

# **Edible Encounters and the Formation of Self in Baltasar Lopes' *Chiquinho* and Paulina Chiziane's *Niketche: uma história de poligamia***

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## **Food in a Context of Disjuncture**

While Cabo Verdean author Baltasar Lopes da Silva (1907–1989) in his coming-of-age novel, *Chiquinho* (1947), and Mozambique's first female novelist Paulina Chiziane (1955–) in her novel *Niketche: uma história de poligamia* (2002), write from different historical and cultural perspectives, a comparison between these two works opens a critical space for probing the authors' respective conceptions of social normativity. In a sense, their divergent style and subjective content allow us to juxtapose their works and, in doing so, delineate the ways in which the two authors differently construed their social worlds and critically assessed their respective realities, while also uncovering their distinctive subjectivities. We suggest that a comparison between these two works has the potential to unravel commonalities in the authors' conception of an ideal social order where kinship and sustenance remain the principal glue and guarantor of social cohesion and well-being. Theoretically, these commonalities, we argue, are best extricated through the conceptual scope of David Sutton in his extension of James Fernandez' theorizing in *Persuasions and Performances*. Fernandez argues that the 'whole', a space imbued with a sense of conviviality with a community, is reached through the selection of metaphors that decrease the inchoateness between phenomenological human perception and the communicative act. Sutton furthers this idea through his argumentation that food, specifically in the sensorial nature of its consumption, is one of the most potent mechanisms in the process of returning to the 'whole'. We argue in particular that, in a colonial situation of cultural and linguistic oppression and in a post-independence situation of rapid change, the use of food tropes allows the authors to unmask colonial and postcolonial modalities of domination and assist the main characters in reaching a space of wholeness and self-liberation.

For James Fernandez, metaphors provoke constant movement. Accordingly, tropes are metaphoric strategies that ‘involve the placing of self and other pronouns on continua’ (9). These pronouns, which are first in an inchoate and fragmented stage, move and transform along the continua towards predication, away from fragmentation. As Fernandez explains, ‘the movement accomplished by these metaphors is from the inchoate in the pronomial subject to the concrete in the predicate’ (11). In other words, tropes aid the ‘self and other pronouns’ in the movement towards reaching the ‘whole’, a convivial space, thereby overcoming a state of inchoateness. This space, wholeness, or, the whole, is a place of conviviality where the predicated pronoun finds greater ease and a sense of fulfillment.<sup>1</sup>

This continuum is applicable to literature, which in one form or another involves a continued effort to predicate and bring the reader closer to the author’s intentions in an attempt to generate a communion of meaning. In the case of *Chiquinho* and *Niketche*, food is the metaphorical device that allows the protagonists to overcome their inchoateness as well as their respective states of fragmentation. Furthermore, food and meals are uniquely tied with the senses, stimulating perception and desire, and thus movement among pronouns, by simultaneously intersecting the sense of smell, sight, touch and taste. Food and meals are therefore closely tied with intimacy and sexuality across cultures as a sensorial device capable of conjuring desire, stimulating sexual appetite, and sustaining pleasure as well as relationships. Movement therefore occurs as pronouns search for wholeness using food metaphors. Hence, it is through the cartography of food that both authors convey the sensorial world of relationships – sexual, with the self and otherwise – and navigate their respective worlds of dramatic change, departing from social expectations into a new space of self-fulfillment.

Lopes penned his *bildungsroman*, *Chiquinho*, in 1947, in a period characterised by (impending) change as famine continued to severely afflict the islands of Cabo Verde.<sup>2</sup> At the time, the basis of Cabo Verdean subsistence relied heavily on agriculture. Reoccurring droughts impacted local crops, forcing the land and its agricultural output to deteriorate into a realm of unsustainability. In a Malthusian situation, whereby famines accounted for cyclical

1 See more with regard to food as metaphors and mechanisms that serve to counter fragmentation and propel pronouns towards a realm of wholeness in James Fernandez, *Persuasions and Performances* and David Sutton, ‘Whole Foods: Revitalization through Everyday Synesthetic Experience’.

2 See p. 260 of Russel G. Hamilton’s chapter ‘Portuguese-language Literature’ in *A History of Twentieth-Century African Literatures*, edited by Oyekan Owomoyela (1993), as well as p. 206 of Pires Laranjeira’s chapter ‘Baltasar Lopes, patriarca das letras cabo-verdianas, e o *Chiquinho*’ in *Literaturas africanas de expressão portuguesa* for more on the ways in which famine in Cabo Verde infiltrated literature and especially *Chiquinho*.

demographic bottlenecks, food availability was concurrent with social survival in a very direct way – both at the individual and at the social levels. Throughout Lopes' narrative, the adolescent Chiquinho comes of age on the islands of São Nicolau, his birthplace, and São Vicente, where he experiences both personal and educational growth. It becomes evident that food and its lack are the means through which the protagonist narrates his childhood past in rural São Nicolau, his adolescence in São Vicente, as well as an imaginary future of abundance in the United States.

Lopes utilises a neo-realist style, characteristic of the *Claridade* generation, in an attempt to convey the sensorial nature of famine. Through the observations of the adolescent narrator, the reader becomes familiar with the sense of entrapment felt on an island surrounded by water yet devastated by the lack of rainfall.<sup>3</sup> The lack of provisions to sustain the alimentation of the Cabo Verdean people affected most profoundly the rural islands without ports and poor commercial connections, such as São Nicolau, where the majority of Lopes' novel takes place. In an island landscape stricken by recurring droughts, reliance on food imports for sustenance was in high demand, a demand hardly ever met. Drought thus became synonymous with lack of food and the corrosion of everyday forms of reciprocity. Throughout Lopes' narrative, which traverses the life history of the protagonist, drought inevitably correlates with an inadequate colonial administration incapable of preventing cyclical famines and of creating the political and economic mechanisms to ensure food relief. Food scarcity thus correlates with the disjuncture between Chiquinho and his social surroundings.

The Cabo Verdean people Chiquinho observed quickly become characterised by fragmentation, in the sense expressed by Sutton. As food sustains one's connections with a community, food scarcity, conversely, equates to displacement and fragmentation or, in Fernandez's terminology, a departure from the whole. This disconnect also stands for the growing gap between the colonial administration and the Cabo Verdean people whom they were obliged to help. In other words, while Lopes' narrative details the daily structural violence of those who succumb to drought – as if they were victims of a natural catastrophe – the author is simultaneously and implicitly denouncing the violence inherent in the imperial project and its embodied effects in *Chiquinho's* subjectivity.

On the other side of the African continent, in Mozambique, the disconnect from the whole becomes manifest in the disparity between the genders, articulated by Chiziane in her novel through cultural ideals regarding food.

3 See more on the neo-realist style of the '*Claridosos*' in David Brookshaw's chapter, 'Cape Verde', in *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa*.

Chiziane's *Niketche* (2002) positions itself after the brutal wars of independence and subsequent civil war. Written at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Chiziane's novel offers a glimpse into the present state of a nation just a few decades into the making. Specifically, her narrative provides an affirmation of the female experience in modern-day urban Mozambique. Although the novelist herself, along with other critics and many other African women, have noted the author's persistent lack of identification with the term 'feminist', Chiziane nevertheless attempts to highlight in her novels the particular oppressions women encounter in the modern, yet patriarchal society of southern Mozambique.<sup>4</sup> As Chiziane expresses in her interview with Patrick Chabal: 'Today, women cook, make love to their husbands, make babies, go to war, drive tractors, fly planes, they do all of this at the same time. And men still are without the capacity to recognise that women are contributing something valid to their society' (Our translation 299).<sup>5</sup> Signe Arnfred in *Sexuality and Gender Politics in Mozambique* writes that this frustrated sentiment is not singular but rather part of a larger social epidemic in which female agency in Mozambique is suppressed. Organisations such as the OMM (Organização da Mulher Moçambicana) continue to advocate for gender equality, but their voices are often overpowered.<sup>6</sup> Chiziane's literary projects therefore emerge from this present condition of womanhood characterised by the rift between changing male and female social obligations, which continue to destabilise the very notion of wholeness for women.

In *Niketche*, Chiziane draws parallels between food and the feminine condition. Through food, Chiziane unmasks male social expectations of female subordination within marriage, kinship, and across social structures. Her novel explores the intricacies of modern marital relationships in Mozambique, within a context of informal polygamy, whereby women carry the unequal burden of supporting households and preparing meals. Rami, the novel's protagonist and narrator, characterises the wife who abides by Western and Christian notions of monogamy, but progressively discovers

4 See Patrick Chabal's *Vozes moçambicanas* for the detailed interview between Chabal and Chiziane or his chapter entitled, 'Mozambique' in *The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa* to further contextualise female literary voices in Mozambique.

5 Original text: 'Hoje, as mulheres fazem a comida, fazem amor para os maridos, fazem os filhos, vão para a guerra, pegam nos tratores, pegam nos aviões, pegam nisso tudo junto ao mesmo tempo. E o homem ainda não está à altura para reconhecer que esta mulher está a contribuir com alguma coisa válida para a sua sociedade' (299). All translations from the original narratives to English should henceforth be understood as 'our translation'.

6 See more on the topic of suppression and the arbitrariness of laws concerning gender equality in Part I: Conceptions of Gender & Gender Politics in Mozambique in Signe Arnfred's *Sexuality and Gender Politics in Mozambique: Rethinking Gender in Africa*.

the extent of her husband's deception. She tries to bring balance back to her relationship with her husband Tony through food by learning seductive recipes from local sorcerers and dressing in clothing that evokes the sensual nature of fruit. However, her efforts are in vain as she quickly learns of the existence of her husband's four other women who also claim to be his wives and legitimate mothers to his children.

In Rami's interactions with the women who assert their entitlement to her husband's affections and earnings, food plays a vivid role. The 'love hexagon' (60) of the five wives initially competes for exclusive rights over Tony, the patriarch. The competition and interaction between the wives, and between the wives and Tony, is expressed through meals and rituals that involve food and drink. As the narrative progresses, Rami uncovers the vulnerability of her competitors. She then re-appropriates traditional polygamy, claiming her commanding position as first wife in order to bring Tony to fulfill his obligations to all co-wives equally. This re-appropriation of tradition involves seeking out the advice of local sorcerers and female family members, all of whom emphasise the necessity of specifically prepared meals as obligatory in the husband-sharing schema. Sexuality and food preparation also become entwined as a result of female knowledge of food potions that are carefully designed to fully enrapture and satiate the voracious male appetite. Yet a system of unequal obligations still exists, as women have to prepare the substance to satiate a shared husband regardless of his financial or emotional support. Articulated through food, Chiziane highlights in her narrative the lack of female agency in modern conceptions of polygamy and, therefore, the disconnect and fragmentation felt by women in southern Mozambique.

While the landscape of Chiziane's novel remains unburdened by the effects of widespread famine, other forms of famine unequivocally pervade the text. Famine permeates *Niketche* in the unquenched female desire for solid relationships and the void women experience – sexual and otherwise – particularly within marriage. This kind of famine is ever more prominently articulated through a discourse of selective food choices and the ingestion of gender-specific foods. The protagonist learns from the teachings of various women that she must prepare certain foods in order to 'retain' her fleeting husband. In a world where polygamy is perversely manipulated to serve the perfidious sexual desires of urban and employed men – who profess monogamous ideals in conformity with the modern state yet practice a corruption of polygamy – food becomes the syntax through which women strategise their economic freedom and discover alternative networks of support.<sup>7</sup> In other

7 See more on modern polygamy practices in Mozambique in Chapter 5, 'Gender in Colonial & Post-colonial Discourses (2003)', in Signe Arnfred's *Sexuality and Gender Politics in Mozambique: Rethinking Gender in Africa*.

words, food is a metonymic signifier for the present disjuncture between the genders showing how they navigate their individual quests out of famine and towards a space of wholeness.

The quest towards wholeness for the wives in *Niketche* is simultaneously a quest for liberation. This liberation from the gendered confines of patriarchy in southern Mozambican society, as Sheldon and Rodrigues argue, entails economic freedom and enhanced solidarity among women. In securing economic independence and female cooperation, women carve newer and more secure spaces, 'strategizing alliances in which emotional and consanguine kinship, motherhood, and female solidarity', allow female protagonists to gain 'command of their financial independence' (93). In the novel, the wives attempt to realise their economic potential by selling goods at the marketplace and sharing recipes aimed to seduce their shared husband. Food therefore acts as the metaphoric strategy that propels the action of the inchoate pronouns, the co-wives, along Fernandez's continua towards the 'whole', where they ultimately find their economic and sexual liberation.

### **Framing the Sustenance of Social Order**

Severe drought and insufficient food relief characterised the decade in which *Chiquinho* was published and, subsequently, such themes dominated the narrative of Cabo Verdean literature around that time. Like Lopes, other Cabo Verdean writers of both prose and poetry such as Luís Romano and Manuel Lopes, 'denounced the poverty of the islands, its chronic devastating famines, and the impact of voluntary and forced migration' (Rodrigues and Sheldon 84). Such themes of devastation also pervaded the periodical *Claridade*, published from 1936 to 1960, which is considered the 'formative' period of a distinct Cabo Verdean literature (ibid. 84). Forced migration defined another prominent characteristic of Cabo Verdean identity tied to food, or, more specifically, its lack. As Sheldon and Rodrigues note in reference to the history of Cabo Verde uncovered in such works as Gabriel Mariano's *Cultural caboverdeana* and Onésimo Silveira's *Consciencialização na literatura caboverdeana*, the general consensus regarding identity on the islands was that, 'migration as a marker of Ca[bo] Verdean insular identity was often tied to the dual desire to leave while wanting to stay' (ibid. 84). This conflicting desire is also pervasive in Lopes' narrative as Chiquinho comes of age on his home island surrounded by devastation.

*Chiquinho* narrates the life of a boy raised on the island of São Nicolau under the loving care of his mother and maternal grandmother, who after leaving to complete high school on the island of São Vicente (at the time the

only secular high school), returns to São Nicolau to discover the impossibility of remaining on his island of birth. The family history witnessed two generations of migration – that of Chiquinho’s grandfather who worked as a sailor and died on a return voyage, and his own father who migrated to the US and regularly sent letters and remittances home. The women stayed in Cabo Verde in order to manage the household, holding on to their gardens, food cultivation/production, and caring for their children. The cyclical droughts, however, burdened the possibility of these tasks and marred the chances of survival year after year. The protagonist’s migration to America becomes the only available form of returning to the whole, in Fernandez’s conceptualisation, and sustaining one’s dreams of both survival and prosperity.

*Chiquinho* simultaneously embodies a family and an island history, Atlantic connectivity, and diaspora. Lopes’ narrative reminds us that against a background of poverty, a cultural world of survival and narration unfolded tying past to present and childhood memories with future expectations. Since the nineteenth century, Cabo Verde has seen a large amount of its population migrate to the United States, with many migrants occupying residence in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Voyages first set sail on American whaling ships and then in schooners bought by Cabo Verdean emigrants as a means to rescue their own people from poverty and famine. These were the schooners of torments and of great expectations, narrating particular seafaring histories outside the dominant discourse of the Portuguese maritime empire. Sailing between Cabo Verde and the US became a rite of passage for young Cabo Verdean men who desired to conquer the impossibility of subsistence particularly on rural São Nicolau Island.

As the protagonist Chiquinho narrates, it was with the money his grandfather earned on the ocean floor that the family built his childhood home in Caleijão. Chiquinho’s home was a whitewashed house with four rooms and a clay rooftop that sheltered a magical world of storytelling fortified with the prayers and scolding of his grandmother. Next to this house was a small shed adorned by a sloping roof where no one was allowed to enter, for this was the storage house where many food supplies were safely kept. The children, Chiquinho and his two siblings Lela and Nanduca, would sneak into this neighboring shed to steal small portions of manioc flower, dry fish from Sal Island, or a bit of tobacco to entice Pitra Marguida, who worked for the household, to tell stories. Chiquinho would cherish these oral narratives exchanged for food as an integral part of his childhood and his being. Here, narration and nourishment are entwined as both engender the continuum towards wholeness during his childhood.

Chiquinho’s childhood memories involving food provide a sensorial aspect to Lopes’ narrative. It is the sensorial nature of food that animates Chiquin-

ho's childhood household where visitors frequently stopped to inquire about one's wellbeing and to share food. Nhô Chic'Ana, for example, often stopped for coffee and to recount stories about his past life as a sailor. The food that accompanied these stories helped those involved return to a place of social harmony, where the boundaries between self and community are nearly invisible. As Sutton elaborates, 'returning to the whole requires a 'mutual tuning-in' based on shared sensory experiences that are explicitly synesthetic (crossing sensory domains)' (122). Food and storytelling thus become synesthetic and 'counter fragmentation' (122). Lopes dedicates one third of his novel to Chiquinho's childhood enmeshed with storytelling ingested with homemade popcorn, referred to in the novel as 'milho aliado'.

*Chiquinho* is also a narrative of departure and return. Characters such as Nho Chic'Ana, Chico Zepa, and Toi Mulato took part in Cabo Verde's Atlantic history of back and forth exchange of people, goods, letters, money and food. This movement allowed the reproduction of family history as a history of Atlantic interactions, captured in time and place by the island's own cultural syntax. The relationship with America formed the syntax inside homes where photographs exhibiting well-dressed men in cashmere suits and pocket watches decorated interior walls; these same walls – built with money earned at sea – listened to tales of witchcraft, sorcerers, and mermaids entangled with heroic tales about Charlemagne's victories and World War I battlefields. These were narratives from afar but made near through their telling, often bought by the children in exchange for food. They not only fictionalised the reality of departure Chiquinho would soon confront, but also shaped what the narrator designates as that 'undetermined something, which little by little shaped my creole soul' (31).<sup>8</sup> While food clearly ties a world of childhood fantasies with that of family warmth, food is also ominously tied to the stories of sailors who wanted to depart but stayed firmly attached to the landscape and their gardens.

Nho Chic'Ana's seafaring stories conquered Chiquinho's friendship along with that of his peers who sought to experience firsthand the tales of maritime heroes. Through his stories, it becomes apparent that the old man regretted his return to a life behind the *enxada*/hoe as the land chronically failed to provide the fruits of labor that he was once able to conquer at sea. Similarly, the rebellious character Chico Zepa refuses to work the land and promises to defy 'destiny' by planning an escape to São Vicente island in order to clandestinely depart on a steamer to the four corners of the world. In the same vein, Chiquinho's schoolfriend Toi Mulato, the best student in class,

8 Original: 'este não se sabe o quê que a pouco e pouco ia formando a minha alma de crioulo' (31).

dreamt of departing in a whaler. When he returns from Preguiça (where the little port village is located), the ships he described to his friends filled their 'lives with mysteries. The night stars were ageless ships that had been navigating for centuries, to take us away' (49).<sup>9</sup> Even the sun, that constant torrid presence in times of drought, was converted into a traveling 'glowing ship made of fire full of light to take us to America' (50).<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the narrative, Chiquinho vacillates between the desire to create his own seafaring story or to endure life on land. In the novel, those who abandon agriculture to face a life on the ocean gain the status of epic heroes, while those who stay behind the hoe year-upon-year are anchored to a history of 'serfdom'. Chiquinho hopes to escape such a destiny through formal education, as it was one of the few venues that opened up job opportunities in the colonial administration. While studying in São Vicente's high school, Chiquinho founds with a select few of his peers the literary group, *Grémio*, a possible allusion to the real-life literati who founded the periodical – *Claridade*. In the contributions of the main character and his educated constituents to the *Grémio* journal lays a parallel between the lived experiences of Cabo Verdeans and the text itself. The protagonist is considered the novelist of the group and on numerous occasions is charged with collecting 'data' on the 'livelihood' and 'realities' of 'our island people' (184). This constant search for factual substance for his writing, positions the protagonist in the role of a pseudo-researcher collecting oral histories, which we know are being told in Cabo Verdean Creole but textualised by Chiquinho into written Portuguese. In this search for substance, Chiquinho finds a world of rich narratives about food traditions and scarcity whereby his people persistently seeded the soil only to harvest scarcity.

As discussed, through food and the daily routine of meals that composed daily life in Caleijão, the reader enters a sensorial experience and temporarily joins the household. As Fernandez suggests, such sensorial metaphoric strategies enable a communion of meaning between authors and their readers.<sup>11</sup> The human quest for meaning, as he points out, is embedded in specific cultural contexts where the subject is in a constant struggle to convey or externalise one's phenomenological experience and thereby generate culturally appropriate and presumably agreed upon meanings. For Fernandez, this is done through the selection of metaphors that have the power to influence behavior and command performance. This process, however, is not

9 Original Portuguese: 'enchia de mistérios a nossa vida. As estrelas da noite eram navios que navegavam havia longos séculos, para nos virem buscar' (49).

10 Original: 'num navio iluminado de fogo para nos levar para a América' (50).

11 See more in James Fernandez, *Persuasions and Performances*, Chapter 1: 'Persuasions and Performances: Of the Beast in Every Body and the Metaphors of Everyman'.

straightforward. The act of predicating metaphors and of escaping the 'privacy of experience' involves a movement from inchoateness to actual predication – which is ultimately a way of attributing some identity upon ourselves and others (Fernandez 46). Metaphors do not simply express and convey meanings arbitrarily. Rather, metaphors arrange our phenomenological experience, bridging the inbetweenness of one's internal sensorial experience and external reality. Metaphors also allow us to become objects to ourselves and to others. For Fernandez, metaphors are performative and capable of influencing behavior. In other words, any act of communication whether oral or written strives to find the tropes that best achieve significance and diminish inchoateness. Food tropes, precisely because of their sensorial and universalizing quality, are therefore exceptional catalysts to short-circuit meaning and bring the reader closer to the agency of the protagonists and their experience of the world. Food tropes thus reduce the inchoate space between that which is verbalised and that which is experienced by characters such as Chiquinho.

Through food tropes, Chiquinho's childhood memories in the island of São Nicolau gain a sensorial texture. Like the immigrant longing for the taste of home in Sutton's article, adolescent Chiquinho longs for the taste of the past, for the 'emotional/embodyed plenitude' (125) that characterised his personal history. As Fernandez notes, 'metaphor is, like synesthesia, the translation of experience from one domain into another by virtue of a common factor which can be generalised between the experiences in the two domains', and, as Sutton adds, food is the ultimate synesthetic experience (12). Therefore, food metaphors evoke the utmost sensorial experience while also bridging communion between two domains, in this case, the author's intentions and the reader's interpretation, as well as Chiquinho's childhood memories and his eventual decision to depart. As a result, the reader is able to more firmly grasp the sensorial nature of the author's narrative. It is for this reason that food is such a potent metaphor in the articulation of Chiquinho's food-laden past and the devastating present of famine.

This search for meaning and predication is also relevant in Chiziane's character construction. Chiziane pens her narrative in *Niketche* from an urban, post-independence context where diverse cultural backgrounds coalesce, competing with modern middle-class livelihoods associated with service-sector jobs, monogamy, and formal education. The very act of predicating is undermined by conflicting cultural expectations surrounding gender, sexuality and marriage. Unlike *Chiquinho*, household sustenance lacks a direct correlation with rural production and the success of harvests, but rather equates with the ability to acquire well-paid jobs. In modern Mozambique, the state remains a large employer that all too often favors the job security of males. In other words, food in this novel correlates with

the security of having a reliable job, which for women often translates into having a 'reliable husband'. Food is entwined with the ability to harness or control a husband in a context where monogamous relationships hold legal status yet polygamy is customary. This is a disjuncture similar to what we find in *Chiquinho* in relation to a livelihood reliant on agriculture but only sustained by migration. However, while a failed colonial system and island survival based on agricultural production underpin *Chiquinho*; in *Niketche*, disjuncture entails postcolonial transformations that affect the most intimate relationships, particularly marriage and sexuality, and that nevertheless involve food.

Chiziane's novel reveals the intricacies of modern day polygamy in an environment where the main character and narrator, Rami, is the only 'legitimate' wife and is, as such, under law, entitled to her husband's undivided affection. However, in a world rapidly changing, and in a country entering hurriedly into the global economic sphere, marriage and kinship obligations are shifty and volatile, especially in Mozambique's patriarchal southern region – where the narrative of *Niketche* is situated. As the protagonist attempts to find answers about her changing body and changing relationship with her husband, food becomes the primary mechanism to navigate and unmask her husband's betrayal. While in *Chiquinho*, food tropes provide the reader with a glimpse into the protagonist's childhood and also into an island universe where survival is undermined, conversely, in *Niketche*, food tropes illuminate the intimate spaces of relationships and the disintegration of idealised, albeit Western, notions of monogamy.

Chiziane's novel highlights the interconnected nature between modernisation and gender. In *Niketche*, Chiziane exposes the consequences of modernisation in Mozambique, and the ways in which the modernisation processes contributed to the reformulation of gender roles that continued to destabilise the power of women.<sup>12</sup> These transformations become manifest in the patriarchal social structures often appropriated from southern Mozambique and Bantu cultures, such as the Ronga and Changana, to the benefit of manipulating men.<sup>13</sup> In other words, Chiziane's exposé departs from an urban environment that selectively reappropriates traditional customs of polygamy into modern conceptions of monogamy. In these reappropriations, men retain one main family or primary home and the façade of monogamy while simultaneously

12 See more on the undermining of women's power in Chapter 3: 'Family Forms & Gender Policy in Mozambique' and Chapter 5: 'Gender in Colonial & Post-colonial Discourses (2003)', in Signe Arnfred's *Sexuality and Gender Politics in Mozambique: Rethinking Gender in Africa*.

13 See more on male manipulation of Bantu cultural traditions in Southern Mozambique in Signe Arnfred's *Sexuality and Gender Politics in Mozambique: Rethinking Gender in Africa*.

maintaining relationships with other women, usually younger. The influx of monetary gains through employment provides men with access to a middle-class urban status, while women lag behind in access to stable positions in the workforce. Urban women who cannot secure financially stable jobs therefore depend on men for their subsistence and sustenance. Through food tropes, Chiziane renders clearer for the reader the unraveling of Rami's womanhood as she navigates the fractures between the ideal and the real, dependency and agency, monogamy and polygamy, patriarchal control of female sexuality and the unrestrained sexual appetite of males.

In Changana and Ronga tradition and throughout much of Africa, women tended to the farm while also being in charge of agricultural production, household chores and child rearing. However, this relatively equitable division of labor that existed among co-wives in polygamous marriages, shifted once global capitalism infiltrated the Mozambican economy.<sup>14</sup> Given Rami's modern upbringing in Mozambique, in which wholeness aligns with her adoption of Christian and monogamous ideals (ideals imposed by European colonists), she is repulsed at the idea of sharing a husband in the rural traditional sense. During one of her many internal monologues, Rami articulates this resistance through a metaphor of food: 'a husband is not a loaf of bread that one slices with a bread knife, in order to give a slice to each wife' (21).<sup>15</sup> Rami believes that, according to Christian traditions, she is entitled to the whole loaf. From her initial discovery of Tony's other wives, food becomes the syntax through which she comes to terms with the extent of her own denial. As a Christian-educated woman, Rami's initial refusal to share resources and her husband with other women indicates her dissonant expectations and the fractures between modern conceptions of monogamy and actual practices. There is a direct connection between Rami's initial unwillingness to share her husband like she would share a loaf of bread with other women and Rami's financial dependence on Tony. In comparison, while Chiquinho departs from a harmonious childhood or a place of wholeness, Rami departs from middle-age disruption and loss. She stands for every woman who has adapted to change and adopted a multiplicity of competing roles, but lives side by side with men who have yet to assimilate to the evolution of womanhood and the changing world.

Food tropes serve to expose the altering institution of marriage in southern Mozambique and guide Rami into her own awakening as an independent woman, or rather, into her individual space of wholeness. Throughout the novel, Rami philosophises about marriage in successive monologues where

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14 See more on the history of polygamy in Part I of Signe Arnfred's *Sexuality and Gender Politics in Mozambique: Rethinking Gender in Africa*.

15 Original: 'Marido não é pão que se corta com faca de pão, uma fatia por cada mulher' (21).

she positions her own life history in relation to her mother's, her rivals', and other Mozambican women of various regions. Marriage is both a gift and a curse for women. The institution of marriage provides monetary stability for women through the husband's employment as well as through the inheritance (or, *lobolo*) that the husband presents in exchange for a woman's hand in marriage, but only under the condition of their subservience to their provider. Rami frequently conveys this notion of female subordination in exchange for subsistence through metaphors of food: 'in marriage, womens' hands are like opened sea shells on the shoreline, begging for love, bread, salt, and soap' (244).<sup>16</sup> What this metaphor also expresses is that like tumbling shells along the shore, agency for women is limited and often unobtainable without the material independence marriage provides. For this reason Rami exclaims that: 'from early on I learned that man is bread, the communion wafer, fire in the middle of women dying of cold' (57).<sup>17</sup> While women are made voiceless subalterns, the narrative exposes the ways in which males garner unfair advantages in the realm of economic opportunities and amorous relationships. Throughout the narrative, Tony manipulates conflicting but coexisting colonial and postcolonial notions of both monogamy and polygamy – following neither of them – to maximise sexual gluttony, while women, particularly those who play the role of faithful wives and reliable mothers, are left famished.

Tony embodies conflicting notions of marriage through a partial monogamous façade in which his first wife Rami holds public precedence vis-à-vis others; she manages his well-being and household, but not his affection. Likewise, his position as a wage earner and chief of police affords him the stature and economic stability to live out a polygamous fantasy with a growing number of women from diverse backgrounds, each spicing up his appetite for youth and beauty. As a result, Tony procreates often, bearing children like 'pumpkin seeds, multiplying by the dozen like a nest of mice' (97).<sup>18</sup> Just as the pumpkin that reproduces wildly without engaging its progeny, Tony is blinded by his own patriarchal sense of entitlement, unable to care for the seeds of his fleeting relationships.

As head wife, Rami becomes the decision-maker of the household, retaliating in order to reclaim the respect she deserves. Part of her retaliation involves consulting a *conselheira*, a local diviner or wizard, who informs her that in order to keep her husband engaged and interested, gastronomical

16 Original: 'No casamento, as mãos das mulheres são conchas abertas sobre a areia do mar, mendigando amor, pão, sal e sabão' (244).

17 Original: 'Desde cedo aprendi que homem é pão, é hóstia, fogueira no meio de fêmeas morrendo de frio' (57).

18 Original: 'sementes de abóbora, multiplicando-se às duzias como ninhadas de ratos' (97).

and sexual satisfaction is key; it is paramount to 'capture him in the kitchen and in bed' (45).<sup>19</sup> The synchrony of bedroom and kitchen essentialises Tony's masculinity outside the framework of complex and meaningful relationships. Dependent on satiating carnal appetite, Tony devours women's bodies without ever fully satiating himself. He eats but he does not provide the means to sustain relationships and, as a result, his search for women ends at every meal. Moreover, as the diviner explains, capturing a man through the sensorial nature of the kitchen entails adherence to gendered rules of food preparation. The ingestion of specific foods – prepared by deprived women – serves to expose the rudimentary nature of patriarchy so easily essentialised through the equation of sex with food. As Sutton articulates, food is 'experienced in terms of a 'burning desire' that is satiated through a sensory experience evoking local knowledge' (125). Therefore, according to the narrative, when women prepare 'the feet, wings and the neck' of the chicken for themselves, while the 'men are served the chicken thighs. The gizzard. [. . .] A man is conquered through his gluttony' (45).<sup>20</sup> This gluttony reconnects a man to his sense of masculinity and in this reconnection, he traverses a 'domain of experience' that distances him from fragmentation and propels him along the continua towards a space of wholeness (Sutton 125). In other words, the specific consumption of the gizzard, considered a delicacy, 'evok[es] local knowledge' and returns him to the 'whole' of fulfilled masculinity (ibid.). As a result of following the sorcerer's additional advice: 'If you want to make a love potion, do so with what they like most. The gizzard' (45).<sup>21</sup> The imbued chicken part, therefore, becomes a trope that stands for masculinity as an ingestible organ.

The gizzard is a prized delicacy in the diverse world of Bantu cultural traditions. During meals prepared by women, the gizzards remain reserved for the man of the house, or, in some cases, an elder or a visitor of status. Such traditions have also been observed by anthropologists elsewhere in Africa and are related to beliefs about female fertility. Chiziane also correlates the hierarchy of chicken parts with that of the members of the household. Accordingly, delicacies are served to men, the providers. Albeit the least desirable part according to Western standards, the gizzard is among the most vitamin and protein-rich parts of the chicken standing for the recycling patriarchal structure. In this vein, Chiziane's narrative joins other African women authors, such as Senegal's Mariama Bâ, Nigeria's Buchi Emecheta and Cameroon's

19 Original: 'prend[er]-o na cozinha e na cama' (45).

20 Original: 'as patas, as asas e o pescoço. Aos homens servem-se as coxas de frangos. A moela.[. . .] Um homem vence-se pela sua gula' (45).

21 Original: 'Se queres fazer uma magia de amor, faça-a naquilo que eles mais gostam. A moela' (45).

Calixthe Beyala, in their critique of polygamy and patriarchal structures (Leite 77).

Frustrated by the diviner's position about food-gendered hierarchies, Rami seeks advice from her mother-in-law. After delivering a long lecture to the wives, in order to educate them in the culinary arts of pleasing their husband, Tony's mother claims, 'You should all serve your husband on your knees, as the law requires. Never serve him food straight from the pot, always serve him food on plates. He must never touch dirty dishes nor enter the kitchen' (126)<sup>22</sup> and the list of rules goes on, recycling once again the diviner's recommendations. Paradoxically, in abiding by such food regulations, Chiziane shows how women also implicate themselves in the perpetuation of patriarchal structures.

Throughout the protagonist's attempt to gain agency along with her co-wives, food marks the stages of Rami's awakening, of her return to the whole, in a way that is reminiscent of Lopes' narrative. The whole, in the case of Rami, encompasses a space of self-liberation and solidarity with other women. In this sense, Chiziane's narrative joins the path constructed and elaborated decades earlier in Lopes' text, where food was found tethered to Chiquinho's coming-of-age in a society under colonial rule. These parallel paths reveal that both works, despite their different genres and historical contexts, face departure. The first entails a geographical departure from a life of scarcity perpetuated by a colonial order that entraps generations of Cabo Verdeans in poverty. The second involves a departure from (post)colonial gender inequality entwined with emotional and material deprivation. In both cases, departure entails finding significance outside the protagonist's present social order and predicating existent tropes into new subjectivities and shifting relationships.

### **Food Destabilizing Order: Feeding Consciousness**

As the main characters of *Chiquinho* and *Niketche* gain self-awareness, hunger breaks the linkage between despondent destinies. In fact, it is the catalyst that propelled both Chiquinho and Rami into action or, in Fernandez' words, into 'performances'. While acting as a destabilizing mechanism within the social order, Chiquinho and Rami's actions reveal new possibilities for survival. In both narratives there is a confrontation with or questioning of the status quo, of tradition, and of the habitual order of things. In *Chiquinho*, material survival and self-realisation are undermined by food shortages and

22 Original: 'Devem servir o vosso marido de joelhos, como a lei manda. Nunca servi-lo na panela, mas sempre em pratos. Ele não pode tocar na loiça nem entrar na cozinha' (126).

a failed colonial system. Food deprivation becomes the catalyst for individual change and, ultimately, migration to America. In *Niketche*, Rami crafts her own female emancipation by first confronting and unmasking the privileges of masculinity inherent at every meal. Before deconstructing the semiotics of these open-ended conclusions for these main characters, we must first delve further into their respective journeys.

In *Chiquinho*, São Vicente represents an epicenter of imported goods and class differences based on commerce, which led to a middle-class detachment from the crippling reality facing the poor and the hungry in the outskirts of Mindelo and in the rest of the islands. Communal practices of eating with colleagues at a table setting along with other ‘maneiras civilizadas’, or ‘civilized manners’ (75), to which Chiquinho was not accustomed, characterised middle-class meals in São Vicente, where Chiquinho spent his high school years. As a result, Chiquinho becomes transformed by the urban bourgeois lifestyle as he joins a household with the means to buy imported foods and to practice European table manners. Food and etiquette entwine, representing the different island hierarchies and their respective symbolic repertoire enacted at the table. At first, he appears to others, ‘very noble in the act of eating’ (75),<sup>23</sup> successfully performing bourgeois etiquette. If eating foods associated with home is a ‘sensory experience evoking local knowledge’, (125) according to Sutton, then what Chiquinho experiences in São Vicente is the creation of a new knowledge. Further, if there is an, ‘imagined community implied in the act of eating food ‘from home’ [ . . . ] in the embodied knowledge that others are eating the same food’ (126) then his new adopted eating customs serve to accentuate the distance between him and the domain of his rural home on São Nicolau. Over time, Chiquinho espouses the more cosmopolitan habits and becomes at ease on São Vicente Island. His transformation into a young man of high aspirations coming of age in colonial Cabo Verde will be determinant to his ultimate decision to depart his homeland.

Chiquinho’s time on São Vicente is a transformative experience that alters his expectations as well as his romantic aspirations. At the dinner table, for example, Chiquinho observes the cosmopolitan eating habits of the women around him, especially as he sets his eyes on Nuninha, who entrances him with her delicate table manners and suggestively sensuous eating: ‘for days I didn’t want to leave after dinner’ (77), he states with affection.<sup>24</sup> The abundance of diverse foods readily available in São Vicente coupled with its sexual undertones upholds a specific social order, or, a cosmopolitan one, that contrasts

23 Original: ‘muito fidalgo no comer’ (75).

24 ‘por dias não quis sair depois de jantar’ (77).

with the general experience of the majority of the rural Cabo Verdean population. There, Chiquinho gains a political awareness and the intellectual know-how to express his inner battles. Part and parcel with gaining political consciousness is the awareness that access to food is a human right, albeit not enunciated in such terms. Hence, upon his returning to São Nicolau, the famine he witnesses in every other household represents the breakdown of social order replaced by the ubiquity of death and despair. Significantly, while his return to São Nicolau is framed as a return home, famine alters the very possibility of returning. A rising tide of food beggars arrive at his door and the sheer inability to heal from famine becomes visceral. The protagonist finds himself displaced and homeless in his own homeland. Food scarcity thus serves as a salient mechanism that propels Chiquinho to combat fragmentation as he later embarks on a voyage in search of the means to return himself and his fellow Cabo Verdeans to a place of wholeness.

In contrast, *Niketche* does not portray a colonial order affected by famine. Yet food insecurity plays a salient role in the ability of the co-wives to feed their children born out of Tony's polyamorous and subsequently, neglectful relationships. Tony inequitably divides of scarce resources among the co-wives and children, all of whom live in separate households. It is thus up to the wives to pursue their respective financial independence through the establishment of small business ventures, aided by the money Rami receives from Tony as first wife, as a means to maintain their households. Essentially, Rami is subsidizing the liberation of the women who she once considered to be her rivals. In so doing, Rami assists the co-wives in 'counter[ing] fragmentation of experience' (Sutton 122): she helps lift them out of emotional and material poverty and away from inchoateness. Reflecting upon this dire situation, which fails to stray far from the situations of the other wives, they are therefore propelled towards the pursuit of financial independence. In other words, the metaphor of hunger drives the wives into action or 'performance' along Fernandez's continua. Their predication is then molded by the sensorial experience of commonality and community among the women they work alongside in the market. As a result, they gain social confidence and financial independence.

This financial independence is also a quest for sustenance for their numerous children. As a result of Tony's neglect, the children become Fernandez' forgotten pronouns. Thus, they are at risk of perpetuating the same patriarchal schemes of inequity of their father. Co-wife Saly conveys this ambiguity of modern notions of family. She speaks of her children, as well as all of the children implicated in Tony's polygamy, through food tropes. The children are 'Unprotected eggs. Fallen eggs. Rotten, marginal eggs [...].' She asks, 'What kind of future can we hope for, where our children

are concerned?’ (106).<sup>25</sup> The articulation of the status of the children born from Tony’s sexual escapades through this metaphor of rotten eggs begs a sensorial response from the reader. The children represented as such allow the reader to more fully comprehend the metaphysics of famine imbedded within Chiziane’s narrative.

The women of *Niketche* manipulate food not only for the sake of feeding their children but also to incite sexual desire. Food and sex are entangled, as gastronomical manipulation plays a central role in the art of pleasing and retaining men, ‘counter[ing] fragmentation of experience’, and readjusting imbalance within amorous relationships. As mentioned earlier, in her exploration of gastronomy to stew a ‘magia de amor’, or a ‘love potion’, Rami seeks out the advice of other women – from the *conselheira* to other wives. After listening to the *conselheira*’s advice, for example, Rami exclaims, ‘I learned all of the things of European women, how to cook angel cake, sewing, good manners, everything of the living room. Nothing of the bedroom!’ (46).<sup>26</sup> Frustrated, she takes matters into her own hands, cooking magic recipes and outfitting herself with clothes that evoke ‘ripe fruit. Cherry. Cashew. Apple’ (49),<sup>27</sup> evoking northern Makhuwa traditions of mixing sex with food as a means to show, in the words of Arnfred, ‘gratitude to their husband by cooking for him and inviting him to have sex’ (261),<sup>28</sup> although, to no avail. Rather, successful seduction entails the constant reaffirmation of the husband as head of the household. For example, Rami’s mother-in-law insists that the women, including Rami, ‘never eat the head of the fish, nor that of the cow, nor the goat, this is men’s food. The head of the animal represents the head of the family. The head of the family is the man’ (127).<sup>29</sup> While, on the one hand, adhering to these cultural notions accentuates the gendered divide, on the other hand, it demonstrates that women are able to express agency through food preparation.

In essence, the co-wives assert control over men through their control over meals. This is not without historical and cultural significance. In southern Mozambique, during colonial times and to escape forced labor, many Tsonga

25 Original: ‘Ovos desprotegidos. Ovos caídos. Ovos podres, marginais. Que futuro esperamos para estes nossos filhos?’ (106).

26 Original: ‘Aprendi todas aquelas coisas das damas europeias, como cozinhar bolinhos de anjos, bordar, boas maneiras, tudo coisas da sala. Do quarto, nada!’ (46).

27 Original: ‘fruta madura. Cereja. Caju. Maça’ (49).

28 See more on Makhuwa traditions that entwine cooking and sex as part of seducing a husband in the Ribáuè region of Mozambique in Chapter 13: ‘Sex, Food & Female Power’ in Signe Arnfred’s *Sexuality and Gender Politics in Mozambique: Rethinking Gender in Africa*.

29 Original: ‘Não comam nunca a cabeça de peixe, nem de vaca, nem de cabrito, que é comida de homem. A cabeça do animal representa a cabeça da família. A cabeça da família é o homem’ (127).

men (encompassing the cultural subgroups Ronga, Tswa and Shangana or Changana) migrated to work in the mines of South Africa, leaving women behind to tend the fields. But in these rural patrilineal and patrilocal societies where women relocate to their husbands' household after marriage, it is also through men and marriage that they acquire land rights, often through the *lobola*.<sup>30</sup> Gender relations have suffered from this legacy. During the war, women became dispossessed of their economic base and of their land rights, forced to join the slums and poor urban areas of Maputo. The patrilineal system and male inheritance are still strong dimensions of customary law and have left its imprint in gender relations, making divorce particularly difficult. Rami's middle-age awakening in urban Maputo where patrilineal land rights can no longer be enforced, therefore entails tracing the source of her subordination and searching for answers from her mother and mother-in-law. The latter upholds her son's dominance and entitlements, thus reflecting the paradoxes of rural patrilineal customs in contemporary Mozambique.

Tony's ultimate betrayal manifests in the faking of his own death in order to spend time in France with another girlfriend, Gaby. With the news that the wives are now widows, they are forced to undergo the grueling widdowings rituals, which inevitably involve food. Along with shaving Rami's head and tearing off her clothes, for example, her in-laws bathe Rami in oils with the scent of feces and rub burning ointments on her skin. Meanwhile, the other co-wives are served minuscule amounts of poorly boiled vegetables without salt. It eventually comes to light that Tony is alive and purposefully enacted his death as a punishment for the wives for expressing behavior in defiance to his patriarchal entitlements. They protest by evoking images of food: 'during this, you were speaking French, in a French restaurant, drinking French wine and eating French cheese' (237).<sup>31</sup> This marks the beginning of Tony's demise. His cruel act of vengeance thus becomes the catalyst for the wives' awakening as they then become active agents of their emancipation. Instead of rivaling each other, they become a united front marginalizing Tony from the realm of meals and domesticity. Eventually, all the co-wives besides Rami leave Tony to pursue their independence in new relationships: 'Lu, the desired one, [goes] into the arms of another with veil and wreath. Ju, the deceived, is crazily in love with an old Portuguese man full of money. Saly, the longed for, bewitched an Italian priest into leaving priesthood for his love of her. Mauá,

30 See: Newitt, Malyn, 'Chapter 18: Labour Migration to South Africa and Southern Rhodesia'. *A History of Mozambique*. Bloomington: Indiana UP. 1995. Print.

31 Original: 'enquanto isso, tu falavas francês, num restaurante francês, a beber vinho francês e a comer queijo francês' (237).

the loved, loves someone else' (331).<sup>32</sup> In so doing, the co-wives force the disintegration of the simultaneously farcical monogamy and distorted polygamy that they once fought so hard to uphold. In addition, as a consequence of the levirate widowing rituals, Rami carries a pregnancy from her brother-in-law, aptly named Levy. This pregnancy becomes the ultimate dismembering of Tony's masculinity, sending him 'toward the heart of the desert, toward the endless hell' (332).<sup>33</sup>

Traversing back to Cabo Verde, Lopes' text also portrays an emancipatory quest similar to that of the wives in *Niketche*. However, in *Chiquinho*, the quest for wholeness is impossible to pursue in his homeland. In order to return to the whole, away from food shortage and its devastating effects, Chiquinho must journey across the Atlantic towards opportunity and abundance. While food tropes highlight gender inequality and dissonance in contemporary Mozambique, food in Lopes' narrative highlights the inadequacy of the colonial regime while propelling the protagonist towards an emancipatory voyage. These different but parallel narratives of emancipation meet at the vertex where both protagonists come to terms with the injustices that entrap their subjectivities and, in doing so, become agents of change. In both narratives, change requires a departure or a voyage in order to return – not to the same place – but to a place of novel possibilities.

### Edible Departures

*Niketche* and *Chiquinho* are both stories of emancipation: *Chiquinho* corresponds to the classical format of a *bildungsroman* while *Niketche* is a coming-of-age tale of a middle-aged woman, Rami, from southern Mozambique, who finds in the upholding of polygamous traditions the tools to avenge her husband's neglect and deceit. Rami crafts her own independence, as well as a newly founded identity, by leaving her marriage and departing from the imposed patriarchal social order. In her coming of age – a journey marked by food rituals and practices – Rami realises her own path towards freedom from the physical and emotional confines in which her husband kept her. Dethroned, Tony is mother, while Rami is, in a sense, free to pursue her individual desires and move towards a space of wholeness as an independent agent.

32 Original: 'A Lu, a desejada, partiu para os braços de outro com véu e grinalda. A Ju, a enganada, está loucamente apaixonada por um velho português cheio de dinheiro. A Saly, a apetecida, enfeitou o padre italiano que até deixou a batina só por amor a ela. A Mauá, a amada, ama outro alguém' (331).

33 Original: 'em direcção ao coração do deserto, ao inferno sem fim' (332).

Identity formation for Chiquinho, however, is marked by a different desire. Chiquinho's coming of age entails the realisation that departure and survival are correlative and an integral part of his identity formation as a Cabo Verdean man. The maritime voyage on the ocean route to the US appears as the only possible and very necessary departure. As he comes of age, America in his imagination becomes a place where he can heal from the devastation of famine, attend a university and learn to provide for those back home. Against the tropes of unsustainability and continued fragmentation, Chiquinho is propelled towards the cyclical voyage taken by his patrilineal kin or, in other words, he is prompted into performance. Accepting this departure and the responsibility of caring for those back home, Chiquinho embarks on a larger journey of sustaining not only his family, but also his people as a whole in an effort to reignite the sentiments of conviviality and wholeness so characteristic, in his eyes, of the Cabo Verdean people.

Food underlies the coming of age in both novels, emphasizing the necessity to depart to a better place – an imagined, idealised, bountiful America as well as a place safe from the crippling deceptions of patriarchy. In *Niketche*, one by one each co-wife achieves economic independence supported by ties of solidarity to each other. It is within this female solidarity, beyond the pettiness of jealousy and competition, that Chiziane highlights the agency of her female characters as they discover a system of support in each other and celebrate their common cause, asserting: 'We shall teach men the beauty in all the forbidden things: the pleasure of crying, the flavor of chicken feet and wings, the beauty of fatherhood, and the magic inherent to the rhythm of the mortar and pestle pounding the grain' (292).<sup>34</sup> This call for female solidarity, vividly inscribed through the male sensorial experience of female foods, brings Chiziane closer to that place where patriarchal structures are subverted and redeemed in a future space of gender equality. This literary use of food thus drives the characters along the metaphoric continua, bringing them closer to the whole in their search for a social system and a space where women rightfully gain agency. As food tropes evoke a sensorial experience, closing the gap between the author's intentions and the reader's experience, the reader joins Rami through her journey towards the whole, a space away from the weight of the proverbial gizzard.

Chiquinho, in the midst of death and devastation, sets out to relive the journey of his ancestors through the same route that took his own father

34 Original: 'a partir de hoje, caminharemos na marcha de todas as mulheres desprotegidas pela sorte, multiplicaremos a força dos nossos braços e seremos heroínas tombando na batalha do pão de cada dia. [ . . . ] Ensinaresmos aos homens a beleza das coisas proibidas: o prazer do choro, o paladar das asas e patas de galinha, a beleza da paternidade, a magia do ritmo do pilão a moer o grão' (292).

back and forth between island survival and migration. In this perpetuation of intra-generational migration, Chiquinho will reproduce Cabo Verdean survival through working-class wages earned in America. Lopes' eternal movement to and from the US does not provide a solution, like the female march of solidarity found in Chiziane's novel where women in the end come to a better place in a changed society. Chiquinho's society is a colonial one where the 'crioulos' or creole people, as Lopes states, had to find their own Christian way to the cemetery, passing in front of the church to receive the priest's fleeting blessing while the church doors remained closed to those who died of hunger. Upon his departure, in between goodbyes and his grandmother's sobbing, his younger brother offers him a chicken breast wrapped in embroidering thread. He tells him: 'Brother Chiquinho only tear the breast apart when you arrive in America [. . .] and you will find out that I am the one who cares for you the most' (209).<sup>35</sup> Ironically, Chiquinho departs carrying the gift of food in a time of famine.

However poor, Chiquinho did not leave his island empty-handed, the embroidering twine that wrapped the offer of his brother's gift also contained the thread to a place of possible return. Through this scope, food tropes are the essential mechanisms that allow the authors to unmask the fractures within colonial and postcolonial modalities of oppression. Food as an underlying trope comes to represent the inchoate site of social plenitude where satiation corresponds to a process of physical and symbolic departures in the inevitable search for the whole.

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35 Original: 'Mano Chiquinho só quebra o peitinho na América [. . .] Vai ver, que eu é que quero Mano Chiquinho mais' (173-4).

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