**Biography**

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**Abstract**

Mobilizing the immanent critical potential of food as well as of Derrida’s deconstruction of *mondialisation* with its interruption of totalizing understandings of globalization, this article re-examines Luc Moullet’s 1978 documentary *Genèse d’un repas* which follows how tuna from Senegal, eggs from Amiens and Ecuadorian bananas reach French plates. Eurocentric Marxist and post-Marxist analyses of these economic flows are bought at once into focus and into question. The analysis uncovers imbricated histories of European exploitation (the slave trade, colonialism, la Françafrique). Commercial (Banania) and literary intertexts (Senghor and Fanon) evoked by misleading branding reveal a world of European racism still in process. Although self-reflexive, Moullet’s filmmaking is also open to critical interruption. Nonetheless the film emerges as an immanent critique of the specificities of historical and evolving power relations of both filmmaking and the historical, cultural and economic processes of the Eurocentric food industry, interrupting the universalizing dynamics of globalization.

**Keywords**

Food

Luc Moullet

Documentary film

*mondialisation*

globalization/*globalisation*

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***Mondialisation* and the Immanent Critical Potential of Food: Luc Moullet’s *Genèse d’un repas* (1978)**

Luc Moullet’s 1978 documentary *Genèse d’un repas* opens as its director and his partner Maria Antonietta Pizzorno sit down to eat. (1) If their meal of tuna canned in Senegal, French eggs and bananas from Ecuadorian plantations rather stretches the definition of a 'meal', Moullet’s voiceover leaves no doubt as to the motivations of the film:

Après le thon, nous mangerons une omelette, et des bananes. Vous les reconnaissez mais vous ne savez pas ce que c’est. Du thon, une omelette, des bananes. Et moi non plus, je ne le sais pas. Pour apprendre, j’ai demandé quarante millions de centimes à un organisme, le Centre du cinéma (01:49–02:17).

Recently, Moullet’s examination of the processes involved in getting three foodstuffs onto French plates has been lauded by Sally Shafto as providing prescient but enduringly pertinent critical insights into processes involved in globalization, remarkable at a time when the development of the ‘global village’ was positively heralded (Shafto, 2010). Meanwhile, Audrey Evrard develops the intersecting argument that ‘the intellectual significance and continued relevance of *Origins of a Meal* to today’s debates lies in Luc Moullet’s persistent reliance on colonialism as an ideological grid relevant to the understanding of globalization – a concept still ill-defined in the late 1970s’ (Evrard 2012). (2) These colonial leftovers are indeed critically significant, but interpretive and critical potential of *Genèse d’un repas* is limited by considering the film through the twenty-first century understanding of globalization – a universalizing, homogenizing sphere of communications, economics and geopolitics and involving the imposition of Anglo-American economic and cultural patterns. This article seeks to open up this unexploited potential by drawing on that bound up with the subject identified by Moullet: food.

Food itself is far from being a homogenizing or universalizing force, as demonstrated by its role and the meanings which necessarily exceed Moullet’s intentions for it in *Genèse d’un repas*. To be sure, food is a physiological necessity, but it also it carries infinite yet indefinite and interlinked traces of meanings – social, cultural and ideological – which, like the dynamic but uncertain processes of metabolism, affect past, present and future experiences. The incorporation of food is always psychologically ambivalent, for eating at once brings possibilities of pleasure and danger and power and weakness; it simultaneously constitutes and breaches identity; and involves the assertion of individuality as well as of coercion into a group. Examining Moullet’s use of food and drawing on its immanent critical potential, the following analysis opens up critical perspectives on French alimentary exploitation across the world, and in doing so interrupts the assumption of an inevitable march of globalization.

Some terminological and theoretical clarification is perhaps necessary, however, before these analyses. *Genèse d’un repas* begins and concludes by filming the filmmaker eating his meal, a meal to which the camera also periodically returns as Moullet’s voiceover relates his experience of tracking its genealogy, and that of the exploitation involved in the arrival of its components onto French plates. Such a point of departure might well be dismissed as anachronistically Francocentric, particularly in relation to the global market forces twenty-first century critics perceive in the film. However, focusing on the Franco-European fulcrum of the film and of the food businesses Moullet tracks destabilizes the Anglo-American hegemony implicit in the current understanding of the word ‘globalization’. Indeed *Genèse d’un repas* carries a future anterior trace of Jacques Derrida’s strategic deconstruction of the French terms *globalisation* and *mondialisation.* (3) For Derrida, French these words are not synonymous (or respectively damned and promoted in the interests of *l’exception française*). The ‘globe’ in *globalisation* carries a sense of the earth as an all-encompassing whole, spherical, complete. It implies universal political economic and linguistic homogeneity: a totalizing Anglo-American ‘homo-hegemony’ which elides any sense of national, cultural, social or religious difference, past, present or future. To accept the term *globalisation* unquestioningly is to deny history, memory and the imbalances concealed by the narrative of universalized homogeneity. However, *mondialisation*, from the Latin ‘mundus’, lacks this sense of geometric self-identity, instead implying a world in process, a becoming-world, where social, historical and religious memories remain in play. This sense of the world is of course Eurocentric and Judaeo-Christian, and brings with its own exploitative and repressive traces, but it is a world which has the potential of changing horizons: philosophical, social and historical. For Derrida, the genealogy of *mondialisation* interrupts the pervasive, totalizing logic of theories and discourses of globalization (or *globalisation*), countering their sense of inevitability, opening up to a world of immanent critical potential that simultaneously enables a deconstruction of globalization and an autodeconstruction of Eurocentric *worldwide-ization* (Derrida 1998, 2001a, 2001b, 2002). As Victor Li explains, ‘The importance of establishing *mondialisation*'s Euro-Christian provenance is that it enables a deconstructive genealogical examination of globalization together with its ethico-politico-juridical concepts of national sovereignty and territory, cosmopolitanism, human rights, and international law’ (Li, 2007). Thus, if Derrida suggests that *mondialisation* may interrupt *globalisation*, at the same time its own Eurocentric universalizing narrative is brought into question: an autodeconstruction which opens up the potential for a non-hegemonic, non-teleological world in process.

With this immanent interruptive potential in mind, this article examines the interruptive potentialities of the food already identified above through that produced and consumed in the world of *Genèse d’un repas*. Instead of homogeneity, the genealogical investigation reveals historical, social and cultural differences in across three locations, all linked by French consumption. The analysis uncovers the specificities and ambivalence of imbricated histories of European exploitation (the slave trade, colonialism and La Françafrique). Eurocentric Marxist and post-Marxist analyses of these economies are bought at once into focus and into question. Commercial and literary intertexts evoked by misleading branding reveal a world of European racism still in process, and Moullet’s own filmmaking, for all its self-reflexivity is open to critical interruption. *Genèse d’un repas* emerges as an immanent critique of the specificities of historical and evolving power relations of both filmmaking and the historical, cultural and economic processes bound up in the Eurocentric food industry, interrupting the universalizing dynamics of globalization, and begging the question of the world to come.

**Interrupting *Globalisation*: A Long History of Eurocentric Exploitation**

Moullet has recently described how his focus in *Genèse d’un repas* involved a deliberate distancing from post-1968 French documentaries on the class struggle: (4)

A la suite de Mai 68, les films militants fleurissaient, mais ils manquaient souvent de précision: ils parlaient d’oppression et de conflits sans retourner à la source, le travail. C’est la raison pour laquelle je suis allé en Amérique du Sud, en Afrique et en Picardie pour voir comment ça se passait réellement, sans idées préconçues (Blottière, 2010).

If Moullet chooses food as the means of getting to grips with work, taking him from his French base to Ecuador and Senegal, food also (and perhaps unintentionally) expresses ambivalence, here in relation to Marxism, one of the most famous Eurocentric totalizing theories. On the one hand, the exposure in *Genèse d’un repas* of the exploitation and alienation entailed in getting eggs, bananas and tuna onto French plates recalls Marx’s and Engel’s assertion: ‘life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself’ (Marx and Engels, 1982: 48). If food is now a commodity (and indeed a fetish), it was the first surplus good, the first to become a form of capital, and thence a form of symbolic exchange. Yet the film also invites an immanent critique of this Eurocentric theory *par excellence* and its recent developments, since as the contradictions and ambivalences of the work that goes into bring the components of Moullet’s meal to France are revealed, the actions of unions as well as the exploitation of workers across the world are brought into question.

Moullet’s montage cuts between the exploitative, wasteful and health-prejudicing working practices and conditions in the food industries of France, Senegal and Ecuador. In Ecuador, (better paid) men work alongside women and children, on plantations as well as in new processing plants, sometimes into the small hours. Children in Machala are also part of the army of stevedores piling double-stacked banana boxes onto ships bound for Europe at breakneck speed, whipped up by the incentive of piecework, and storing up a range of health problems for later life. This is a far cry from the union-regulated eight-hour day of Dieppois dockers, who oversee the mechanical unloading of packaged fruit, and enjoy sickness benefits and a salary four times greater than the earnings of their Ecuadorian counterparts (yet fear the competition from cheaper overseas workers). On French-owned tuna boats, similar earning disparities pertain between white and black crew. Effectively, colonial apartheid prevails, with the Africans literally *under* workers, both in terms of tasks and lodging. On return to Dakar, the tuna catch (along with that caught off the coast of France) is processed in vast Franco-Senegalese factories where despite mechanized production lines, women stuff fish into cans with their bare hands. Yet they may sit and sing or chat to relieve the monotony of their work, whilst at the unionized egg-processing plant in Brittany the all-female workers must stand and are forbidden to talk in the managerial belief that silence will increase productivity.

This ‘benefit’ of verbal relief notwithstanding, the voiceover draws attention to the way the Dakar production line resembles a child’s construction toy, underscoring the cost of human suffering, particularly in Senegal and Ecuador, incurred before the food arrives in France:

Notre effort pour comprendre l’ingéniosité de la chaîne, et le pittoresque de son côté jouet dans la chaîne de montage des boîtes de thon, ou dans la quatrième chaîne de la banane, le conditionnement à Rungis pour les supermarchés, tend à nous faire oublier la cruauté de ce travail, qui engloutit la vie de centaines de millions d’hommes (12:38–12:58).

Further imbalance is revealed as effective campaigning for workers’ rights is implicitly positioned as a French prerogative (and sometimes, a luxury). So union-negotiated improvements frustrations and future hopes discussed by *syndicalistes* in Dieppe and Boulogne are juxtaposed with footage demonstrating how the power of Senegalese and Ecuadorian union officials is stymied. A Dakar shop steward comments that although the Socialist Party in Senegal has a majority, when it puts socialist theory into postcolonial practice, this involves accommodating foreign interests, not workers’ rights: ‘être un arbitre qui se veut socialiste, c’est une difficulté’ (42:20–42:22). An Ecuadorian union representative bemoans widespread collaboration with profit-making organizations (governmental and private): ‘En effet beaucoup de syndicats sont vendus’ (1:32:13–1:32:16).

Working conditions, eating patterns and health are also shown to be mutually and inequitably influencing. Senegalese crew on tuna boats can only afford to eat rice, whilst their French counterparts enjoy plenty of meat and vegetables. In Ecuador, clean running water is available for processing bananas but not in the workforce’s miserable living quarters, where there is also not enough to eat. A plantation owner remarks that bananas are the ‘aliment idéel pour le peuple’ (50:35–50:37), but admits that to sell them at prices low enough to benefit the hungry would be to prejudice profits from the lucrative export business. Meanwhile, bananas deemed not to make the European supermarket grade are dumped into the sea, and cows graze noisily on vast piles of discarded fruit. If the French stake in the African fish-canning trade has encouraged the poor of Dakar to start eating tuna rather than viewing it as unhealthy waste catch. This, it is implied, is a coercive change to traditional foodways. In Dakar’s *ville coloniale* eating habits have also shifted, as, in a jarring image of alienation, it is established that supermarkets are not only stocked with French food and bottled water, but also with tuna imported from Europe and Japan. These products are accessible only to those – ex-patriot or local – who profit from Franco-Senegalese postcolonial exploitation.

Patterns of European exploitation have been adopted in post-independence Africa, as the voiceover reminds spectators: ‘Notre capitalisme n’est pas seule en cause. Il y a des profiteurs locaux’ (1:12:06–1:12:11). Whilst Senegalese and Ecuadorian workers spend a high proportion of their meagre disposable income on food, owners, executives and civil servants profit from their labour. The voiceover makes calculation after calculation of exploitation and inequality, from disparities and insufficiencies in salaries and calories to profit and tax benefitting union representatives, governments, conglomerates and middlemen. Moullet is nonetheless careful to emphasize the deleterious effects of the food chains linking France and the countries it exploits, on the health not only on *victimes* but also on *bourreaux*:

Les Français bénéficient du chantage sur les salaires pratiqués dans le thon. En achetant à bas prix les produits du tiers monde, ils lui volent un pouvoir d’achat qu’ils gaspillent. Tous profitent. Exploiteur ou exploité. Riche ou pauvre. Toi spectateur. Tu profites. Et moi aussi. Mais notre gros pouvoir d’achat nous sert-il? Le juste milieu en calories se situe vers 2,400. En France on atteint 2,700 à 3,000. Une alimentation couteuse et abondante à base de lipides, provoque le cancer de tubes digestifs et le renouvellement accéléré des tissus qui entraînent des maladies cardiaques première cause de mortalité dans les pays riches (57:16–57:48)

Returning to France and interpellating the French spectator-consumer with this image of alimentary self-harm, *Genèse d’un repas* opens up critical questions of European exploitative processes and the failures of European thought and ideology, at the same time, immanently, bringing into question the inevitability of Anglo-American homo-hegemony.

**Critical Perspectives from a World of Eurocentric Exploitation**

French and European interests in the parts of the world explored in *Genèse d’un repas* have long fuelled by the exploitation of labour to produce food. Martiniquais banana growing and the postcolonial use of cheap Senegalese labour in the Dakar tuna trade have their roots in the slave trade (even after abolition in the nineteenth century, a port on the mouth of the Senegal river was an important holding post for African slaves bound for French Caribbean sugar plantations). Colonialism then brought the further exploitation of sugar, along with other foodstuffs: coffee, cocoa and bananas. Moreover, Moullet concludes his film by enumerating the non-food trades – from minerals to arms – likewise predicated on these previous cycles of European alimentary exploitation. Far from elucidating inexorable Anglo-American economic and cultural domination, *Genèse d’un repas* reflects how, in the late 1970s, France continues to play a dominant role in Senegal’s postcolonial economic and alimentary life. ‘L’Occupation de la France n’était rien à côté de celle du Sénégal par les français’ (1:02:55–1:03:00), asserts the voiceover, then identifying French governmental agencies in Dakar which have replaced almost like for like their colonial predecessors. The borders of former French colonies are argued to have been drawn up to promote competition and conflict, the examples cited are not only competition between Senegalese and Ivorian tuna factories that keep the cost of labour for French companies down, but also French sales of arms to Senegal: ‘L’ennemi du Sénégal ce n’est pas l’Algérie ou la Guinée, c’est la France capitaliste’ (1:04:22–1:04:24).

In a 1980 interview Moullet distinguishes between the origins of the alimentary products he explores: ‘Ici, ils proviennent de trois origines: la France, le « Tiers-monde français » et le « Tiers-Monde étranger »’ (Courant 1980). This bracketing off of the ‘Tiers-monde français’ pre-empts and supplements Jean-Xavier Verschave’s 1998 polemic on the ongoing French exploitation of France’s African ex-colonies: La Françafrique. Verschave’s grim play on words designates the political and economic ties of influence, which he contends have kept France’s African ex-colonies fuelling the interests of the Republic:

Plus d'une vingtaine de réseaux politiques, des officines mafieuses, de filières occultes, se partagent aujourd'hui le gâteau africain. Depuis quarante ans, la politique française en Afrique vise uniquement à exploiter les ressources naturelles et géopolitiques des pays francophones. […] C'est le plus long scandale de la République (Verschave, 1998; quatrième de couverture).

For Verschave, France’s longest-running scandal is Franco-African inter-governmental corruption, diversion of aid money and French fingers in the biggest, industrial pies (notably nuclear energy, transportation and logistics, telecoms, media and construction, oil and aluminium by the likes of Areva, Bolloré, Bouygues, Total-Elf and Pechiney). Alimentary metaphors notwithstanding, Verschave leaves food out of his analysis. Not so *Genèse d’un repas*.

In Dakar, a French tuna executive candidly describes how post-independence, 35% of Senegalese concerns are French-owned. Interviews and Moullet’s voiceover establish that French involvement in African tuna canning dates back to 1955, a pragmatic move to cut increasing labour costs in France, and that, even in the postcolonial economy, two thirds of the profit goes to the French middleman, and much less than a third to the Senegalese-owned factory. Oil is here (Total-Elf *peut être*?) in both footage and voiceover, but tellingly, it is linked at once to film and to by-products of the food industry:

Le film est fait de gélatine tiré de la peau des joues de veau ou de porc, sans lesquels il n’y’aura ni *Battleship Potemkin*, ni *Le Parain*, et le circuit du porc se ressemble à celui de l’œuf sans parler des ramifications secondaires. Le film provient surtout des dérivés de pétrole du tiers monde, des pays musulmans ou tropicaux dont les travailleurs ne touchent presque rien sur cet or noir (1:48:38–1:48:54).

The voiceover pre-answers its own question in no uncertain terms: ‘Le colonialisme est devenue plus perfectionné. L’indépendance au Sénégal, la nationalisation, qu’est-ce que ça veut dire? (1:05:53–1:06:00). Further emphasis comes from interviewees who explain how French companies have entered into partnerships with the Senegalese government, pragmatically such that there is precious little change to colonial working practices (or French profits). The voiceover comments sardonically of the tuna business: ‘L’infrastructure bretonne reste solide au Sénégal’ (1:07:07–1:07:08). It goes on to establish how this is at the cost of local workers: ‘A Dakar on paie les travailleurs deux ou trois fois moins que si le pays était resté français’ (1:09:26–1:09:29).

Thus seventeen years after Senegalese independence and twenty years before Verschave omits its long enduring history from his analysis of la Françafrique, Moullet identifies postcolonial French alimentary exploitation. This in turn invites the question of twenty-first century French players in the African *industrie agroalimentaire*, such as Cémoi (France’s biggest chocolate company dating back to 1814, and opening its first African processing plant in 1996); La Compagnie Fruitière (Africa’s biggest producer of bananas), and Groupe Mimran (comprising the Grand Moulins of Dakar and Abidjan and the Compagnie Sucrière Sénégalaise, founded 1945 and 1963, 1970 respectively and whose owner Jean-Claude Mimran is France’s thirty-fourth most wealthy businessman). (7) Here the sugar, banana and cocoa trades have their roots in the slave trade and colonialism, such that the exploitation of African foodstuffs is a scandal for France, long pre-dating the Republic yet enduringly interrupting the notion of an inevitably homogeneous global market. Indeed, this twenty-first century Franco-African axis has evolved from a long history of European exploitation, a process of *mondialisation*, but this critical appraisal of it at the same time reveals how it does not reflect the putative Anglo-American hegemony of *globalisation*.

**Racist Sleights of Brand: Fuelling the Business of European Racism**

If *Genèse d’un repas* opens up broad historical perspectives of European *worldwide-ization* extending backwards and forwards, Moullet's genealogical examination also brings to the fore small, contemporary details and the weave of past, present and future traces of exploitation bound up with them. Identifying how components of his ‘meal’ are presented to consumer with misleading branding, Moullet reveals how marketing boost profits and racism, drawing on colonial prejudices to maximize the profit from postcolonial exploitation. (4) As the film cuts between Senegal, France and Ecuador, a cumulative picture is established of the ways in which markets feed and cater to French consumer prejudices. One plantation owner explains that his bananas are labeled with three different brands depending on the marketplace for which they are destined. Those bound for France elide Ecuadorian provenance, since as two fruit sellers explain (themselves immigrants, and one of whom readily admits to passing off all his bananas as Martiniquais) that French consumers consider (or have been historically and economically influenced to consider) Martiniquais, Guadeloupian and Ivorian bananas as tastier and keep longer. Yet bananas are not indigenous to Martinique and Guadeloupe (and neither, thanks to the slave trade, are the populations that grow them). In the twentieth century, banana cultivation has taken over from (formerly slave trade) sugar, encouraged by conglomerates seeking to maximize revenue.Here, linking the legacies of the slave trade and empire with evolving modes of exploitation, and the marketing which drives them, contemporary retailers profit at once from cheap foreign labour and from manipulating historical French pride and prejudice. To be sure, one Ecuadorian grower asserts that American investment influences growing decisions leading to the precariousness of monoculture, made knowingly to the detriment of the nation’s economy and ecology, but Moullet then cuts to a German competitor talking about the consequences for branding and sales of particularities of his domestic market, where, unlike France, Ecuadorian bananas are preferred. Here the ostensibly minor detail of a sticky label cannot paper over a long and enduringly evolving history of racism in a Eurocentric world.

Similar insights are offered as Moullet analyzes the label on his tin of tuna (or disingenuously invites a supermarket manager to explain the branding before doing so). The U Prix executive explains that Pêcheur de France tuna outsells brands such as one clearly marked as produced in Ivory Coast. Although slightly more expensive, the better-selling Pêcheur de France brand hides its Senegalese provenance behind the nationalistic name and image of a ‘Breton’ fisherman (‘Dakar, Sénégal’ appears in extremely small print). This branding is judged excellent by the French supermarket representative who explains that his customers prefer to think of tuna as locally fished and produced, rather than hailing from Africa. Moullet then decodes the commercially driven racism fuelled by such contradictory vaunting and concealing of colonial provenance.

As the voiceover exposes this commercial incitement to racism, Pêcheur de France tuna labels are juxtaposed with other examples of what are effectively racist sleights of brand:

Non seulement les Sénégalais travaillent contre un maigre salaire, mais en plus, on ne fait pas mention de leur travail, on l’attribue aux Bretons. La Bretagne rassure. C’est bien de chez nous. Un produit déclaré de chez les noirs provoquerait le refus du Français. La seule effigie de noir, c’est Banania, qui assimile le noir à l’enfant. ‘Y a bon Banania’. Confirmation de la supériorité des blancs. Des moulins à vent pour le cacao fait en Allemagne, dit-on. Ce café porte la seule adresse du Courbevoie, ou il n’en poussera jamais (03:16– 03:50).

This brief focus on fortified breakfast drink Banania repays further examination. Banania is largely composed of the spoils of the slave trade and colonialism: bananas, sugar and cocoa, and was inspired by a drink discovered in Nicaragua by founder Pierre Lardet, and patented in 1914. It was initially marketed with the image of a buxom Antillaise adorned with jewelery and garlands of bananas. The brand’s popularity and profitability grew when it perceived in the First World War tapped lucrative potential for encouraging sales of the product to ‘fortify’ French troops and civilians. The image was then replaced with that of a sharp-shooting Senegalese soldier – the *tirailleur Sénégalais* - of whom 140 000 fought for France. On the packaging at least, the uniformed *tirailleur* has a broad smile, a distinctive *chéchia* on his head and a spoon uplifted to his mouth from a bowl of Banania. Aside the image, a strap-line provides the *tirailleur*’s endorsement in putative Senegalese pidgin: ‘Y’a bon’. The replacement of the image of the *tirailleur* with the less ethnically specific (but differently racist) logo of a geometric, generic smiling black face began in 1977, and it was not until 2006 that ‘Y’a bon Banania’ and its racist *petit nègre* connotations were removed). (6)

Whilst Moullet raises the issue of the perpetuation of the negative psychological effects of colonialism in a postcolonial world, he does not dwell on the enduringly racist changes to Banania branding. Nonetheless his visual reference to the newly-introduced generically racist image, along with his voiceover evoke theprevious branding, all the more so in that there is a striking resemblance between the Pêcheur de France pipe-smoking sailor and the spoon-toting *tirailleur Sénégalais.* Along with this visual intertext come literary intertexts evoking the psychological impact of French exploitation in colonial and post-independence Senegal (and supplementing those shown in the tuna industry). Léopold Senghor invoked Banania in his 1941 ‘Poème liminaire’. Here, seeking the recognition of African soldiers killed whilst fighting for France in the First and Second World Wars, Senghor undertakes to destroy the racism expressed (and fuelled) by Banania branding:

Vous Tirailleurs Sénégalais, mes frères noirs à la main chaude sous la glace et la mort   
Qui pourra vous chanter si ce n’est votre frère d’armes, votre frère de sang?

[…]

Je ne laisserai pas la parole aux ministres, et pas aux généraux   
Je ne laisserai pas — non! — les louanges de mépris vous enterrer furtivement.   
Vous n’êtes pas des pauvres aux poches vides sans honneur   
Mais je déchirerai les rires *banania* sur tous les murs de France (Senghor, 2006: 53).

Such confidence in the possibility throwing off the material and psychological constraints of colonial racism rings false in the Senegal of the late 1970s presented by Moullet, where Senghor is president, and bosses, union officials and civil servants alike exploit their compatriots, yet tuna workers spend hours and a huge proportion of their wages to travel to work, ‘tandis que le président Senghor pérore aux quatre coins du monde’ (1:23:17–1:23:19).

There are also resonances with Frantz Fanon’s *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952), wherein Banania is rejected as a symbol of the colonial racist psychology interiorized by black subjects, a psychological racism that Moullet’s voiceover suggests endures:

Si le Blanc me conteste mon humanité, je lui montrerai, en faisant peser sur sa vie tout mon poids d’homme, que je ne suis pas ce « Y a bon banania » qu’il persiste à imaginer. Je me découvre un jour dans le monde et je me reconnais un seul droit: celui d’exiger de l’autre un comportement humain (Fanon 1952: 186).

Moullet’s representation of the late 1970s Franco-Senegalese tuna industry and its marketing suggest that eighteen years after independence, ex-colonizers’ racism and postcolonial subjects’ inferiority complexes continue alongside postcolonial exploitation. Indeed, *Genèse d’un repas* provides a grim updating of the psychological leftovers of colonialism Fanon went on to describe as pitfalls of national consciousness in *Les Damnés de la terre* (1961). Here, the year after Senegalese independence, Fanon bemoans the entrenchment in food crops to exemplify how the national bourgeoisie fails to put newly independent nations’ economies on a new footing, seeking not to feed and nurture a new economic infrastructure, but instead to take on the benefits enjoyed by colonizers (whose interests continue to be served):

L’économie nationale de la période d’indépendance n’est pas réorientée. Il s’agit toujours de récolte d’arachide, de récolte de cacao, de récolte d’olive. De même aucune modification n’est apportée dans la traite des produits de base. Aucune industrie n’est installée dans le pays. On continue à expédier les matières premières, on continue à se faire les petits agriculteurs de l’Europe, les spécialistes de produits bruts (Fanon 1961: 97-8).

Seventeen years later, Moullet’s footage of the Dakar tuna factory implies that these economic and psychological power relations have yet to shift, since the farming of food has been supplemented by its processing for the ex-colonizer. In *Genèse d’un repas*, two years before the end of Senghor’s presidency, the voiceover implies of his peregrinations a form of collaboration with ex-colonizers, a collaboration like that of the Franco-Senegalese tuna cannery’ssimultaneous exportation of local (processed) products and processing of the ex-colonizer’s unfinished products. The patterns being adopted here are not Anglo-American. Instead of – and disrupting understandings of – hegemonic homogenizing global economics, the film reveals how foodstuffs such as tuna and bananas (and of course Banania) simultaneously fuel racism and enduring European patterns of exploitation in the postcolonial world.

**Immanent Critique and *Genèse d’un repas***

Like the food industry, filmmaking is simultaneously bound up with production and consumption: of subjects by the filmmaker, as well as by the spectator. Moullet makes self-reflexive reference to his cinematic modes of consuming the Other, from his opening frames underpinning the source (and constraints) of his film’s funding to concluding by noting the imbalance between his own and his crew’s conditions and that of workers in Ecuador and Senegal: ‘Même notre film participe à l’exploitation’ (1:50:22–1:50:24). In the final frames, exploitative power relations – economic and cinematic – are further underscored as the camera pans over the tuna canning factory, and the voiceover intones, ‘Et pour choisir mes images, je me trouvais ressembler aux surveillants des conserveries du Sénégal comme si la connaissance n’était qu’une forme subtile de l’exploitation’ (1:52:06–1:52:17). Moullet also shows awareness of the potentially problematic nature of the contradictions his montage and voiceover exposes (and at times creates) as part of a deliberate strategy to facilitate the spectator’s identification:

Dans *Genèse d’un repas*, il y a des effets de contre-point de la voix *off* avec l’image. Quand un patron ou un travailleur parle, je montre des images de la réalité qui disent exactement le contraire. C’est un effet quelque peu facile, mais ce n’est pas répété pendant tout le film. […] Mais c’est la principale forme d’opposition de l’image avec le son. C’est utile puisque ça fait travailler les spectateurs qui attendent que l’image et le son soient synchronisés. Il faut qu’ils puissent saisir eux-mêmes le moment où il y a séparation. […] C’est leur participation au film (Courant, 1980).

If for Derrida, the French word *mondialisation* brings with it immanent critical potential that may interrupt the homo-homogenizing discourses of *globalisation* whilst opening up critical perspectives on the Eurocentric ‘becoming-world’, so this film’s immanent critical potential, along with that of its subject, food, opens up to the autodeconstruction of its own modes of consumption. Certainly, Moullet’s deliberate quest for contradictions leads to the exploitation of his interviewees. Breton female workers are filmed as they sit with their male union representative, carefully making positively framed comments for a ‘film industriel’. The filmmaker extracts at once obfuscation and candid pragmatism from wealthy bosses by presenting his project as an information film, only then to juxtapose these with contradictory footage. There is an exoticist fascination with the faces and bodies of the Ecuadorian and Senegalese workers, and a desiring gaze objectifies one female Senegalese tuna worker in particular, to whose beauty the camera returns on numerous occasions in lengthy close-up. A yet more troubling close up features as Moullet draws his film to a close. The camera tracks over pack shots emphasizing the sheer extent of food imported into France:

Dattes d’Algérie, cœurs de palmiers boliviens, café du Brésil, thé de Ceylan, langoustes du Chile, ananas de côte d’Ivoire, poivre de Guyane, orangeade d’Israël, petits pois de Kenya, haricots du Maroc, corned beef malgache, rhum antillais, crabe du Pakistan, crevettes de Thaïlande, figues de Turquie, citronnade du Venezuela’ (1:47:01–1:47:30)

Presumably with the intention of multiplying motifs of co-implication, Moullet then sustains a close up as his partner Pizzorno begins a striptease whilst detailing the provenance of non-food products on the French consumer market: ‘Pour les vêtements que nous portons: Corée, Pérou, Zaïre, Philippines, Inde, Pakistan’ (1:47:31–1:47:38).

At this point, Pizzorno strips off her T shirt then removes her underwear made from ‘pétrole Arabe’ (1:47:49–1:47:52), until all that is left to be discarded are her false eye lashes ‘encore du pétrole’ (1:47:53–1:47:55). As the camera lingers on Pizzorno’s naked form, it is interrupted by scopophilia which in both Eurocentric filmmaking theory and in Moullet’s practice further raise questions of critical potential. (8)

Thus, through the immanent critical potential of food as it intersects with that of the notion of *mondialisation*, *Genèse d’un repas* simultaneously raises questions of the politics and ethics of filming and of consuming films, and of historical, enduring and evolving Eurocentric exploitation across the world. These discussions demonstrate how – productively – Moullet’s meal is not a well-rounded one. Instead, together with this analysis of its representations of food, *Genèse d’un repas* interrupts the totalizing image of the globe, at the same time inviting critique of a Eurocentric world in process. The film opens up critical perspectives on Eurocentric (post-) Marxist thought; identifies resonances of the slave trade and colonialism alongside future anterior traces of la Françafrique and reveals the commercial manipulation of a long history of psychologically constraining European racism. Indeed, *Genèse d’un repas* emerges as an ambivalent expression of the specificities of historical and evolving Eurocentric power relations. Simultaneously Moullet’s questionable meal invites the question of the potential for challenging perceptions of universalizing dynamics of globalization as well as of the immanent critical potential of food.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Luc Moullet for sending me a DVD copy of the film in 2007, when I first gave a paper on it.

2. For accounts of Moullet’s career as critic, director and, often producer of features, shorts and documentaries, of the release of a DVD box-set and of several retrospectives see Evrard (2012), Rosenbaum (1977) and Shafto (2009) and (2010). Shafto and Evrard also provide comprehensive lists of relevant recent food documentaries.

3. For a detailed discussion of Derrida’s deconstruction of *globalisation* through *mondialisation* see Li (2007).

4. For more information on post-1968 activist film see Smith (2005). For discussion of cinema *vérité*, and the problematic power relations involved making, and viewing, documentaries in ethical terms see Cooper (2006).

5. Misleading branding in the egg industry is also revealed. The Coq d’Ami logo features Amiens cathedral because Picardy is reputed for its eggs, yet many eggs thus branded come from Brittany, Normandy or Italy (battery farmed, as long tracking shots of serried ranks of fowl attest).

6. See Garrigues (1991) for a spirited history of Banania.

7. See *Challenges*.

<http://www.challenges.fr/classements/fortune/fiche/jean-claude-mimran-et-sa-famille;2067.html> (accessed 30 January 2014).

8. Laura Mulvey (1975) conceives of scopophilia as the misogynist objectification involved in the desiring (male) gaze of the camera in classic Hollywood cinema, the gaze which makes of the woman on screen the object of male desire, either voyeuristic or fetishized.

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