Sheldon notes that the educational goals of the curriculum for girls and young
women stated that their education was in strict contrast to that of the boys, its goals being to “[improve] the native woman in order to prepare her to make a civilized home and to honestly acquire the ways of maintaining a civilized life” and also to maintain obligatory the “practical education in domestic economy, especially in relationship to the good management of the household and the formation of a proper housewife” (90).

With these facts in mind, it becomes easier to understand the feeling of liberation felt by the women in Neighbours concerning death at the end of the novella in which Narguiss, Leia, and Januário are murdered during a terrorist raid in which Dupont also dies. Narguiss expresses a moment of clarity before death “As balas atingem-na, certeiras, no pescoço e no peito e ela espanta-se da sensação da infinita paz que a acompanha na queda. Já nada a faz sofrer, nem o Ide sem ver a lua, nem as filhas sem casar, nem mesmo Abdul” (94). Mena feels empowered to be relinquished from the shackles of Dupont’s emotionally and physically abusive ways: “Sente apenas que, pela primeira vez, tem a sua vida nas mãos, vida que lhe pertence inteiramente porque, mesmo que Dupont esteja vivo, já não é possível continuarem juntos” (104). There is, as well, the moral struggle of inbetweenness felt by the women in both novellas concerning pleasing their children and their husbands—Dona Liloca caught in between her husband’s demands for meat and her children’s demands for justice for “Carnaval da Vitória,” being a prime example.

Although the majority of Mozambican girls encountered the grim statistics for education, some used their class as an advantage to acquire schooling and a higher place in society. This can be seen in Muntaz’s character, who pains her mother with her
studious nature and her lack of interest of securing a husband. Muntaz represents the minority of women with access to education, who strayed from their socially constructed gender roles, while the other female characters in *Neighbours* and Dona Liloca in *QMDSO* represent the majority—those with little education who remain bound to their domestic duties.

The female characters that most exemplify this sense of inbetweenness are Narguiss in *Neighbours* and Dona Liloca of *QMDSO*. Narguiss demonstrates this idea of inbetweenness in regards to her feelings of obligation and disappointment towards her absent and philandering husband and raising successful marriage-bound daughters. Dona Liloca in *QMDSO* displays a strong sense of inbetweenness throughout the novella, as she struggles with her mediating role between pleasing her husband’s insatiable hunger and protecting her children from witnessing the death of their beloved pig companion.

Narguiss, in many ways, exemplifies the social inscription Sheldon highlights in *Pounders of Grain*, in one particular sense when the narrator further explains Narguiss’s views on the “verdadeira mulher,” that much of it meant to cook well in order to obtain a worthy suitor, “a cozinhar primorosamente com o supremo objectivo de agradar ao homem que um dia escolhesse” (74). This idea plagues Narguiss throughout the novella as she worries about her daughters never finding a husband, while by the same token not realizing the damage her securing a husband has done to her. The intelligent Muntaz perceives this, however, observing how her father who has relegated Narguiss to the kitchen neglects her and how she in turn neglects herself. The narrator describes Muntaz’s observation of her mother: “agora que está gorda e feia … é como tirar-lhe toda
a possibilidade de viver” (72). Narguiss then reminisces about her first wedding and her initial feelings of societal obligations connected to food. Narguiss distinctly remembers the copious amounts of food at her wedding that her guests delighted in while to the workers “não faltava a chima de caracata com tocossado de peixe, única iguaria capaz de saciar inteiramente os seus humildes estômagos” (75). This memory portrays the class division made manifest by what the workers ate and the view of their appetites as unsophisticated, while those celebrating ate everything imaginable. This idea would later characterize the outlook on life of her daughters, Rábia and Dinazarde, and their disinterest in the plights of the rest of the country. With the extravagant variety of food present at the wedding came a weight that Narguiss felt:

Lembra-se, principalmente, das intermináveis horas que permaneceu aguardando o noivo sentada no palanque especialmente preparado para ela, rodeada das suas damas de honor. Sufocava debaixo do véu vermelho que o noivo só foi levantar quando, por fim, terminaram as demoradas cerimónias interditas às mulheres. (75)

Despite this distinct memory that strongly hints at the societal implications of food, coupled with her present anguish at Abdul’s absence during the one holiday he never misses, Narguiss in the present still desperately wants for her daughters to find a husband and fulfill their roles as “verdadeira[s] mulher[es].” The narrator continues to delve into Narguiss’s and Abdul’s relationship:

Amá-lo apesar de tudo, é também, para ela, uma maneira de se fazer perdoar pelo seu corpo, deformado pela gordura que se foi instalando, lenta e insidiosamente, desde o nascimento da segunda filha. Em vão Narguiss lutou contra ela,
suportando dietas de fome, logo seguidas de períodos de bulimia. E as aventuras amorosas do marido impelem-na a compensar-se com guloseimas que a fazem inchar cada vez mais. (76-77)

This demonstrates the correlation between Narguiss’s increasing reliance on food for emotional satisfaction and the neglect she feels from her husband.

It is interesting to note that she felt provoked by her husband towards sweets, that they provided her with solace in the face of her suffering, which seems to be a prevalent theme as Muntaz is seen enveloping herself in her kitchen duties in order to avoid the confrontation with her mother’s suffering. By each act of consumption, Narguiss became aware of the weight she gained. Now, “já não é possível reconhecer, na mulher disforme em que se transformou a rapariga esbelta que Abdul conheceu” (77), and the insecurities that grew on her have led her to forgive Abdul for his consistent infidelities. Narguiss essentially fears losing him, losing the tenderness he feels for her despite her appearance, and this fear is “um grande medo que a retém na cozinha percorrendo o fio da sua vida, longe da grande cama vazia que tanto lhe faz do que a ausência de Abdul, nesta véspera de Ide” (77). Ultimately, Narguiss is caught between the weight of societal pressures to be a “verdadeira mulher” in terms of food preparation and pleasing one’s husband and the consequences this has had on her body and self-esteem as well as imparting this cultural education to her daughters who seem to be either disinterested altogether or just under a “fortíssimo feitiço” that “as mantém ainda solteiras” (15).

The main female character of QMDSO, Diogo’s wife Dona Liloca, experiences a sense of inbetweenness in regards to food in a different manner. As soon as the pig
claimed residence in their seventh floor apartment, the moral battle began between Diogo’s desire to turn the pig into food and Ruca and Zeca’s love for their new pet and, ultimately, Dona Liloca became wedged in the middle of this madness. At first, the pig’s presence seemed amicable, bringing the family together: “na cara de Liloca a alegria de ver pai e filhos contentes na igual ideia, ainda riqueza de um leitão mais tarde um porco de tanta coisa, torresmos, banha, carne, costeletas, ossos para salgar. Abriu a boca de sono” (11). Here, however, begins Dona Liloca’s mediating function between the desire to please her husband who becomes increasingly insatiable and angered by the pig’s presence and her desire to protect her children from “Carnaval da Vitória”’s imminent transition into food for the neighborhood to enjoy during the carnival celebration.

Throughout the novella, Dona Liloca displays examples of her mediating role, supporting her children in finding different ways to satiate their father with meat scraps from the hotel in order to save their pig friend from their father’s wrath: “Dona Liloca entendia o sentimento e estacionava nessa indecisão de mãe e esposa, ora a comungar do carinho que os filhos dedicavam ao porco ora carnívora também nos desejos expressos no projeto do marido” (24). Dona Liloca lies for them and keeps secrets in order for her children and “carnaval da vitória” to stay out of trouble with the authorities and with Diogo. She is seen defending her children in many instances, one of which is when she saves the pig when it runs away after being tugged on by the students at school. When Diogo tries to castigate Ruca and Zeca for allowing this to happen, Liloca saves them from being beaten more, “pra quê mais bater? O porco voltou, Diogo” (32). When later Diogo complains about food inequality and lack of variety, Liloca attempts to argue—
“também você no tempo do colono comia mesmo carne todos os dias? Mesmo casa assim não recuperaste?” (44)—but Diogo wants nothing to do with her reasoning: “cala-te com essa pequena-burguesia. Sempre o tempo do colono, o tempo do colono” (44). As the action intensifies throughout the novella, we see Dona Liloca’s character become further wedged between her husband and her children and we begin to wonder where her power will cease. She helps her children in providing Diogo with different scraps disguised as meat dishes that Ruca and Zeca collected from Hotel Trópico and this brings temporary peace between the two sides. There is a moment of stillness and happiness, “essa noite, Dona Liloca decifrou estrelas de amor nos olhos luarentos dos filhos brilhando de alegria por não ouvirem o pai xingar no porco nem repetir ameaças de morte à facada contra ‘Carnaval da Vitória’” (51).

However, despite Liloca’s mediating efforts, carnival arrives and so does the death of “Carnaval da Vitória”: “Liloca atarefada nos últimos preparos da matança mas, comungando da inquietude dos filhos, pediu a Diogo para lhes deixar ir ver o desfile. Ela não queria que os miúdos assistissem à morte de ‘carnaval da vitória’… a mulher limpou as mãos ao avental e, antes de sair, olhou amarradamente os olhos na varanda” (55). Here we see Dona Liloca’s ultimate mediating act of protecting her children from the pain she knows they will feel and providing her husband with the alimentation he desires. We see that, even in the end, Dona Liloca never moves out of her mediating role, just like the character of Narguiss in Neighbours who is tragically shot and killed and only experiences peace from suffering in her mediating role in the brief moments before her death. What these two characters have in common in regards to these mediating roles and
their connection to food is that neither is able to escape their roles and, although we get a glimpse into the disappointment Narguiss feels with Abdul’s absence and infidelity and the frustration and hurt Dona Liloca feels wedged between her vulnerable children and volatile husband, neither is able to truly express herself and become an action-forward character, instead remaining resigned to her role in the kitchen.

As Caroline Smith elucidates in her article, “‘The Feeding of Young Women’: Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar,*” representations of women as bound to their specific gender role or doomed otherwise are a common theme in literature. Smith analyzes Plath’s protagonist Esther, focusing on her moral conundrum between following her ambitious dreams and succumbing to the culturally desirable role of housewife, which mimics the feelings of inbetweenness of such female characters as Muntaz of *Neighbours,* who is constantly caught in between her ambitions and the domestication her family wishes to impart on her, and Dona Liloca of *QMDSO* who is seen battling her contrary desires to protect her children and please her husband.

Smith places particular emphasis on the anxiety of Esther’s character in relation to food—excessive eating equates to crossing proper gender boundaries. She notes that Esther’s character “preoccupies herself with performing ‘appropriately’ … to what society thinks a woman in the 1950s should be [and] as a result, she devotes much time throughout the novel to watching other women perform femininity” (10). This analysis lies parallel to issues female characters within *QMDSO* and *Neighbours* confront, as ideas of proper femininity pervade the texts, oftentimes inextricably linked to food.
Although the consequences of female characters deviating from culturally prescribed gender roles rarely becomes manifest in either *QMDSO* or *Neighbours*, what is interesting to note here is the profound cultural pressure, in general, placed on female characters to be “feminine” in their relation to food—Narguiss fixated on pressuring her daughters to hone their skills in the kitchen in order to appear more desirable to men, Mena as Dupont’s wife obligated to prepare food without question, Dona Liloca ordered by Diogo to prepare diverse meals, etc. The idea of proper femininity in Mozambique and Angola as portrayed in *Neighbours* and *QMDSO* is essentially centered on the woman occupying the kitchen. As Sheldon notes in *Pounders of Grain*, in the transition to colonialism families began to adopt western ideas of female domesticity (80) and education for girls and women during this time was a “practical education in domestic economy, especially [directed] to the good management of the household and the formation of a proper housewife” (90). While Smith argues for the influence magazines had in instilling gender stereotypes in women like Esther, it can be said that the education women received in school in Mozambique, as delineated by Sheldon, similarly perpetuated ideologies of femininity while subtly and simultaneously warning women of the dangers of transgressing these gender boundaries.

Although the idea of femininity in Mozambique and Angola appeared to be solely defined by the domestication of the woman, women’s roles were in fact evolving after independence was gained in both countries. Hilary Owen’s chapter on Momplé in *Mother Africa, Father Marx* discusses the “after-effects of Salazar’s ‘natural difference’ categories of race, gender, and color” (148), which originally discounted women as
unworthy of full citizenship. This particular emphasis on the political implications of categorization of women and the “second-class citizenship” status they received elucidates another instance in which oppressive ideologies forged their way into the social sphere.

Looking at such modes of thinking at the governmental level in society helps to understand the development of these two novellas, specifically in regards to the formation of female characters. The characters throughout both texts essentially grapple with the hypothetical departure from such oppressive ideologies. Such iteration of cultural ideals of femininity and its connection with food become manifest in Neighbours, for example, when Muntaz displays interest in subjects outside of the kitchen. Family members react with dismay: “estudar tanto para quê? Mulher não é para encher cabeça” (14). It appears that a woman is rather for “enche[r] a máquina de moer com pequenos nacos de carne vermelha e macia” (12) and being “preocupada em ‘agarrar marido’” (72). Owen highlights in her chapter the irony of the pressure Narguiss places on her daughter to get married: “her own repeated experiences, being betrayed twice by two different husbands, do not prevent her from endorsing marriage as the only option for her three daughters” (148). This indicates the difficulty Narguiss has in recognizing the errors of her own ways and the implications of imparting such a future onto her daughters.

The character of Mena provides another example, as she faces the consequences of meddling in Dupont’s shady business rather than being fully attentive to her domestic duties. She wonders: “ás vezes chega a duvidar de que ele a considere um humano que
pensa e sente como qualquer pessoa, ou se a tem em casa . . . uma máquina para realizar os serviços domésticos e da qual pode também dispor para fazer amor à sua maneira sofrega e apressada” (22). Dupont goes so far as to threaten Mena with physical violence in order to make her return to the kitchen—“trata mas é do jantar e boca calada, não arreio-te porrada mesmo diante desse gente” (24)—at which point Mena feels hopeless. This feeling of hopelessness in the face of societal pressure to adhere to culturally prescribed gender roles is also evidenced in *QMDSO* by the inbetweenness expressed by Dona Liloca. Dona Liloca shifts between the obligation to provide her family with sustenance—and ultimately please her husband in so doing—and protecting her children’s feelings. Each of these examples demonstrates the obstacles these female characters faced in dealing with the evolving gender roles in both Angola and Mozambique at that time.
Food and Masculinities

While the symbolic connection between women, food, and the reconstruction of the nation is apparent within *Neighbours* and *QMDSO*, in both texts there also lies an undercurrent of anxiety male characters experience in regards to food choice and availabilities. While women in Angola and Mozambique during post-independence times struggled to maintain order in the home by providing sustenance to the men of the nation despite the obstacles presented by food shortages, natural disasters, and general governmental instability, men also experienced struggles in dealing with the disruption of not only the construction of their nations but also with what the consumption of certain foods meant in this process. The theme of men and food choice plays a profound role in both *Neighbours* and *QMDSO*. The political context in post-independence Angola and Mozambique required a reconfiguring of the roles of the men in constructing the nation. This reconfiguration altered the symbolic significance of the consumption of specific foods. What did it mean to eat foodstuffs associated with life before independence? What were the implications of consuming what was now made unavailable by the Marxist regime? How did the pressure of manhood in such ambivalent times affect food choice? Exactly how did food choice both evoke anxieties in the male characters of both novellas and connect the characters to their ideal notion of nation during the regeneration process?

Food variety suffered greatly in the face of shortages, droughts, and governmental restriction. Leia, in *Neighbours*, when commenting on how grateful she is to her faithful and virtuous husband notes how the lack of food variety affected other men:
E, mais uma vez, lhe está agradecida por não ser como tantos homens que,
sobretudo aos domingos, enchem os restaurantes onde cosomem ordenados
inteirios com um prato de carne ou de peixe fresco, deixando em casa a ushua e o
repolho para as mulheres e os filhos. (34)

It is obvious that this contrast between Januário’s modest alimentary behavior and the
gluttonous consumption of the rest of the male population, as Leia depicts it, reflects the
typical desire for men at the time to feel masculine in the act of eating. Leia’s husband,
Januário, represents rather a counter-ideal to the prevailing notion of male satisfaction
through food by restraining himself from the gluttonous alimentary desires of the male
majority. Solely from interpreting the image Leia’s comment offers, to be masculine
meant to have privileged access to certain foods while wives and children were left to eat
from “um menu tão monótono” (34).

Such ideas are manifest in QMDSO as well, as authorities within the novella
appear to classify certain foods in specific politically charged categories. For example,
“Quitanda clandestina de dendém em prédio habitacionável e especulativa contra-
revolucionária,” (16) conveys the political meaning associated with storing certain foods
in one’s household. Examining “Carnaval da Vitória” as eventual meat for consumption,
Diogo also associates the pig’s existence with “todos os burgueses!” (26), attributing
political qualities to the pig. The children, Ruca and Zeca, make further associations
between the desires for certain foods and its symbolic significance. The statement: “O
meu pai é reaccionário porque não gosta de peixe frito do povo,” (35) makes it clear that
fried fish is a staple food of the people of Angola and that to detest it signifies detesting
Angola. For Diogo, consuming “Carnaval da Vitória” means finally obtaining a part of what he is unable to have under the new regime. Diogo, throughout the novella, maintains an unrelenting craving for meat, delighting in “Carnaval da Vitória”’s impending death and demanding from Dona Liloca food other than the monotonous fried fish dishes.

Along with the political symbolism food represents for the men, especially for Diogo, there is also a competition between them revolving around the ability to obtain the best meat and therefore be granted alpha male status in the community. Diogo not only desires to cook “Carnaval da Vitória” for the meat but also for the way in which being the one who supplied this meat will make him look in comparison to the other men around him. Throughout the novella, Diogo participates in an ongoing verbal battle with his neighbor Faustino and looks forward to the idea of making him jealous: “até me dá àgua na boca de pensar a inveja que o cheiro da carne dele assada vai brilhar na gosmerice desse Faustino” (42-43). Food for Diogo is essentially a point of competition for ultimate masculinity, for dominant status in the community. For Diogo, the man with the best meat wins and can claim authority in the decision making in the community.

As discussed throughout this essay, food choice and the consumption of specific foods is heavily tied to the individual’s view of the nation. Njeri Githire, in “The Empire Bites Back,” examines the political significance of the incorporation of international foods into English national cuisine, as represented in Andrea Levy’s works. She argues that “for the British,” for example, “eating curry was in a sense eating India” (859) and that choosing national versus foreign foods signified whether or not one belonged to the
nation, as in the saying “you are what you eat.” If this is so, then perhaps what can be argued from this in regards to Momplé and Rui’s works is that the consumption of ushua, cabbage, and fried fish represents pre-colonial/colonial Mozambique and Angola and that ingesting such foods of the past signifies an inability or unwillingness to fully assimilate to the political transition of the country. It is the ingestion of what Mozambique and Angola used to be, while the ingestion of new foods signified an absorption and, ultimately, an acceptance by the men in these stories of a new diversity, of Mozambique and Angola of the future as independent nations in the process of constructing a national identity.

As I have already noted, the relationship between the male characters of the novella and food correlates with the relationship they sustain with their respective nations. Food and its consumption are essentially attached to the male characters’ vision of the nation. Ojwang makes an interesting correlation between food consumption and its connection to the consumer’s history, stating: “food thus becomes a way through which the expelled communities maintain a nostalgic connection with a place for which they have an ambivalent attachment” (79). What the characters of Dupont in Neighbours and Diogo in QMDSO are doing seems to display the opposite of this notion, as both appear to use food as a means to distance themselves from the previously colonial state of the countries. Their food choice, which differs from the fried fish and cabbage dishes prepared by those around them, signifies a departure from their pre-colonial identities.

Ojwang discusses this issue as well in regards to similar themes in East African Indian writing, claiming that the consumption of foreign foods (or, in the case of
Neighbours and QMDSO, forbidden and mainly unattainable foods) signifies a break from traditions—a break in the ties of the consumer to their history, especially when the desired food is radically different from the national cuisine. However, Miriam O’Kane Mara looks at this issue in a contrasting light in her article, “James Joyce and the Politics of Food,” as she focuses on the symbolism of food rejection rather than food choice. She places particular emphasis upon the characters within James Joyce’s Ulysses and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man that deny ingestion as a form of rebellion directly related to the male identity of characters in both Rui and Momplé’s novellas. She notes that this food rejection is “a form of political speech and suggests a way to rebuild fractured identity” (94). Examining Diogo’s character and his rejection of fried fish dishes, we can use this correlation to assume that perhaps his choice for rejection of Angola’s staple dish is a means to begin to create a new national identity through food, which departs from an identity associated with colonial times.

An example of this is found in one of the final scenes of the novella where Diogo’s increasing frustration with the lack of variety of meats culminates. Dona Liloca attempts to argue with his reasoning—“Também você no tempo do colono comia mesmo carne todos os dias? Mesmo casa assim não recuperaste?”—but Diogo is dismissive of her questions: “Cala-te com essa da pequena-burguesia. Sempre o tempo do colono, o tempo do colono” (44). O’Kane Mara analyzes such “food rejection behavior” by focusing on the character of Stephen Dedalus of Ulysses who displays similar characteristics to that of Diogo. She argues that this behavior is a “rejection of materiality [that] connects Stephen’s” (or in this case Diogo’s) “status as a colonized, thus
feminized, subject and to his current physical location in Ireland” (or, in this case, Angola), and also that this political act is “coupled with a quest for gender identity” (96). Whereas O’Kane Mara argues that the character of Stephen Dedalus is using food rejection as a means to rebel against the typical gluttonous normative masculine identity, Diogo appears to use food rejection as a means to fashion his own ideal of a normative masculine identity in post-independence Angola.

While Diogo’s character seems to lie in contrast with Stephen’s, Januário’s character in Neighbours appears to mirror it. O’Kane Mara notes that Stephen’s character rejects and detests normative masculine identity that calls for gluttonous eating, a characteristic that recalls Januário’s character, who refrains from outright rejecting gluttony, but whose character is clearly built around the acceptance of limits. O’Kane Mara remarks: “the text’s representation of food rejection in the young sub-protagonist . . . allows the character to build identity as special and superior—as well as spiritual and intellectual—through this control of eating” (109). It is evident that Januário likewise displays a break from normative masculine identities in Mozambique in an attempt to create a new model for masculinity that appropriates abstemious behavior. This, however, is tragically thwarted by his murder at the end of the novella.

While women suffer the confines of culturally imposed gender roles in QMDSO and Neighbours, anxieties concerning food seem relegated to the sphere of hegemonic male identity. In both novellas, male characters suffer the pressures of adhering to their social obligation as providers for their family. How can Diogo successfully provide if many of the food items he desires for himself and his family are considered illegal items?
Towards the beginning of Neighbours, we see that Leia, at one point, almost gave of herself in order to save Januário from the emasculation of being unable to provide for his family on a meager teacher’s salary, as she was presented with a situation in which providing a sexual favor to a general director would have, in exchange, provided her family with a suitable home. However, Leia, “dividida entre o forte desejo de alugar uma casa e a repulsa que sentia em entregar-se a outro homem que não fosse Januário” (19), is unable to go through with the act and runs away immediately after the general director attempts to force himself on her. Abdul, Narguiss’s absent husband, placates his family’s judgment for his philandering ways with providing an abundance of food, albeit from assumed shady sources. Dupont pressures Mena to prepare the food he obtains through illegal means in order to portray an image of high social standing in front of his conspiring guests. In each of these cases lies the theme of the patriarchal figure of the man as provider for his family and the pressure associated with negotiating this role. This idea is further complicated, however, by the difficulty the men face in actually being able to provide with the obstacles they face caused by the instability of the transition period in both Angola and Mozambique.

As iterated earlier in this essay, civil wars, governmental instabilities and inadequacies, unequal food distribution, and natural disasters made it extremely difficult to make a decent living and provide proper sustenance to one’s family without the use of illegal means. Januário is hardly able to support his family on his teacher’s salary, Dupont involves himself with terrorists for the promise of financial gain, where Abdul obtains his means is unknown, and Diogo is frequently seen in a verbal battle over the
injustices of the government’s control over food. Ultimately, the instability of this transition period weighs heavily on the male characters of both novellas, resulting in anxious characteristics most evident in the characters of Diogo and Dupont—Diogo is often seen scolding and berating all those around him, while Dupont emotionally and physically abuses his wife in order to reclaim any masculinity lost in his attempts to impress his terrorist guests. This erratic and irrational behavior is a result of the ways in which the construction of the nation, especially during the ambiguous times in which these novellas take place, affected ideals of hegemonic masculine identity. Dupont and Diogo, in essence, represent male figures caught in between departing from ideologies of masculinity in “o tempo do colono” and the fashioning of masculine identities during the regenerative process.
Conclusion

In analyzing the semiotics and gendered politics of food in Neighbours and QMDSO, it is evident that themes of food vulnerabilities pervade both texts. Isabel Rodrigues makes an interesting point concerning the connection between men and food vulnerabilities and anxieties in Lusophone Africa. She states that “long established cultural conceptions about honor and shame conceal food needs behind closed doors” (345), which offers an explanation to the symbolic ties men would have to food. She notes that the governmental silencing of outcries in response to famine and food shortages “perversely blurred the distinctions between freedom and enslavement, challenging the rules of stratification, but also reinforcing interdependencies across the social strata” (351). This notion easily provides an explanation as to how Rui and Momplé fashioned their male characters’ relationship to food. Since Mozambique and Angola are now both legally independent, the people also want to feel independent rather than stuck between ambiguous lines of “freedom and enslavement.” Striving toward such a feeling is hindered by “interdependencies” on the government to provide food and food choice ultimately being a marker of social stratification.

Looking closely at the connection between women and food in both novellas and their strong presence in providing the alimentation and sustenance to their male counterparts, it is safe to wonder: are these female characters essentially feeding the nation? Do these characters, as noted by Ojwang in relation to East African Indian writing, use food as “a way to escape life’s insecurities” (73) and in doing so create a “gendered province for their own self-expression” (74)? What conclusions can we draw
concerning the female characters in Neighbours and QMDSO and their relation to food?

Ojwang makes an interesting remark concerning the role of women in East African Indian writing that can apply directly to the discussion of women and food in Angola and Mozambique. He notes that in this regard there is a complete display of “autonomy in the kitchen on one hand, while being enlisted to ensure cultural permanence as a means of safeguarding the interests of the group” (74). This idea is personified by Dona Liloca’s character in QMDSO and Narguiss, Mena, and even Leia’s character in Neighbours, where “female subjectivity comes to be understood in terms of self-sacrifice, whose main tenet is the willingness to serve men” (74), or in this case, serve men food. Each of these characters is portrayed as fully dedicated to her husband regardless of whether such care and loyalty are reciprocated. Such ideas come full circle in the final scenes of both novellas. In the ultimate festive dinner scene in QMDSO, despite the fight of the children to prevent the pig’s consumption, “Carnaval da Vitória” is finally cooked and served by Dona Liloca, her mediating role falling on the side of her servitude to her husband.

As has been noted, the bourgeois pig-turned-food is politically charged and, as Phyllis Peres notes in Transculturation and Resistance in Lusophone African Narrative, “the image of the pig is the irony of the revolution several years into the nation” (98). This act of consumption essentially plays a significant role in the political and social sphere of the nation. In this case, Dona Liloca facilitates the connection between consumption and nation by serving the cooked pieces of “Carnaval.” Diogo and the other male characters of the novella inevitably consume “Carnaval da Vitória,” who once
represented all of the petit-bourgeois characteristics that the male characters of the novella fought against. While Dona Liloca is feeding Diogo and the other male figures involved in the regeneration process of the country, Ruca and Zeca—the protagonists fighting for what is just in this process—are symbolically consumed as well. As Peres notes, “the revolution has eaten its children when the children of Angola cannot eat” (102), indicating that the voices of the innocent are essentially stifled in this act of consumption. Although the novella ends on a festive note with the celebration of new beginnings during carnival and Dona Liloca playing her part in her gendered province, this ending portrays a gloomy outlook for the future, where the greedy get fed, the children get eaten, and the women remain powerless and wedged between the two.

Festivity is contrasted by the aftermath of a bloody murder in the gloomy final scene of Neighbours, where, during a violent raid, South African terrorists and Mozambican mercenaries murder both innocent and villainous characters (Owen 146). Leia, Januário, Dupont, and Narguiss are the victims of the vicious massacre and, while this outcome is despondent in itself, there is also an irony at place similar to that seen in the final scene of QMDSO. As stated earlier, women at the time used their place in the kitchen as a means to play a part in the construction of the nation, providing sustenance for the future and expressing themselves in their “gendered province.” The murder of Leia and Januário, who, as Owen notes, “represent the loyal ‘povo’ or ‘people’ who are still willing to contribute to building the new Mozambique” (149), is ironic in this sense because, as Owen elaborates, it “underlines a deadly foreclosure on the Marxist vision of the national future” (150), just as the consumption of “Carnaval of Vitória” symbolizes
for Angola. This notion is solidified by Fauzia’s comment after the death of Narguiss:
“eu bem disse para elas irem embora para Portugal. Eu bem que avisei a elas” (102).

After the death of her husband, Mena is seen leaving the flat with a feeling of extreme liberation, no longer tied to her emotionally and physically abusive husband and ultimately no longer having to provide sustenance for his behavior. Mena has no further obligation to play a part in this “Marxist vision of the national future,” as Owen expounds: “this act of leaving the flat and simultaneously evicting patriarchal values finally confirms Mena’s sense of being at home in Mozambique” (155). However, this outcome also demonstrates a pessimistic outlook on the Marxist ideals for the future of Mozambique, since it takes Dupont’s death in order for Mena’s liberation to be realized. The ending is, in essence, open-ended: although Mena is liberated, everything around her is still in shambles. If feeding her husband connected her with building the nation, what happens now?
Works Cited


Review of Literature

Introduction

This review of literature highlights the research most pertinent to the topics that arise within Mozambican author Lília Momplé’s, Neighbours, and Angolan author Manuel Rui’s Quem me dera ser onda. Set in their respective countries during contemporary times, issues concerning the construction of nation and national identity post-independence, political and economic instability, war, classism, and sexism permeate the novellas. This in mind, the following review of literature attempts to first provide historical context to the novellas by discussing the recent history of Angola and Mozambique. The historical discussion also touches upon the recent literary history of Angola and Mozambique in order to place Líliá Momplé and Manuel Rui’s novellas in context with the post-independence literature being written in each country. Moving forward, the review then delves into a discussion of Momplé’s Neighbours and Rui’s Quem me dera ser onda and the interpretive aims of a comparative analysis of the texts. Further exploration of the texts then requires a detailed account of the already present criticisms and analyses of the authors and their works. The review then concludes with an in-depth discussion of the recent literature written regarding the theoretical topics of the essay: food politics and the connection between food and gender.
Literature and History of Post-Independence Angola and Mozambique

Patrick Chabal, in *A History of Postcolonial Lusophone Africa*, gives an introductory historical account of Mozambique and Angola that will aid in the understanding of the historical contexts in which both Manuel Rui’s *Quem me dera ser onda* and Lília Momplé’s *Neighbours* were written. Both Angola and Mozambique gained their independence in 1975 after over a decade of armed struggle. Breaking ties with Portuguese rule in the colonies was at first thought to be a relief, leading to expectations that free expression was to be restored and that steps towards equality were under way. However, both Angola’s and Mozambique’s newfound independence proved more problematic than had been hoped, and the scramble for organization and order that Chabal delineates are themes that play out in the ironic allegory of Rui’s *Quem me dera ser onda* and later on in Momplé’s *Neighbours*. Rui takes more of a direct hit at local authorities of Angola’s capital city Luanda and the general inequality and disarray that the Marxist regime was supposed to resolve, while Momplé focuses on a particular instance of cruelty and violence resulting from the aftermath of the Mozambican civil war. Each author, however, is influenced by the recent postcolonial history of their respective countries and it is important to analyze how such historical elements manifest throughout each of the novellas and most often in regards to food. This interesting connection is one of the many factors that lead the motivation for this essay and why Chabal’s account is important to this work.

The process of decolonization in both Angola and Mozambique was devastating, causing political disorganization and conflict as well as displaced populations. Socialism
led to debilitating inadequacies in the economic and political infrastructure of both countries after the departure of Portuguese rule. Angola and Mozambique, in the process of decolonization, lost the colonizers that fled the country who essentially controlled and steered the countries, leaving behind only those with limited experience and education to pick up the pieces. Angola’s MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) and Mozambique’s FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Mozambique) attempted to tie up loose ends, to adjust to postcolonial life, and overall, to start creating national identities while working on the political infrastructure. Chabal attempts to further explain the failure of socialist economic policies in Angola, Guinea, and Mozambique, stating, “it is much more fundamentally a reflection of the economic crisis which is afflicting Africa generally” (28) and that, “one of its root causes is the inability of African states (‘socialist’ or ‘free-market’) and entrepreneurs alike to generate sufficiently productive economic activity to sustain growth for development” (28). Considering the overall economic state of Africa, it is clear that former Portuguese colonies had compounded challenges ahead in reaching socioeconomic and political stability. Writers such as Rui and Momplé, while waiting out the storm, constructed fictional stories and novellas centered on their observation of those struggles.

One important aspect mentioned by Chabal in his chapter on Angola that directly relates to my research on food is his account of the shift in survival strategies after the Angolan civil wars. Those privileged enough to purchase specialized goods from supermarkets then sold such goods in the lower levels of society in exchange for other goods not easily attainable. Food economy was forced into the black market and what
developed was similar to a prison barter system. Chabal explains the food economy in Angola as follows:

State employees, Portuguese-speaking Angolans with government-sponsored jobs, received coupons which enabled them to buy a range of authorized goods in state-owned supermarkets at controlled prices. These government-issued rations, including good quality imported whisky, could be sold off at deregulated prices on the parallel market in exchange for all the goods which the planned economy could not supply—ranging from a fresh chicken to a spare part for a Mercedes car. In the process of exchanging coupon goods for black-market goods, money virtually ceased to be recognized and it was barter that became the recognized medium of exchange. (158)

Such barter systems are revealed throughout Rui’s QMDSO. Results of the barter system are seen in the illegal items Faustino stores in his apartment and Dona Liloca’s means for retrieving meat scraps to diversify her family’s meals. Looking to these means of provision as part of everyday culture in Angola puts into perspective the choices of the characters towards bartering and obtaining certain goods normally deemed not within their reach. Bartering is essentially seen as a means for survival and understanding this can help elucidate specific interactions between characters in QMDSO and why Rui fashioned characters with certain behaviors and inclinations.

Similar to Angola, Mozambique experienced a difficult decolonization process. As the MPLA in Angola inherited a country in shambles after the Portuguese ended the war, so did Mozambique’s FRELIMO. When the war ended and the Portuguese
peacefully departed from the colony, the FRELIMO had little experience before they were left in control, many of its leading members only having acquired political experience in exile. “The concern of both FRELIMO and the MFA to transfer power as rapidly as possible,” as stated by Chabal, “left too many dangerous loose ends” (194). There were no guarantees to civil rights, social issues had yet to be resolved, and there was a lack of skilled workers in all occupational areas. FRELIMO’s leadership looked promising at first, with no opposing political party; however, the variety of “dangerous loose ends” eventually led to violent civil wars. The natural disasters that followed as well contributed to the state of havoc within the country that would ensue.

Touched upon in the backdrop of Lília Momplé’s Neighbours, war broke out between FRELIMO and RENAMO. Ultimately, war post-independence erupted between the former and its supporters who desired to move forward in terms of embracing Mozambique’s newfound independence to modernize the county and the latter organization and their supporters who employed violence and promoted destruction to counter this modernization process. RENAMO essentially, through violent tactics, attempted to dismantle FRELIMO as a government, attacking different aspects of the country that contributed to its modernization such as “roads and railways, industrial installations and government schools, offices and health centres . . . they cut the communication systems linking central Africa to the Mozambican ports,” (211) as well as FRELIMO-founded social development programs. As a result, although in 1981 statistics showed that Mozambique was experiencing economic growth, FRELIMO was rapidly collapsing. As Chabal elaborates, “outside the towns government largely ceased
to function, communications were cut, services broke down and marketing and distribution became impossible” (212). Despite the governmental disarray of the eighties in Mozambique, luck seemed to change in the nineties. After decades of violence, a peace agreement was signed on October 4, 1992, “leading to multi-party elections in 1994 and a relatively smooth transition to peace,” Chabal notes, “and by the end of the decade Mozambique was experiencing the most rapid economic growth of any country in Africa” (220). Signing of the agreement led to multi-party elections in 1994 in which FRELIMO won by only a slight margin. Officially coming into power in 1994, FRELIMO was again faced with picking up the pieces, obliged to implement extremely efficient political, economic, and public programs in a short period of time. Chabal describes the conditions in 1994: “After the 1994 elections FRELIMO faced growing popular discontent due to the conditions of poverty in which people lived, the low salaries paid to professionals and the declining public services” (232). As this was occurring a year before Momplé published Neighbours, it is important to put into perspective the historical context of Mozambique at the time the novella was written. Throughout the text, reverberations of political discontent and disorganization appear and calling upon the historical politics of this time in such works as Chabal’s leads to a more profound understanding of Momplé’s societal constructions in Neighbours. Providing this background will then help in the analysis of women and food as victims in the process towards peace, equality, and organization.

Richard A. Preto-Rodas gives an introductory historical account to Lusophone African literature in his essay, “Portuguese Africa: Toward Mutual Assimilation,”
published in *Critical Perspectives on Lusophone African Literature*. Taking into account the publication year of 1981, the book is limited on the subject of recent history and literature of Lusophone Africa, but is useful nonetheless in providing a pathway into the understanding of more contemporary literature. Preto-Rodas focuses on literary and social themes that more or less precede the independence and that dealt with the clashing of European and African identities. Preto-Rodas notes that “the white minority was hardly receptive to local cultures and preferred that the educated African abandon his past entirely in exchange for a thoroughly Portuguese outlook” (9), indicating an inevitable growing tension for African intellectual progress.

Poets attempted to combat this divide created by European ethnocentrism by writing of their anguish of having to choose. These poets followed along with the literary and ideological Negritude movement in an attempt to reclaim their blackness and reject European influence. Preto-Rodas writes that “such representative poets as Viriato da Cruz, Agostinho Neto, and António Jacinto construe Negritude primarily as a call for transforming their society by rejecting the European” (16). Angry sentiments pervaded much of the literature of Lusophone Africa that combated European ideologies. Rather than finding a constructive middle ground, writers saw their aggressive expressions as a pathway nonetheless. It can be said that Momplé’s and Rui’s works were influenced by similar sentiments displayed by the Negritude movement although more so in connection with reactions to racism and classism.

Preto-Rodas goes on to note the influence that the liberation wars, which began in 1961, had on Lusophone African literature, having caused the silencing of literary
expression by Portuguese authorities. Even when the fighting disbanded, African writers were still either forced into silence or willingly silenced their literary expressions out of fear. Even when Angolan independence seemed a viable outcome of the wars, the battles for power that ensued after Angolans won their independence left the country preoccupied by the general disorganization. As Preto-Rodas explains,

The Pandora’s box of fear, hatred, inhumanity was reopened, as another, this time fratricidal struggle for power, pitted elements of the African population against one another while throwing the Portuguese colonials into a panic. The struggle was brief, except for the richest prize, Angola. But the disarray was general. It seemed as if no room would be left for artistic creation, whether in Portuguese or in any other language. (31)

However, the newfound independence of the Portuguese colonies did allow for the history of the colonies to be rewritten. These histories began to include Africanisms that gave Lusophone African Portuguese a marked distinction, a linguistic preference often seen later on in such literary works as Neighbours and Quem me dera ser onda.

Eventually, rewriting histories gave way to fictional representations of history and the historical present in Africa, allotting literary space for such authors as Manuel Rui and Lília Momplé to express, through fictional representations, their sentiments of their historical present. Preto-Rodas’s article in this sense helps contribute to the historical context that bore such writers as Rui and Momplé and gives a glimpse to the history preceding the post-independence literary outburst in Lusophone Africa.
Published in 1996, Patrick Chabal’s *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa* gives a more recent account of the literary history of Lusophone Africa, with strict focus on each of the Lusophone African countries. Starting with Mozambique, Chabal describes the country’s literature as comprised of a variety of cultures. Chabal quotes from an interview given by Nelson Saúte in *Vozes Moçambicanas* in regards to the definition of Mozambican identity, in which the writer demonstrates a distinct pride towards Mozambique’s cultural diversity: “I never venture to try to define what is Mozambican because one of the important characteristics of Mozambique is to be a mosaic of various cultures, various ethnic groups, various forms of expression, various languages… To define it would be to reduce it” (qtd. in Chabal 37). Such nationalistic sentiment can be connected to Momplé’s *Neighbours*, as her intentions for writing the novella appear not to denounce her country but rather enact change to better it.

Momplé’s work falls into a category which Chabal describes as nationalist and revolutionary literature, a genre which blossomed during the anti-colonial struggle. Although *Neighbours* was written in 1995, twenty years after Mozambique was granted its independence, the disarray in which the country was left after the Portuguese had abruptly fled left much to write about. Momplé’s work aligns itself with the characteristics of political literature that, as Chabal notes, “refers to the large ‘evil’ of world exploitation or discrimination deemed responsible for the poor conditions under which Mozambicans, Africans and blacks generally had to live” (38). Such literature, as Chabal states, “is most effective when it can appeal directly to human emotions” (38) and Momplé’s novella that covers various familial histories in a twenty-four hour time period
does just that. What is most important to note, however, in regards to Momplé’s *Neighbours* and its connection to the history of Mozambique is how literary works such as *Neighbours*, according to Chabal, are “invaluable as source-material for understanding the relationship between literature and the formation of national identity in Mozambique” (39), making the historical contextual analysis of this novella all the more important.

Chabal ends his essay on Mozambique praising the likes of literary legends such as José Craveirinha and Mia Couto for providing diversified and original literary texts that draw from the rich culture of Mozambique. Here, Chabal displays limitations in his account. Although he pays considerable attention to Paulina Chiziane, Chabal merely mentions a few other female literary names without elaborating on any. This could be due to the limited amount of literature by female authors at the time his essay was written; even so, this shows that attention is needed in the realm of Lusophone African female literary writers. This lack of attention towards female Lusophone African writers is another reason why this comparative analysis is an important academic contribution.

Shifting focus towards Angola, Ana Mafalda Leite notes in her essay published in *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa* that one of the main literary themes since the sixties has been the topic of war. As Leite observes, “For more than thirty years, [Angola] has known nothing but war—colonial war followed by civil war” (117). During such tumultuous times, writers sought to distinguish through prose an Angolan linguistic identity in order to create a foundation from which to build a national identity in Angola post-independence. Themes of war and its consequences are manifest in the works of writers like Boaventura Cardoso and Manuel Rui, who, in the midst of calling attention to
post-colonial struggle, “sought to capture in their prose the ‘Angolanidade’ of the Portuguese language spoken in the country,” (110). Angolan narrative fiction is known for its greater linguistic diversity in comparison to other Lusophone African countries. This is interesting to note because it helps to approach the language in *Quem me dera ser onda*, published in 1982, through a different perspective, as if Rui were crafting a distinct Angolan-Portuguese linguistic variant, an interesting facet to analytically approach when contrasting this text with the language of Momplé in *Neighbours*.

The literature written in the eighties and nineties was concerned mainly with the construction of a national Angolan identity. By exposing the realities of the present, authors, if not enacted, at least expressed their hope for change. As mentioned, although independence of Angola was won in 1975, much work needed to be done in building the nation recently relinquished from its colonial reigns. Authors stepped in to put these times into perspective and, as Leite delineates, “a new phase of Angolan literature began in which the tautologies of an invented unity were replaced by the masks and mirrors of diversity … by means of deconstructive irony” (124), Manuel Rui being one of the main literary contributors of this distinct genre, which also included Manuel dos Santos Lima, Pepetela, and Uanhenga Xitu. Manuel Rui’s literary manifestations of deconstructive irony in *QMDSO* will serve as one of the main facets for analysis in my discussion, as gender and food—the central themes I will examine—are represented through such ironic and sarcastic approaches. Overall, both Chabal’s and Leite’s contributions to *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa* will help in the situating of the literature in its historical context.
Shifting focus towards more historically food-specific work, Rosemary E. Galli’s article, “The Food Crisis and the Socialist State in Lusophone Africa,” focuses on the relation between the commercial, fiscal, and exchange rate policies and the rural producers during the period of 1974-1984. This proves useful, because it provides background as to what caused the food shortages in Angola and Mozambique and the exact positioning of fault in the inequality of production and trade. Struggles between state officials and the peasants of each country, as Galli demonstrates, are at the heart of the food inequality in Mozambique and Angola. Each country attempting to perfect their newly independent government found difficulties in many areas, but the one most pertinent to this study is food production and distribution. It is important to note that these difficulties began before the Portuguese lost power over their colonies. During the Portuguese colonial rule, social stigmas were established that tended to separate the Portuguese and African populations: “the attitude fostered was that everything European was modern and that which was African was primitive and backward… [and] agricultural policies adopted by leaders of the Lusophone African states reflect the bias against peasant agriculture inherent in earlier colonial practice and socialist policies” (20). Rather than focusing on peasant societies for agricultural productions, new leaders focused on state farms and large-scale productions. We see here, then, that an increasing divide began to grow between the access to food for urban and rural populations. New leaders, instead of prioritizing feeding the nation as a whole, began to neglect areas that appeared less profitable. Instead, focus was turned to mass production that targeted consumption in the urban areas for increased profitability. However, such shifts in priorities were made
without taking into consideration the ability to encounter sufficient labor and produce food at the exponential quantity they desired.

Angola was greatly affected by the divide of food distribution and production created by overzealous state officials:

By 1984-1985 production had fallen 86 percent owing to the continuing war, to the abandonment of the small plantations and to the neglect of the large ones. Most damaging of all for indigenous producers was the disruption of the market, since the state marketing system introduced by the independent regime did not reach them with supplies of consumer and production goods. (31)

Whichever new tactics were implemented, they failed to produce the quantity of food needed to truly sustain the entire population. Another big hit to the food economy was the exodus of hundreds of thousands of white settlers back to Europe once Portugal had lost control over its colony: “with the massive departure of 300,000 white settlers after independence, the new government found itself unable to reach into local communities. Moreover, it instituted a state marketing system which did not offer adequate process to stimulate production” (32). If we think about this information in the context of QMDSO, we can begin to understand the depth of the food shortages and perhaps anxieties associated with these shortages in Angola. This could also help us understand the character of Diogo’s cynicism and Manuel Rui’s overall desire to employ sarcasm and subversion in regards to the government of Angola.

The food production in Mozambique differed from Angola. Mozambique was wholly devastated by a drought between 1981-1984 while also being neglected by state-
and urban-focused governmental policies concerning agriculture. Galli notes that the southern provinces were the most afflicted and that in these areas, production declined by between seventy and eighty percent (36). “At the end of 1983, it was estimated that about 100,000 people had died of famine, mainly in the southern provinces” (37). As Maputo is located in the southern region of the country, we can assume that the capital city was also greatly affected and that the social consequences of this are highlighted in Neighbours. Such consequences are seen in the numerous scenes centered on alimentation and the desire to illegally obtain certain foods.

Drought was not the only reason for the disruption and devastation of the food market, however. Portuguese traders were mainly the controlling agents of food production and export crops, and their departure after 1975 disrupted the system that they implanted. The mass exodus of the Europeans left the population to suddenly find means to sustain themselves without having much education or resources. State legislation attempted to resolve the food discrepancies but there was a lack of interest in attempting to improve conditions: “when labor was not forthcoming in the quantities required, planners turned to mechanization as the solution, thus reinforcing the tendency to concentrate resources on the state sector.” (39) This once again created unequal distribution of food among peasant and rural societies. Taking into consideration the repeated failures to recreate a working food economy after its founders fled the country, this article will be important to call upon in order to increase understanding of food politics and food-related frustration in newly independent Angola and Mozambique. This will then help contextualize the theme of food in both QMDSO and Neighbours, and lead
to an understanding of both the male and female characters’ relationship to food as well as to the government of their respective countries.

Shifting from food economics in Lusophone Africa to the economics of women, Kathleen Sheldon’s historical account of the recent evolution of women’s status in Mozambique in *Pounders of Grain: A History of Women, Work, and Politics in Mozambique* gives a close look into a subject that is all-around deserving of more attention and which also introduces us into the important discussions that will be extrapolated from Rui’s and Momplé’s works. Much of the written history of Lusophone Africa focuses mainly upon male political leaders, male artists, male writers, and only vaguely and briefly touches upon the role of women in Lusophone African history, indicating there is a serious deficit on the inclusion of women in this history. This makes Sheldon’s work not only important to the study of Mozambican women in Lília Momplé’s *Neighbours*, which is pertinent to this particular discussion, but also revolutionary for the course of written Lusophone African history.

Focusing on the relevance of Sheldon’s research to the analysis of Momplé’s and Rui’s novellas, it is important to start with the chapter “‘I Studied with the Nuns in the Mission, Learning to Make Blouses’: Girls, Domesticity, and Colonial Education,” in which Sheldon talks about how schooling was a way to “improve Mozambican women and girls” and how women felt it would improve their lives. However, it is clear that the “education for girls and women was organized along gender lines” (qtd. in Sheldon 85). To further her conclusions, Sheldon quotes the educational goals of the curriculum for girls and young women, stating that their education was in strict contrast to that of the
boys, since the goals were to “[improve] the native woman in order to prepare her to make a civilized home and to honestly acquire the ways of maintaining a civilized life” and also to maintain obligatory the “practical education in domestic economy, especially in relationship to the good management of the household and the formation of a proper housewife” (90). With these ideas in mind, it becomes easier to understand the alluded feelings of liberation felt by the women in Neighbours who suffer the loss of their husbands and also the moral struggle of inbetweeness the women feel in both stories concerning pleasing their children, their husbands, and themselves.

The education system under colonial rule was criticized for the lack of resources, incompetent teachers, harsh and cruel punishments, and lack of actual teaching of the Portuguese language. Over the years, enrollment of women increased but the education still remained of poor quality. A quote from the seventies shows the prevailing attitude towards the education of women at the time: “many parents argue that a girl does not live by books, but in caring for the home and the machamba, which is truly the school for women” (qtd. in Sheldon 100). Although the majority of Mozambican girls were casualties of the grim statistics for education, some used their social class as an advantage to acquire education and a higher place in society. This can be seen in Muntaz’s character, who pains her mother with her passion for politics and her lack of interest in securing a husband. Muntaz represents the minority of women with access to education, who strayed from their socially constructed gender roles, while the other female characters in Neighbours and Dona Liloca from QMDSO represent the majority—those with little education who remained bound to their domestic duties.
Sheldon’s chapter “‘Today in FRELIMO the Mozambican Woman Has a Voice’: The Struggle for Independence and Socialism” presents an analysis of Mozambican women’s involvement in the colony’s rise towards independence and socialism. Wanting to rid themselves of an oppressive patriarchal authority, many felt socialism would help women become free and equal within society, as well as integrate them into the larger world outside the household, but there was a hesitation of many men to willingly “relinquish their advantages” over women (116). Conflict arose between the modernists who were willing to adopt change and the traditionalists who were content with the rituals and traditions they maintained over the years, regardless of the hierarchical divisions they entailed. This idea is displayed in the familial struggle between Narguiss and Muntaz in Neighbours, one satisfied with tradition and impassioned to preserve it, the other striving for more than what her society tells her she must be.

With regard to Mozambique’s construction of nation post-independence, Sheldon makes an interesting point during her discussion of the absorption of diverse cultures and their transformation into national identity. What she finds is that gender inequality is still deeply involved in the rebuilding of the nation and its identity, whereby women were still categorized by ethnic identity, marriage practices, and initiation rites. Sheldon here gives a background of women’s involvement in building the nation: that they still remained separate from the crucial politics, that the only issues that concerned them or that others were concerned about regarding them were issues of marriage and sexuality. Even as other social groups were starting to breach the political sphere, women’s issues still remained limited if spoken about at all. Although women were allowed to join
FRELIMO, they still had little say in the decision-making process, reiterating a male-dominated governance of society. “Though women were lauded for their contributions, the irony was that because the FRELIMO leadership was dominated by men, gender issues were sidestepped and women’s programs ignored” (137). Women’s issues were relegated to discussion solely once a year, on Mozambican Women’s Day, and the rest of the year was spent juggling the improvement of educational and political opportunities for women and their domestic duties.

Although the OMM (Organização da Mulher Moçambicana) attempted to fight for women’s equality, Sheldon notes, it became apparent that FRELIMO’s control over the OMM ensured that the organization did not attempt to alter policies too radically towards the woman’s advantage. Sheldon remarks that “the final document from the 1984 conference praised OMM’s role in advancing Mozambican women, but included little substantive policy change … the nuclear family was maintained as the fundamental unit of society and relations within the family were not questioned” (139-140). Sheldon goes on to further explain that during the time between the preliminary document and the final, women called out for men to share the responsibilities of the household so that they would not be left to bear the entire burden. Despite this plea for equality, the final document omitted this issue (140). “The all-male Political Bureau, the ruling group within FRELIMO, attended the entire conference, and observers have suggested that the men did not trust the women to run their own conference” (140). Taking this all into consideration, it is apparent how such ideological tenets as that expressed by the saying “a mulher na casa, o homem na praça” were strictly imbedded within social and political
discourse. Thinking about the rigid social policies that divide men and women, it becomes easier to empathize and truly understand Momplé’s character constructions, both male and female, within Neighbours. Rather than discrediting Dupont, for example, for his misogynistic attitude toward Mena, we can begin to understand his anxiety and the social pressures he faced as a man in Mozambique, and we can also begin to see the truly revolutionary nature of Januário’s character as Leia’s compassionate and understanding husband.
Lília Momplé, Neighbours

*Neighbours* is one of the main texts set for analysis within this article. What I wish to extrapolate and analyze from this text is the role of food in the rebuilding of the nation post-independence from Portugal. This period of instability gave way to modern food economics and the semiotics of different types of food present on the nation’s dinner tables. Some points of interest in this text include deciphering the connotations of preparing various types of food and the question of why certain foods are better received than others. What constitutes the food hierarchy and how does it correlate with social hierarchy? Beyond just the role of food, I desire to analyze the connection between food and gender in Mozambican society in this particular text. I will illuminate this idea by bringing in other sources such as Sheldon’s *Pounders of Grain* to give a background on Mozambican women and food production. Using these texts, I will attempt to answer the following question: since women are the cultivators of food, laboring to bring sustenance to the men of the nation, are women essentially feeding the nation? Attention will also be focused upon the role of men as food providers, as there is a distinction between food provided by men and the food provided by women. Whereas women appear to procure food for their own as well as their family’s survival, men appear to provide food through shady means and their procurement often is coupled with negative behavior, while the honest husband is shown to bring none.
Manuel Rui, *Quem me dera ser onda*

This inquiry will also seek a connection between the role of food—whether voracious consumption or lack thereof—in Manuel Rui’s novela, *Quem me dera ser onda* and how the control of food is hardly ever in the hands of the father. This will help in delving into the gendered politics of these stories and the question of food in post-independence Angolan society. Rui’s novella centers on the controversial existence of a bourgeois pig, “carnaval da vitória,” occupying space in an apartment on the seventh floor of a high-rise apartment building in Luanda. This apartment belongs to Diogo and Dona Liloca and their children-protagonists Ruca and Zeca. The novella’s drama in the case of “carnaval da vitória” poses the question, *to eat or not to eat?* While the children Zeca and Ruca treasure and embrace their new roommate/family member, their father Diogo refuses to see the pig as anything other than future food leading a bourgeois life in his own home, with the only outcome in sight being the pig’s consumption. Throughout the novella, Diogo becomes progressively irritated in regards to the food provided to him by his wife which subsequently increases his cynicism and resent towards the food distribution of the country. What I look to analyze within this story is the significance behind Diogo’s abhorrence of *peixefritismo* and the existence of “carnaval da vitória” as something other than succulent pork to be eaten during the ritualistic ceremony of Carnival. What is the role of consumption, gluttony, and lack of variety in relation to the bigger picture of Angola’s nation post-independence, and how can we analyze the role of Dona Liloca as the provider and cultivator of her husband’s diet? The roles of women and food in post-independence Angola will be analyzed in comparison to the same roles.
within Neighbours as a means to explore the connection between women as cultivators within the food economy of nations and the construction of individual identities as the country breaks away from Portugal’s influence.
Critical Review of the Authors and their Works

Fernando Arenas provides a contemporary account of the cultural production in post-independence Lusophone Africa in *Lusophone Africa: Beyond Independence*. Published in 2011, this book delineates one of the most recent accounts of Lusophone African history. What is most fascinating about this book is that rather than focusing specifically on either literature or history, Arenas incorporates such cultural aspects as film and music, a feat not yet accomplished by many academics studying the literature and culture of Lusophone Africa. What most concerns my work, however, is the attention Arenas places on Angolan literature, more specifically the writings of Manuel Rui. In regards to Rui’s work, Arenas makes an interesting point about literary intentions. He states that Rui “bring[s] attention to the significant deficit as far as political democratization and socioeconomic justice are concerned despite the recently gained peace” and that he “expose[s] the oligarchization of Angolan society that has led to the entrenchment of internal colonialism as well as the deployment of pernicious forms of coloniality and power” (172). It is interesting to use these remarks to better understand Rui’s motivations for allegory in *QMDSO* and the overall distrust of the characters towards authoritative figures. As stated earlier in this review, however, political ridicule in literature is often expressed in the hopes of contributing to and “building a more equitable social order” and to “probe the sharp ideological contradictions, historical dilemmas, and ontological ambiguities at the heart of Angola’s postcolonial condition as a nation” (Arenas 173). What Arenas also interestingly notes is how Rui in *QMDSO* seems to put the future of building this “equitable social order” in the hands of the
children, Ruca and Zeca, who are seen constantly exposing the hypocrisies and consequences of socialism. Overall, Arenas’s work will be extremely useful because of its more recent publication and given the fact that, amidst the scarce information existing on Rui, it provides a brief but substantive account of Rui’s political involvement and the connection of his literary works to the obstacles facing reconstruction of Angolan society and the formation of national identity. Illuminating these connections will provide a background for the understanding of the concepts of food and the role of women and food in *QMDSO*.

Niyi Afolabi offers another important critical analysis of Manuel Rui in his book *The Golden Cage: Regeneration in Lusophone African Literature and Culture*, which will be an important work to call upon in the discussion of Rui’s intents in creating the literary world within *QMDSO*. In discussing regenerative themes in Angolan literature, Afolabi offers an interesting summarizing explanation of Manuel Rui’s aims in *Quem me derá ser onda*: “Angolan regeneration is called into question through the incisive power of satire where degenerative post-colonial images conflict with loft expectations and dreams of an ideological Angola fighting for liberation from Portugal” (78). This description highlights the historical connections between the literary work and the failed attempts of Angola to implement Marxist ideology.

Afolabi’s chapter, “Manuel Rui and the Construction of Angolan Regeneration”, analyzes the relationship between Diogo and “Carnaval da Vitória, shining light upon Diogo’s distaste for those that fail to earn their keep, the “petty-bourgeois” (84). His following analysis proves paramount to arguments within this article, illuminating the
connection between consumption and control: “Diogo consoles himself by promising the pig that its very flesh will be served as food during its funeral; suggesting that bones will be left to bury, he asks why even have a burial?” (84). What I wish to examine using Afolabi’s chapter on Rui is the reasoning behind the pig’s consumption in relation to societal pressures surrounding Diogo and how this affects his relationship with his wife, Dona Liloca. Afolabi connects the pig’s existence with the exposure of “social ills of the new nation,” such as “greed, corruption, illiteracy, food shortage, water shortage, disturbing bureaucracy, malfunctioning elevators and telephones, long lines to buy food,” etc. Ultimately, food seems to remain at the center of the orbit of “infrastructural deficiencies” (Afolabi 105).

Phyllis Peres also offers an explanation of food politics in QMDSO in her book Transculturation and Resistance in Lusophone African Narrative. Peres elucidates the “irony of independence” present within Rui’s narrative and, in doing so, comments on an important theme throughout the narrative: how Diogo castigates the pig for its bourgeois behavior, “because he won’t eat fried fish like the common Angolan people” (97). Peres demonstrates Diogo’s envy of the pig’s ability to avoid the repetition of food to which the rest of Angola is subjected. This quote serves as an important commentary on the general sentiment of food scarcity for the majority of the population of Luanda and highlights a contrast between Diogo’s character and Januário’s character in Neighbours, who humbly accepts the same meals day in and day out. Peres also notes the important significance of Carnaval da Vitória’s nomenclature which evokes a “common memory” of “cultural resistance”, throughout Angola’s history (98). Peres then explains that before the
revolution the Portuguese colonial regime had ceased any celebration of carnival, which I believe is an interesting point to focus on because of the significance of excess behind carnival. Here we can connect Bakhtin’s idea of carnival to the possible reasons as to why it was banned under colonial control. This brings into mind, which would be an important and interesting topic for elaboration in the article, the question of whether the voracious consumption of food during this celebration allowed for too much leniency among the people.

Shifting discussion from Rui to Momplé, Hilary Owen in *Mother Africa, Father Marx: Women’s Writing in Mozambique, 1948-2002* dedicates a section within the chapter “Lília Momplé: Unworlding the Home” to *Neighbours* and its factually based narrative, which draws on the violence that befell the night of May 29, 1987 in Maputo. As she notes that the attack takes place the night that dinner was provided to the perpetrators by Mena, the idea of food as a basis for the ritualistic convening of “neighbours” comes into question. It would be interesting to focus on this particular dinner scene and how it set the standard for the course of the night. It can be analyzed that the gathering act of food consumption seems to have played a role in the night’s gloomy outcome. Owen also focuses upon “the after-effects of Salazar’s ‘natural difference’ categories of race, gender, and color,” which discounted women as unworthy of full citizenship; we can see throughout the novella that this ideology lingers and that the characters are continually grappling with the newfound (at least hypothetical) departure from such ideologies (148). In a society where women are now technically allowed to find themselves, men who have always been defined in opposition to women
now seem emasculated by their confusion. Identity crisis then ensues as the oppositional gap starts to close in on unprepared men, an interesting point of departure for the discussion of anxieties of masculinity within both *QMDSO* and *Neighbours*.

It is also interesting to note Owen’s focus on the home of Narguiss and the general disinterest of the women in Narguiss’s household towards the goings-on within society. Perhaps it would be interesting to explore whether the abundance of food and festivity indicates a detachment from the prevalent unstable political life occurring outside their home or whether food abundance equates with safety, social and political exemption. This would then lead to the questioning of the characters in *QMDSO* and whether they are similarly “depoliticized” by food’s abundance and conversely politicized by its scarcity. The only member of the family who appears replete with reason, as Owen notes, is the youngest daughter Muntaz, who makes the executive decision to own herself and pursue education rather than men, thus refusing to adhere to what is expected of Mozambican women.

Owen also analyzes Mena’s character post-attack, walking out of her home released from the reins of her oppressive husband: “marking a time-lag in women’s experience of national independence, this act of leaving the flat and simultaneously evicting patriarchal values finally confirms Mena’s sense of being at home in Mozambique” (155). Overall, this chapter will prove crucial to the article, as Owen provides a detailed analysis of the female characters in opposition to males and the pushing and pulling of societal pressures upon these characters, while also addressing the question of how the post-independence instability of the country constantly leads to
rearrangement and reconstruction of gender roles.
**Theory and Politics of Food**

This section will focus on works that present and analyze issues of the political significance of food as portrayed in literature. The analysis of food is a large part of the comparative analysis between *Neighbours* and *QMDSO* and it is therefore paramount to review the critical works analyzing the representation of food in various authors, from Joyce to Dickens to Plath and so on. Looking to these critical works will provide a foundation to approach the semiotics and politics of food, as well as the societal implications of hunger, in Momplé’s and Rui’s texts.

James E. Marlow, in his discussion of Dickens in *Charles Dickens: The Uses of Time*, pays considerable attention to food politics in the chapter “The Presence of Hunger.” In this chapter, Marlow argues through Thomas Carlyle that hunger was an incentive to motivate society to work: “Human work was the sole means of converting time into spirit; but without the momentum of hunger, who would work?” (72). Marlow suggests that the control of consumption correlates with the Protestant work ethic but by the same token creates a “black mutinous discontent … that devours [workers]” (71). However, he ultimately argues through the Malthusian principle that, at the time, the presence of hunger would call to action human competition, a “natural response to a niggardly world” (72), and thus create a society of self-sufficiency of those able to combat hunger by adopting a more proactive and aggressive means towards doing so. The concept of consumption control as a means to controlling a people seems evident within Momplé’s and Rui’s accounts of post-independence Mozambican and Angolan society. Using Marlow’s chapter, it would be interesting to make a connection between
the Dickens-era hunger, as it pervaded literature and society, and the hunger and voracious consumption in *Neighbours* and *Quem me dera ser onda*. It can then be contemplated whether authoritarian control of food economics in Angola and Mozambique at the time correlated with a desire to maintain a subdued people. Even more interesting to note is how society, within Momplé’s and Rui’s works, reacts to hunger and the attempts by authorities to control a natural and basic human need, e.g., through the “sacrifice” of a “bourgeois” pig, unrest in gender relations, procuring food through illegal means, etc. Overall, Marlow’s work will help in the understanding of the reactions of the characters in regards to hunger or, conversely, the abundance of food in the context of widespread hunger.

Gang Yue raises similar questions concerning food culture as portrayed in literature in his work, *The Mouth that Begs: Hunger, Cannibalism, and the Politics of Eating in Modern China*, which can be correlated with Momplé’s and Rui’s texts and the representation of food in the literatures of Mozambique and Angola at the time their works were written. The questions Yue presents that are pertinent to my discussion are: “If eating is one of the most biologically determined acts, in what ways is it also shaped by cultural values and social relations? To what extent has a culture’s experience with food molded its outlook on the world? How does alimentary discourse simultaneously reflect lived realities and cultural arrangements and motivate historical changes?” (3). While Yue attempts to deconstruct the “paradox of pathology,” the tropes of hunger, and cannibalism in Chinese food culture throughout their history and literature, it would be most pertinent to focus on his treatment of hunger, since hunger is a prevalent theme in
both *QMDSO* and *Neighbours*, not so much in the sense of lacking any type of food at all, but hunger for food diversity, for options, for the freedom to consume what one pleases.

It is interesting to note, in Yue’s first chapter, his elaboration on the importance of food in social politics and how, as he quotes David R. Knechtges in “Food in Early Chinese Literature,” “[o]ne of the most pervasive uses of food in ancient Chinese literature is a metaphor in political or philosophical discourse,” which is a theme that I intend to extrapolate from Rui’s and Momplé’s novellas. As Knechtges elaborates, “the proper seasoning of food is a common analogy of good government”; this is an apparent theme within Rui’s and Momplé’s works as well (Yue 39). The topics of ushua and cabbage, the lack of meats, *peixe fritismo* for some versus the abundance and diversity of food eaten by others elucidate an apparent disparity within society and an inequality in not only food politics but also the overall politics of the nation.

In the section “Chairman Mao: God or Food?” of his chapter “Hungry Revolution,” Yue dissects the story “Xinkendi” which presents similar themes of distrust for authority to provide egalitarian alimentation as those displayed in *Neighbours* and *QMDSO*. Yue examines hunger in this story as a phenomenon “figured in a daydream” and “paradoxically kept open-ended,” so that, “in this way ‘hunger’ can only signify its source of desire,” and that the backdrop of the revolution is a “discourse of immediate need and insatiable desire” (159). As Yue further examines hunger in the literature penned by Chairman Mao he comes to an interesting conclusion:
The meaning of the story is only an effect of storytelling as signifying: *Chairman Mao*, *national unity*, and *China* are just signifiers, as are *feast, braised pork*, and *chopsticks*. Each signifier does not make sense apart from the others, and together all produce the text, the “pleasure of the text” as Roland Barthes might call it. What governs the text, exactly as shown by the peasant’s “fabrication,” is the principle of double orality. (161)

Utilizing Yue’s conclusions, it would be interesting to analyze the actual mentions of the different types of foods within *Neighbours* and *QMDSO* as signifiers, the stories as signifying. The signifying power of food is intrinsic to each story, and without it both stories would make little sense, perhaps more obviously so in *QMDSO* than in *Neighbours*. Looking at food through this scope, in any case, will help us distinguish and analyze the double narrative occurring within the texts, that tropes of food and the more direct literary punches aimed at political inequities seemingly work alongside each other.

It will show how food in these texts is used as, in Yue’s words, a “trope on which revolutionary discourse is modeled” and that “central to this theme and trope is the hungry desire for food, meat, . . . and social justice” (166). This trope plays out in *Neighbours* as it calls attention to the inequality in the household, the societal duty of women to remain in the kitchen and serve their husbands, as well as to the inequality within society, where the honest and loving husband eats poorly while the philanderer and traitor eat limitlessly. Food as a trope within revolutionary discourse also plays out in *QMDSO* in the sense that the text is centered on Diogo’s desire for meat, which is translated into the goal to kill the petty bourgeois (Carnaval da Vitória) and consume
him/it, Diogo’s inability to be satisfied with the food he and his family presently have, and the food shortages present throughout Luanda that serve as a background to the main story. In general, Yue’s text will serve as a reference to tackle the semiotics of food within both Momplé’s and Rui’s novellas to aid in the arrival at concrete conclusions concerning women, food, and the building of the post-independence nations.

Returning to Lusophone Africa, Isabel P.B. Fêo Rodrigues in her article, “From Silence to Silence: The Hidden Story of a Beef Stew in Cape Verde,” focuses on food vulnerabilities and the silencing of these vulnerabilities in Cape Verde. Despite its Cape-Verdean focus, I believe this article is pertinent to instances of silencing and food vulnerability in the Angolan and Mozambican contexts in both Neighbours and QMDSO. The article centers on the consumption of beef, as well as on general food shortages and their relationship to the symbolic distinction of social class, and will help to more profoundly understand the ways in which men treat food and treat women in relation to food in both stories. It will help to examine the anxieties of the characters associated with food in both novellas, as Rodrigues argues that “long established cultural conceptions about honor and shame conceal food needs behind closed doors” (345), illuminating the historical context that informs the food anxieties of such characters as Rui’s Diogo and Momplé’s Dupont. Rodrigues looks at food shortages and food politics through the post-colonial Cape Verdean context, which is the similar light I am placing on the analysis of food in both post-independent/post-colonial Angola and Mozambique.

As she expands upon the ideas of silence concerning food shortages, she notes the ways in which authoritarian figures attempt to silence cries for food equality in order to
maintain a “stable” image of society and suppress revolutionary behavior of its members. Rodrigues continues on, using Mintz and Du Bois to explain that “food deprivation is not a mere metaphoric device, but a basic need that undermines human existence and the sustainability of social order. Thus, to openly acknowledge food failures is an incisive way of undermining the basis of political legitimacy and dismantling the bonds of social life” (347). These ideas can be used when analyzing the scene in QMDSO in which Sofia, Ruca and Zeca’s teacher, the only other prominent female character in the novella besides Diogo’s wife D. Liloca, is being scolded by administration for allowing students to write about Carnaval da Vitória, offering an opportunity to observe that such writing is seen as revolutionary and in confrontation with the ruling societal ideologies, as well as to elaborate on the inbetweeness felt by female characters in both novellas as authoritative figures attempt to silence any type of counter-Marxist discourse.

It is also interesting to note Rodrigues’s mention of the influence of postcolonialism on diets as well as desires for modern items such as televisions. This shows the disruption the transition into a postcolonial society caused concerning historically established traditions and customs. This idea can be useful in analyzing the confusion of many of the characters in both stories in attempting to adjust to the new state or, conversely, their refusal to adjust to the new and emerging social orders, again iterating the conflict between modernists and traditionalists. This article, in general, is important for explaining the societal and cultural implications of the consumption of certain foods in QMDSO and Neighbours.
Njeri Githire, in her article “The Empire Bites Back: Food Politics and the Making of a Nation in Andrea Levy’s Works,” touches upon similar themes of food as literary tropes for political commentary and national identity. She states that “investigations of the intersection of food and national identity almost always extend into the multifarious relationship between nation, language, race, gender, and even class” (857), elaborating on the connections of food to other aspects of society previously discussed by Marlow, Yue, and Rodrigues. All of these authors essentially analyze food as a metaphor that, in Githire’s words, “challenges” and “underscores” the “dialectic between permanence and change” (861). While Githire focuses on Englishness and foreign identity in Andrea Levy’s works, her discussion can be viewed as pertinent to the historical situations of both QMDSO and Neighbours; for Githire, “food is, after all, very much a matter of taste, that sense of distinction that Pierre Bourdieu identifies as ‘the basis of all that one has—people and things—and of all that one is for others’” (857). Githire also tackles themes of what constitutes authentic national cuisines and how this question of authenticity has the “potency to tear down the scaffolding on which essentialist and static notions of identity [are] mounted” (858), a theme we see in both QMDSO and Neighbours. While in QMDSO food—acquiring it, its types, having access to it—seems to play a more destructive and tension-producing role in its relation to one’s identity and the identity of the nation, in Neighbours these ideas play out in the sense that food disparity seems painfully evident as we see the characters grow more and more tired of repetition of bland foods while others dine like royalty. This article, in general, can be used to further discuss the semiotics of food within literature as it relates to nation and
Food politics are further problematized in Dan Ojwang’s article, “‘Eat pig and become a beast’: Food, Drink and Diaspora in East African Indian Writing.” In this article, Ojwang analyzes food’s correlation with societal change and immigration and connects food consumption with otherness in East African Indian writing. This is an interesting article to draw upon because, rather than focusing on food as a symbolic metaphor for social alterations, political corruption, subordination, etc., Ojwang focuses on the “ordinariness” of food in its daily production and consumption. Some of these ordinary uses of food in East African literature include the use of cooking as a therapy, “a way of escaping life’s insecurities,” (73) which is profoundly illustrated in the character of Narguiss in Neighbours. Ojwang also highlights food preparation and consumption as “powerful semiotic indices of gendered and class power” (73). For example, women who were limited to domesticity sought in food selection and preparation a means of creating a “gendered province for their own self expression” (74). Ojwang also makes an interesting note on the “paradox of positionality” of women whose burden to “reproduce the immigrant community socially through the preparation of ‘traditional’ food is turned into a resource by the women who take control of kitchen” (74). This is personified by the complete display of “autonomy in the kitchen on one hand, while being enlisted to ensure cultural permanence as a means of safeguarding the interests of the group” (74), on the other. This is interesting to note, because Dona Liloca’s character in QMDSO and Narguiss’s and Mena’s characters in Neighbours personify this idea where “female subjectivity comes to be understood in terms of self-sacrifice, whose main tenet is the
willingness to serve men” (74), while Muntaz of Neighbours serves as a powerful counterpoint to this notion.

Ojwang also makes an interesting correlation between food consumption and its connection to the consumer’s history. As Ojwang explains, “food thus becomes a way through which the expelled communities maintain a nostalgic connection with a place for which they have an ambivalent attachment” (79). For such communities, to rebel against their present situation is to eat foreign foods or foods that connect them to a pleasant history that contrasts with the present. In this context, to alter a traditional dish is seen as a cultural contamination. He places particular emphasis on the consumption of foreign foods and the moral qualms that follow, as it signifies a break from traditions and a break in the ties of the consumers to their history, especially when the foreign food is something radically different from their national cuisine.

In regards to the ontological significance of gastronomic choice, Ojwang uses the example of the character of Nurdin in M.G. Vassanji’s novel No New Land who undergoes emotional and moral distress upon consuming pork sausage, afraid that through ingesting the sausage he would then become a pig, to argue that to eat foreign foodstuffs, in this case pork sausage, can cause social death. Ojwang notes here that, “to eat pork is symbolically to become another kind of human-being altogether, a transplanted man, a beast” (84). This idea could connect to the implications of Diogo’s desire to eat Carnaval da Vitória and is an interesting route for exploration.

As food and culinary practices seem to separate cultures, nations, and communities, Ojwang notes how Alibhai-Brown “strives to show how [food] can act as a
bridge between hitherto hostile groups” (78); this seems to be evident in Neighbours as only through the meals prepared by Mena for Dupont and his guests are they allowed to have some sort of semblance of peace, despite the clearly evident tensions among them. Although Ojwang focuses on food as “a means for imagining crosscultural amity” he also focuses on food as an “important means of accessing history as well as the substance of that history” (85) that will prove useful in the analysis of food in Neighbours and QMDSO. Approaching food through its “ordinariness” and its connection to the history of Angolans and Mozambicans will help in exposing the semiotics of food separate from much of its gendered significance. Fully understanding the use of particular foods in literature and in specific scenes throughout the stories will then aid in a more profound understanding of the connections to gender.
Gendered Politics of Food and Family in Literature

Switching from themes of food consumption to themes of food rejection, Miriam O’Kane Mara, in her article “James Joyce and the Politics of Food,” analyzes the literary refusal to eat in Joyce’s works *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, indicating the denial of ingestion as a form of rebellion. O’Kane Mara claims that food rejection is “a form of political speech [that] suggests a way to rebuild fractured identity” (94) and correlates this notion of corporeal and political rebellion with gendered identities. O’Kane Mara focuses much of the article’s attention on the character of Stephen Dedalus from *Ulysses* and his perpetual rejection of food and argues that this “food rejection behavior” that others have coined as a “rejection of materiality connects to Stephen’s status as a colonized, thus feminized, subject” and that this political act is “coupled with quest for gender identity” (96). She argues further that Stephen’s disordered eating is a means to escape the rigid confines of a normative gluttonous masculine identity and that, in doing so, his character becomes feminized by opposing such an identity. O’Kane Mara elaborates on the Christmas dinner scene in *A Portrait* and the elements of masculine nationalism and lack of female political agency. She makes an interesting note about the gender politics within this scene in correlation with food consumption and rejection:

The scene’s gender politics begin with Mr. Dedalus’s denial of gravy to Dante and her subsequent refusal of “sauce” when he grudgingly offers it. This denial of food to a woman, when he has been generous overall dispensing the turkey, indicates an expectation that women will restrain appetites to control their over-
corporeal selves. Dante fulfills his expectation, covering her plate with her hands.

Thus, early in the dinner Stephen learns that openly nationalist men are allowed to be hungry, while women, at times, are not. (98)

This clearly political division in gendered food consumption is interesting to note when analyzing the characters of Neighbours and QMDSO. While there does not seem to be this obvious a divide between not eating as a feminine attribute and voracious eating as a masculine attribute, the latter is still present in both stories.

Perhaps, like with the character of Stephen Dedalus, food is seen as a threat to the body borders, to the borders of masculine identity, and to stray from these constructed norms threatens to cast males into the realm of the Other and therefore deem them less powerful or threaten the space they occupy. This can then create an anxiety linked with food consumption and rejection. O’Kane Mara comments on the sensitivity of the subject of breaching borders as displayed in Stephen’s character: “Stephen’s frustration erupts with a mental reference to accusations of overindulging. … It displays an ongoing connection between anxiety about his colonized status, his feelings for Mulligan, and accompanying anxiety about ingestion” (106). This is interesting because of the plentiful amount of food anxiety present within both Rui’s and Mompyle’s stories that also relate to the character’s colonized/previously colonized status. Men feel “the right to food based upon … somehow intact, or performed, masculine identity” (107). O’Kane Mara notes that Stephen’s character rejects and detests the normative masculine identity that calls for gluttonous eating.
This article will be useful as a model for approaching food and the character’s relationship to food in a similar manner. O’Kane Mara concludes about Stephen’s character, “by strictly controlling further intake of food, Stephen … uses his body to enact his rebellion, mimicking the famine as well. Ulysses ends with Dedalus rejecting home” (109). Using this article to analyze the control of food intake in both stories will be an interesting facet. It will pose questions concerning food’s correlation with normative masculine and feminine identities and the straying from these identities through aberrant consumption, as well as help tackle the anxieties associated with food, its scarcity, its preparation, and its consumption.

Wenying Xu, in “Masculinity, Food, and Appetite in Frank Chin’s Donald Duk and ‘The Eat and Run Midnight People’,“ focuses on the relationship between the semiotic construction of food and gender in culinary Asian fiction, also elaborating on the connection between food and masculinity. Xu emphasizes the particular societal importance of analyzing this relationship within literature: “it is an established claim that our gender identities, too, are constructed by our food practices … the gendered syntax of foodways not only finds ample expression in literature but it also structures the gender identities of those populating literature” (78). The literary obstacle Xu ultimately attempts to tackle within this article is how Asian-American writer Frank Chin’s intricate placing of food in his literary works deconstructs stereotypes of Asian-American males. He quotes Eileen Fung’s claim, in her analysis of Chin’s novel Donald Duk, that “food becomes a discourse of a masculine culture which reinscribes male aggression and domination” (qtd. in Xu 79) and, in response, states that “in Donald Duk, the kitchen
becomes a site for the assertion of masculinity, with the language of cooking repeatedly
evoking images of martial arts and war” (79). This would be an interesting point of
departure for a discussion on the connection between food and domination in QMDSO
and Neighbours. Xu’s conclusions will also provide an alternative pathway to approach
food in both texts. By approaching the male characters’ relationship to food and their
own masculinity, we may begin to arrive at conclusions concerning oppositional female
characters as well.

Another interesting and fruitful aspect of the article is Xu’s focus on the struggle
of men of color to attain a hegemonic masculine identity. Xu quotes Jachinson Chan to
further explicate the “glass-door effect” felt by men of color in their struggle to attain
normative masculinity: “the seduction of hegemonic masculinity can be a powerful force
that lures men of color from a place of complicity to an aggressive pursuit of being part
of an elite group” (qtd. in Xu 80). Xu further notes that a hegemonic masculine identity is
by no means secure and stable, and this is precisely what we see in the majority of the
male characters within QMDSO and Neighbours. “Gender anxiety manifested in this
‘relentless test’” of what it means to be a man “takes an even heavier toll on men of
color” (80), leading to a self-hatred associated with being unable to fulfill the particular
normative masculine role inscribed for men. Although, in the end, Xu exposes Chin’s
ironic attempts at creating a proper masculine identity for Asian-American males that
only reinforces “conventional traits of patriarchy and machismo” (99), he approaches the
text in an interesting fashion, which will serve as a useful tactic in deconstructing the
semiotics of food and gender in Neighbours and QMDSO.
While Xu focuses on the literary male relationship to food, Caroline Smith’s article, “‘The Feeding of Young Women’: Sylvia Plath’s The Bell Jar, Mademoiselle Magazine, and the Domestic Ideal,” approaches the literary analysis of food from an opposing angle, as she untangles the web weaved between the main character of Esther in Plath’s The Bell Jar and her relations with food and the cultural context of feminine conditioning feeding such relations (pun intended). This article will also provide useful information regarding the relationship between food and gender. Although Smith focuses on women and food in this article, as I mentioned with regards to Xu’s article, the conclusions made about women and food can also help us better understand men and food in Neighbours and Quem me dera ser onda.

To analyze the character of Esther Greenwood’s demise in Sylvia Plath’s The Bell Jar, Smith starts simply with the passage of the fig tree delineating Esther’s indecisiveness on life: to be a housewife or to follow her dreams. All the while, the figs representing these paths eventually fall to her feet, indicating that in the end none of these paths appear possible. Quoting Susan Coyle and Linda Wagner-Martin, Smith deciphers the implications of this passage, in which Esther is “‘starving’ not simply from indecision but also from an increasing sense of alienation from self and alienation from the world and her potential goals”: “Esther believed firmly that there was no way, in the American society of the 1950s, that a talented woman could successfully combine a career with homemaking” (qtd. in Smith 2). As Smith iterates throughout the article, the image of the figs at Esther’s feet signifies that she is not only literally starving but figuratively starving as well.
Smith places an emphasis on the anxiety of Esther’s character as it is played out in connection to food throughout the novel, similarly to the anxiety experienced by Dupont (*Neighbours*) and Diogo (*QMDSO*). Smith analyzes Esther’s anxiety about food alongside the models of proper gender behavior as portrayed in 1950s editions of *Mademoiselle* magazine. Smith is ultimately attempting to argue that:

1950s consumer culture—a culture that encourages women to navigate beyond the private sphere of the home while limiting those options by simultaneously discouraging that navigation—is not conducive to Esther’s being properly nurtured—a circumstance that contributes to that metaphorical starvation that Esther envisions for herself in the fig tree passage. (4)

This argument is extremely interesting because Smith analyzes magazine articles and advertisements at the time as being both encouraging and discouraging for women, which is similar to themes found in the educational endeavors of post-independence Mozambique as presented in Kathleen Sheldon’s book *Pounders of Grain*. In *Pounders of Grain* Sheldon noted that, although Mozambican government attempted to make education more accessible to women, the classes offered were normally highly specific and practical and mainly limited to activities of domesticity. *Mademoiselle* magazine “wooed their female constituency, promising the ‘right’ and scientific way to live” (6) through their ads and articles, which hints at the ways in which women in *Neighbours* and *QMDSO* were perhaps also wooed in a slightly different way, through their particular acculturation to socially constructed gender roles.
As noted, Smith argues that the advertisements were both encouraging and discouraging for women who “were, on one hand, encouraged to travel to Mexico while, on the other hand, admonished to stay home and learn the best way to cook a chicken” (6). She further argues that “these articles would often provide their readers with dual messages, encouraging women to be self-sufficient while also offering them limited options for achieving self-sufficiency” (6), which, again, is similar to the historical context of post-independence Mozambique concerning women and education, as elaborated by Sheldon. “Though, purportedly, there is a future promised for those ‘divided’,” between career and home, as Smith notes, “the text implies that, in actuality, there is not” (7), which resonates in the endeavors of FRELIMO in regards to the education of women and perhaps, on a general scale, to the hopes clashing with the inevitable shortcomings of socialism in Lusophone Africa. When only offering practical and domestic-based classes as part of the educational curriculum for women, Mozambique’s government was claiming that education would help women better themselves outside the home, but the actual education offered was more for bettering women’s performance inside the home.

Smith makes another interesting point in her article in regards to gender roles and food preparation. Regarding food preparation and male satiation, she calls upon articles that reinforced the idea that men were unable to cook for themselves and instead relied upon the women they dated, and eventually married, to do it for them. Read in this context, then, Esther’s inability to cook results again in another form of metaphorical starvation: “Unable to perform the appropriate domestic behaviors, as exhibited by her
mother and Jody, Esther will be unable to feed either herself or any young man, and the consequence of this action will result in one of her ‘fat purple fig[s]’ falling, uneaten, at her feet” (12). Perhaps the metaphor of the figs could be connected to the fates of the female characters of Neighbours and QMDSO. One fig may represent their fate of non-conformity to feminine roles as food providers, while another the fate of conforming to the subordination of women in the kitchen.

Smith concludes that Esther’s character begins to accept that straying from normative femininity provides catastrophic results, “that transgressing society’s carefully scripted boundaries for women can be disastrous” (19), and that all that is left to do is succumb to societal pressures. This alludes to a similar mode of thinking as seen in Narguiss’s character and especially in Dona Liloca, who constantly battles her feelings of inbetweenness in regards to pleasing both her children and her husband. Smith’s conclusion puts not only Esther’s character into perspective but all of the characters in both QMDSO and Neighbours:

We can read Esther, then, for the character she truly is—a woman with a confused sense of identity, informed by the conflicted historically rooted messages she encounters, overcome by a tremendous fear of losing all the opportunities that “beckoned and winked” and ultimately starving to death. (21)

This last sentence resonates with the overall sentiment in post-independence Mozambique and Angola, that in creating a national identity there existed much confusion, that attempts to create a new identity were countered by instilled “historical roots,” that there was fear of the unknown and the inability to “perform,” and ultimately
the fear of starving in regards to unequal food distribution, the lack of diversity of food, and metaphorical starvation. Elaborating on such themes will provide a stimulating pathway to interesting conclusions concerning national identity in post-independence Mozambique and Angola and its linkage to food.

Andrea Adolph focuses on a similar idea of a society in transition and the confusion that ensues from the disruption of normative gender politics. Rather than focusing on an individual character’s confusion from bending the boundaries of normative gender and eating, Adolph focuses on the effects of wartime on gender politics as it is represented in literature. Adolph analyzes the representation of post-war gender identity in English literature in her article, “Austerity, Consumption, and Postwar Gender Disruption in Mollie-Panter Downes’s One Fine Day,” which centers on the aftermath of World War II in regards to the disruption of government food controls and rationing and how this affected gender roles and domesticity within the home. Adolph highlights these themes in her reading of Panter Downes’s novel One Fine Day, placing emphasis on the implications of World War II on food in England: “In the realm of the quotidian, these policies become cultural synecdoche for the war itself: even if the war did not invade the security of ‘home’ via personal tragedy or mass media, there was no escaping the fact that for the majority of Britons, meals were smaller, monotonous and difficult to procure” (19). Although post-war England seems like a far cry from post-war, newly independent Angola and Mozambique, it is important to note the linkage between the disruptions and repositionings of gender roles in the reconfiguration of a post-war nation in regards to food. While Panter-Downes focused on middle-class English women in her novel, similar
gender struggles can be found in the female characters of \textit{Neighbours} and \textit{QMDSO}.

Further along in the article, Adolph quotes a passage from Downes’s character Laura’s honeymoon to illuminate the profound connection of food to memory. Adolph notes that Laura “could remember nothing of the cathedral … but she could remember every melting brown mouthful of those truffles” (qtd in Adolph 29). This theme of an ability to recall only the culinary aspect of an important event is also seen in the character Narguiss in \textit{Neighbours} as she recalls hardly anything from her wedding save the copious amounts of food and the weight of the jewelry around her neck. Both Laura and Narguiss’s character call attention to feminine anxiety associated with food, which would also be an interesting route to explore. Perhaps we might be able to arrive at interesting conclusions when examining the use of food in both novellas as not only a marker of social status but also as a “source of pleasure and physical satisfaction” for the male characters. In general, this article will be useful in analyzing the disruptions to gender roles after the colonial wars in Angola and Mozambique, mainly in regards to feminine domesticity and the role of food.

Placing focus more specifically on family dynamics and politics in Mozambique, Ximena Andrade of the WLSA (Women and Law in Southern Africa) gives an account, in her contribution to the volume, \textit{Families in a Changing Environment in Mozambique}, of the present familial organization in Mozambique. It is important to take a closer look into familial dynamic when analyzing \textit{Neighbours} and \textit{QMDSO} because food—its production, consumption, its gendered politics and provisions—as the main focal point of my analysis is inextricably linked to family in both stories. Therefore, \textit{Families in a}
Changing Environment in Mozambique is useful because the authors are focusing more on the evolution of family structures after the civil war rather than on how families were regulated beforehand. Andrade elaborates on the notion and organization of family:

As a social body, the family structures and reveals the ways people organize themselves and think in society, at the same time that it prepares strategies of adaptation and social change. It is in this context that the family should be understood as a social actor that reflects external signs of social change and acts on and defines the contours of the change. (15)

This will prove extremely useful because, as stated in the introduction, there is not much written on the subject yet, aside from Signe Arnfred’s recently published Family Forms and Gender Policy in Revolutionary Mozambique. Andrade elaborates on the dominant ideology of the woman’s space in society: “within gender relations as in dominant relations, the woman is recognized by her affection for the kindred, projecting this image in society and satisfying all expectations. The skills expected from the woman end in the domestic sphere” (23). However, war has altered this, as “the economic crisis and the war have led women to more direct and permanent involvement in activities considered to be masculine” (23) and a shift can be perceived in the domesticity of women. Women have become “essential to the economic survival of the family, and at the same time keep up, reinforce and expand the traditional relations of mutual aid” (23), demonstrating that gender roles in post-war Mozambique are evolving. Yet, gender distinctions and their associated responsibilities still play a marked role in the socialization of boys and girls into men and women. As Andrade notes, “in families, sons and daughters are prepared
for the roles they should play in the division of labour occupying differentiated places in family strategies” (29). This leaves little room for any mobility across spaces; once the bodies are marked with a sex, they are “destined” to follow the social rules attached to their sex. This leaves females also “destined” for subordination and moral grappling with these subordinated destinies, as is seen through the female characters in both novellas. Andrade, in this sense, gives more of a critical gendered background to the female characters’ post-war needs to fulfill certain roles.

Andrade goes on to further describe that in the cities “it is invariably the boys that are privileged, regardless of their capacities, or rather, the sons, by the way they were socialized (aggression, competition…) ‘naturally’ appear to be the most ready to face a job market subject to masculine competition” (29). This information is vital in understanding the characters within QMDSO and Neighbours, why they may be anxious, acting out against repression, or even particularly interesting for not falling within the categories of their “destinies.” This analysis also gives further backing to the information presented in Kathleen Sheldon’s Pounders of Grain. Rather than just focusing on historical facts and statistics, Andrade gives insight into the social construction and working of interpersonal, intersex, and individual relationships, which will be useful when deconstructing the relationships between the characters in Neighbours, mainly among the female characters, to ultimately connect their relationships and characteristics to the historical context of women in Mozambique.
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