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Cinemaεthn**ographic** specta(c)torship: discursive readings of what we choose to (dis)possess

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Rachel Holmes
PhD
Manchester Metropolitan University
Institute of Education
799 Wilmslow Road
Didsbury
Manchester
M20 2RR

0161 247 2059
r.holmes@mmu.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper examines critical methodological issues emerging from the interstices of applied educational research, social science research and arts-based research, bringing criticality into the field of childhood. My aim is to question how I might w(rest)le (un)comfortably with 'what is worth looking at' (Hall, 2002: 65) when studying children. Manoeuvering between observations of children in classrooms and representations of children in film, I will consider ways I enact discrete performances of specta(c)torship, but also how I might resist revoking one performance for another within my 'practices of looking' (Kindon, 2003: 142) by conjuring the menace of ambivalent narratives. Rather than falling into familiar framing devices that serve to embrace some, and prohibit other ways of seeing, I will procure notions of colonialism and restless hybridity to incite antagonistic play on the edges of ethnographic specta(c)torship, drawing on Stronach's (2008) notion of 'lean-to' concepts.

Introduction

Although some researchers have resisted using film because of its roots in popular culture (Griffiths, 2002), others have valued its potential to 'trouble the contours' of the familiar (Slattery, 2003: 192), deeming it to be as conventional and artful as any written text (Crawford and Turton, 1992; Loizos, 1993). Where film and video have been used in classroom ethnography in the UK, this has generally been from within a realist perspective (Ball & Smith, 2001): video recording is predominantly deployed as merely one more device for 'capturing' classroom realities. By developing deconstructive film, video and textual strategies within this paper, I hope to disturb habitualised ways we 'specta(c)te'[1] children and by doing so, interrupt something of the meta-stories surrounding childhood that service UK government 'crusades', media editorialising and prevailing educational visions of the child.

> …The enemy is a mode of seeing which thinks it knows in advance what is worth looking at
>
> and what is not: against that, the image presents the constant surprise of things seen for the
>
> first time… (Hall, 2002: 65).

As an untrustworthy antagonist, my intention is to reflect upon ways ethnographers w(rest)le (un)comfortably with 'what is worth looking at' when studying children. By edging into entangled **cinema**ethn**ographic**[2] gazes, I want to untidy what is thought to be known in advance by undertaking specta(c)tor work around childhood, posing the question, how can a consideration of the interstices between film- and classroom-specta(c)torship usefully contribute to an ethnography of representation? The process of w(rest)ling (un)comfortably with 'what is worth looking at' (Hall, 2002: 65) is intended to agitate ways that

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[1] The term 'specta(c)te' is used here to denote the spectator and actor roles that are entangled within the participatory process of watching and the spectacle of looking

[2] The neologism '**cinema**ethn**ographic**' refers to an entangled process that brings cinematographic and ethnographic processes in relationship with one another

Hall's 'enemy' could be understood as played out in researchers' own ethnographic practices of looking, rendered stealthy, untrustworthy and all-too-familiar. Previously, and within the confines of particular parameters of being ethnographers collecting classroom data[3], we have become aware of how our own engagements with children have often failed to break through the frames of familiarity and illusory immediacy afforded by the discourses of childhood (MacLure, 2008 unpublished). This tacit familiarity has been bolstered by our habitual practices of observation, which could be understood as pockmarked with omissions, half-truths and sometimes lies (Jones, Holmes, MacRae & MacLure, forthcoming). Avoiding the pursuit of a 'whole' story or full / partial 'truths', I want to rupture this methodological lethargy by looking to the fields of film, performance and visual cultures to evoke disruptions to stability, negotiate flawed, broken personas and latent myths (MacLure, 2005) in order to explore ways we might (dis)possess when we observe children.

Within this paper, I will reflect on how a group of researchers[4] responded to watching characters in a film to consider how acts of specta(c)ting different visual cultures could be used as a series of interruptive ethnographic performances that might trouble our classroom observations, working to agitate our familiar 'practices of looking' (Kindon, 2003: 142). The first part of the paper focuses on insights from film genres and practices that have deployed 'interruptive' techniques to challenge the truth claims, rationalist assumptions and humanist narratives of the self that are coded in realist forms of representation. The second part of the paper develops a critical methodology that moves into the realms of ethnographic specta(c)torship to interrogate how *Ratcatcher* (Ramsay, 1999)[5] could be used to menace understandings

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[3] This data emerged from an ethnographic project looking at 'Becoming a problem: how children develop a reputation as 'naughty' in the early years classroom' (Economic and Social Research Council, 2006 – 2008)

[4] The researchers have all been involved in an ethnographic project looking at 'Becoming a problem: how children develop a reputation as 'naughty' in the early years classroom' (Economic and Social Research Council, 2006 – 2008)

[5] Ramsay's lyrical portrait *Ratcatcher* (1999) is an Art House, British film and features a boy growing up on the 'wrong side' of the Scottish tracks. James is a 12-year-old coming of age in a rough working-class estate in Glasgow. Something of a misfit, James has only three close friends, Ryan, Margaret Anne, an older girl whose need to be loved often leads her into ill-advised sexual episodes with the neighborhood boys, and Kenny who loves animals but isn't sure what went wrong when he tried to send his pet mouse into space. One day, James gets into a fight

of how we observe children. I will discuss how the experience of 'reading' a film might trouble habitual acts of observation and in doing so, re-imag(in)e ways to consider 'what is worth looking at' (Hall, 2002: 65) and experience what *is* worth looking at in different ways. The aim of this paper is to reflect on a performance of film specta(c)torship, to consider the potential of becoming continually embroiled in, but simultaneously violated by already inscribed discursive readings of our own (dis)possessions.

Interruptive orientation to the performance of identity

Documentary, ethnographic, surrealist and documentary ethnography films

According to Ellis and McLane (2008), documentary film is one of three basic creative modes in film, the other two being narrative fiction and experimental avant-garde. The term has its roots in the word *document*, or the Latin *docere* (to teach), Rotha (1935) suggests this narrows the scope of documentary films into fields that engage with being naturalist, newsreel, propagandist and continental realist. The naturalist tradition includes the films of Flaherty, for example *Nanook of the North* (1922), which is generally cited as the first feature-length documentary. Despite Flaherty's commitment to knowing something more of Inuit culture, he has been heavily criticised for distorting and tampering with the events he filmed. Flaherty himself suggests, "Sometimes you have to lie. One often has to distort a thing to catch its true spirit" (Calder-Marshall 1963: 97). The emergence of ethnographic films saw what might now be considered a culture of voyeurism or imperialism played out in the Johnsons' *Very Foreign Peoples* (Heider 2006: 19) and Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922). Debates about voyeurism, distortion, imperialism and the subordination / sentimentalising / exoticising of marginalised cultures have often shaped critical and public reception of ethnographic film (and indeed ethnography in general: cf Clifford, 1981, 2002). Loizos' suggestion that, "Ethnographic films are a subset of documentary films…" (1993: 5) inspires a brief

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with Ryan near a canal that runs through town. James accidentally knocks Ryan into deeper water and he drowns; James is too scared to tell anyone, but the incident weighs heavily on him, adding further tension to an already strained relationship with his alcoholic father.

overview of the developments in these entangled filmic styles. According to Ellis and McLane (2005) the 1920s saw a number of what were variously described as documentary and ethnographic films being produced. These included Vertov's *Kino Pravda*, a series of news reportage films that foreshadows both later newsreels and later documentary styles, including cinéma vérité. Propogandist films largely grew out of the revolutionary theory developed by Marx (1818 – 1883) and became a primary concern of Lenin (1870 – 1924). However, according to Ruby (1991), there is little interest in the impact of social and political films and the degree to which a film can produce desired political action is debatable. As Lenin suggests, film may not be a cost-effective tool for social a political change. Rotha (1935) suggests that the continental realist documentary films emerged as part of the avant-garde of the 1920s. Various European and American experimental filmmakers began to work in styles that incorporated avant-garde cinematic filming and editing techniques (such as fluid camera work and montage) and abstract narratives to create impressionistic, highly poetic and quasi-documentary works. These experimental works that explore the transactional juxtapositioning of viewer and film include various "city films," such as Ruttmann's *Berlin: A Symphony of a Great City (Berlin, die Symphonie der Grosstadt)* (1927) and Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures* (1926).

Surrealism and ethnography share a partially overlapping history. Clifford (1981) traces their inter-connections in 1930s France, when Surrealists and ethnographers shared an interest in the realities that were repressed by the taxonomic orders of Western rationality, and looked to 'primitive' cultures and to the unconscious as sources of disruptive energy. 'Ethnographic surrealism', as defined by Clifford, values 'fragments, curious collections and unexpected juxtapositions', putting these to work to 'provoke manifestations of extraordinary realities drawn from the domain of the erotic, the exotic, and the unconscious' (1981: 118). Surrealist films with a specifically ethnographic aspect include Kildea and Leach's *Trobriand Cricket* (1979) and Jennings' *Spare Time* (1939). According to Dall'Asta (2004: 88), surrealist

cinema sought to conjure 'a kind of parallel universe that lay sunk in the folds of the real world', breaking with the conventions of linear narrative in favour of fragmentary assemblages of dissonant images, in the attempt to represent the workings of the subconscious. Filmakers such as Dalí and Buñuel used techniques of cutting, superimposing, blending, manipulating images and irrational plot sequences to create jarring juxtapositions (Williams, 1981).

According to Chanan (2007), ethnographic filmmaking changed radically at the start of the 1960s, perhaps with the technical breakthrough of the 16mm portable cameras, able to be synchronised with portable tape recorders. The term "observation" was used to denote a particular sort of ethnographic filmmaking that first appeared in an article by Sandall (1972), for the British journal *Sight and Sound*. Sandall (1972) noted interesting attempts made by some observational filmmakers to record moments of cultural life that tried to represent the complex dynamics and intricacies of relationships despite the inclination to fragment. Their films worked to resist what Sandall refers to as "interpretation" (1972:193). Engaging with the debate around fact and fiction as portrayed in the ethnographic and observational film genres, Young (1995) contested that observational filmmaking involved an invisible camera, 'the ideal was never to pretend that the camera was not there – the ideal was to try to photograph and record 'normal' behaviour' (1995: 101). Ruby (1991) suggests that filmmaking emerging within the realist documentary ethnography tradition required a cooperative, collaborative and subject-generated focus, where the social, political and epistemological implications of filmmaking share or relinquish their power. Moments when filmmakers and ethnographers work together, such as in *The Meo* (1972), the collaboration tries to convey subjects and ideas that have 'outreach and staying power' (Crawford and Turton, 1992: 53) – the dramatic narrative logic of realist documentary ethnographies might reach different audiences and bring 'additional information' (Crawford and Turton, 1992: 53) into films that otherwise might absent the ethnographic gaze. For example, the process of ethnographically building long relationships with individuals and communities can help disrupt

more traditional documentary filmmaking practices in order to move the film subjects, filmmakers and spectators into fluid spaces of participation and collaboration, offering different ideas to work on the visual narrative. According to Chanan (2007), Morin (2003) and Berman, Rosenheimer and Aviad (2003) other, later documentary ethnography filmmakers, such as Dick and Kofman began, more deliberately to exploit moments of psychoanalytic ideas within film, such as scopophilia and voyeurism, while on the side of the subject, there is narcissism and sometimes exhibitionism. This could be understood as the documentary ethnography working to (mis)represent subjects. For example in *Derrida* (2002), the subject of the film himself discusses with the camera what is happening in the process of the documentary filmmaking. According to Chanan (2007) this is not to say that the result is fiction, as both the subject and the filmmaker tend to become invested in their relationship with each other. Never-the-less, the increasing complexity and fluidity, the playing with (mis)representation and the visibility of the camera have all contributed to a critique that is energised by questioning and provocation.

Mass Observation, Art House film and contemporary artist moving imagery

The 1930s saw another encounter between surrealism and social science, with the inauguration of Mass Observation in the UK. Created by a group of left-wing intellectuals, Mass Observation aimed to document the everyday life of the people of England in their own words. The political aim was to forge a polity more expressive of the 'collective wish' than the socialist imaginaries of the time (MacClancy 1995). For Humphrey Jennings and David Gascoyne, the two surrealists among the founders, the aim was to free the energies of the collective unconscious, by tapping into the fears and fascinations aroused by public events, buildings, customs and objects. Jennings film *Spare Time (1939)* assembled clips 'strange' rituals (eg kazoo bands) to document the leisure pursuits of working class communities. The democratising and defamiliarising aims of the early Mass Observation filmmakers, photographers and writers, foregrounded their commitment to representing multiplicities of voices against a historical background that plays with

distortion, fragmentation, juxtapositioning and contested notions of 'truths'. The 20th and early 21st centuries have witnessed a proliferation of filmic works that play with distinctions of fact and fiction, truth and fakery, art and social science, education and entertainment. The emergence of 'Independent' or 'Art House' films, as well as contemporary artist films also mark out significant moves to disrupt the classical cinematic narrative. The roots of independent film can be traced back to filmmakers in the 1900s who resisted the control of a trust called the Motion Picture Patents Company or "Edison Trust". These, typically low-budget films, could afford to take risks and explore new artistic territory. Influenced by foreign "Art House" directors, (such as Ingmar Bergman and Federico Fellini) exploitation shockers (including Joseph Mawra) and those who walked the line between (Kenneth Anger), a number of young film makers began to experiment with transgression not as a box-office draw, but as an artistic act. Directors such as Waters and Lynch would make a name for themselves by the early 70s for the bizarre and often disturbing imagery, which characterised their films. Curtis (2006) notes the pre-eminence of film and video work on the contemporary British art scene, for instance Deller, Gordon, McQueen and Wearing. Vitali (2004) suggests that the status of truth, reality and identity has become even more contested for film and documentary makers working within postmodern conditions of fluidity, multiplicity and fragmentation.

The cinematic gaze: the place of lack, displacement and desire

Debates that connect film and cinematic genres with the process of spectatorship (author, text and reader) often engage with the cinematic gaze. Aaron (2007) suggests that the spectator is the target of the film's address, but at the same time, Althusser's 'imagined relations' (1971) render the narrative and cinematic mechanisms as working to conceal this by allowing the subject an illusionary sense of him/herself as the producer of meaning. This all-perceiving spectator who is absent from the screen yet always present ties into Lacanian readings of the screen as the spectator's mirror, becoming a complex site of (mis)recognition, fuelled by the racial and masculine gaze as analysed in the work of Hall (1989), Russell (1991), Zavarzadeh

(1992), Mulvey (1975) and later Williams (1994), Cook and Johnston (1990) and Rich (1990). Russell's conceptualisation of the 'dominant gaze' (1991) attempts to bring together the complexity of Mulvey's (1975) masculine, with Hall's (1989) critical racial gaze in order to reiterate the pleasure or desire of the one who is looking and the one who is looked at as split between active/male/white and passive/female/non-white. She suggests that the dominant gaze subtly entangles the spectator in identification and objectification processes within its visual representations as natural, universal, and beyond challenge; it works to fortify its own legitimacy in defining narratives and images. Zavarzadeh (1992) argues that the distortive messages conveyed in films and documentaries have a hegemonic effect on popular culture precisely because they create the space in which the daily is negotiated. The racial, masculine gaze consumes Lacan's insatiable notions of desire, displacement (cinematic metonymy or metaphor) and lack, 'the gaze is therefore the object that is eluded by all forms of representation and vision; it is the lack that is inscribed into the phenomenology of consciousness… (Samuels, 1998: 111). According to Aaron (2007: 29) spectatorship represents a desire-fuelled but anxiety-ridden relation to the screen but the lack that is being worked out, or played out by cinema is the lack of the non-dominant gaze and the fretful reality that it represents to the intricate workings of the dominant gaze. Within the context of more recent feminist and postcolonial work, perhaps we need to consider Hall's (1989) negotiated gaze, which seems to entangle Cook and Johnston's (1990) reading against the grain in order to resist succumbing to colonial and patriarchal prescriptions. Perhaps here, multiple, complex and much more fluid notions of identification might become provocative within cinematic structures of looking.

Critical and performance ethnography, art and anthropology

Anthropology has itself undergone processes of diversification, fragmentation, textual experimentation and critical re-examination in the wake of post-colonial critiques of cultural and linguistic imperialism, and doubts about the relation between world and text inaugurated by the crisis of representation (Clifford, 2002; Denzin,

1997; Atkinson & Coffey, 1995). Pignatelli (1998) proposes that a critical ethnography should aim to 'move people to see themselves and their relation to a set of circumstances differently', and recommends Clifford's ethnographic surrealism as a set of defamiliarising practices capable of placing 'the possibility of comparison …in unmediated tension with sheer incongruity', and leaving visible 'the cuts and sutures of the research process' (1981: 563).   Denzin (2003) locates performance (auto)ethnography as a genre within critical, postmodern ethnography. Formulations of performance ethnography that seek to disrupt notions of 'the real' (Jones, 2002), continue to interrogate the boundaries of self and other, autobiography and culture, in the search for a reflexive ethnography. Conquergood invokes 'a pedagogical borderland, in the spaces where rhetoric, politics, parody, pastiche, performance, ethnography and critical cultural studies come together' (1992: 80). Discussions around the edgy relationship between art, ethnography and anthropology have been circulating for some years. From Benedict (1934) who presented whole cultures as collective artists or read them as aesthetic patterns of symbolic practices and Benjamin's call for artists 'to side with the proletariat' (1978), to criticisms of Clifford who was thought to have 'artist-envy' (Foster 1995, cited in Marcus and Myers, 1995: 304), to more recently, an emerging 'ethnographer-envy', where the prestige of anthropology rages in contemporary art. According to Foster, these practices of 'envy' seem to conflate in particular configurations of the landscapes that both fields seem to share. For example, according to Foster (1995) both fields grapple with alterity; they take culture as their object; they are considered contextual and arbitrate the interdisciplinary; and they invite reflexivity. Vying for authority across the fields of art and anthropology seems to have preoccupied many, yet the potential in resisting any sense of authority within either field seems to open up opportunities for interesting border-crossings, Anzaldúa's *la Coatlicue*, 'existing in a hybrid or in-between state, fluidly shifting…always a path to something else (1987: 34).

With such historical and more contemporary moves to interrupt realist filmic narrative, playing along the edges of fiction / non-fiction, 'real' and fantasy, film genres and qualitative research methodologies continue

to diversify and offer opportunities to challenge and question received and homogenised cinematic narratives. Here, I want to introduce a different aspect to interruptive techniques that might also contribute to anti-realist practices of representation, by turning to film specta(c)torship as an ethnographic 'collage' (Clifford, 1981: 563). By pulling through and playing with ideas that (continue to) inspire ethnographic and surrealist films, Art House cinema and performance ethnography, the second part of this paper will reflect upon ways researchers specta(c)ted the film *Ratcatcher* in order to disrupt their habitual practices of looking.

Frames of familiarity

Ryan and Kenny (characters in the film) live on a poor, working-class estate in Glasgow, UK. Jamie's story (character in the classroom) lies in a leafy suburb in Manchester, UK[6]. Discursive framings could be understood as mechanisms that 'hold still' these two disparate stories. For example, I would suggest that terms associated with children such as 'working class' and 'classroom' evoke familiar and particular sets of discursive framings. In the UK, New Labour's political rhetoric seems to frame aspects of 'working class' as, 'particular 'types' of (problematic) families, and specific 'kinds' of 'insufficient' or 'incomplete' children … children and families constructed as being 'in deficit' and/or expressing aspects of 'otherness'' (Barron, Holmes, MacLure & Runswick-Cole, 2007: 22). Inscribed in the dialogue and visual language deployed in the opening encounter between Ryan and his mother in *Ratcatcher*, I find metonymic signifiers of traditional working class caricatures, that discursively frame and designate as particular place-holders, '..through which the individual can be revealed in language…' (Butler, 1997:10). Opening depictions of Ryan's 'broken' family; the harsh slap to the head that Ryan's receives, the use of colloquialisms; the high-rise inner-city

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[6] One of the four schools that participated in the ethnographic project looking at how children develop a reputation as 'naughty' in the early years classroom (Economic and Social Research Council, 2006 – 2008)

council flats situated amongst a grey concrete landscape; together with the unfolding struggles between a mother and her son all seem to be visual triggers that lean on stereotypes of working class cultures.

***Ratcatcher* estate, Glasgow**
Copyright © Pathé Pictures and BBC Films 1999 *Ratcatcher*

For God's sake, look at the state of my curtain.

Look at you. If I've told you once, I've told you umpteen times. Keep your trousers tucked in your boots. Ryan Quinn! Are you listening to me? Come here.

Ma, can I go out and play?

You can go out after.

Ma, leave it. I'll do it. I look like a spaz with them tucked in.

You won't say that when you trip and fall on your backside.

I look stupid.

You keep 'em tucked in. Is your foot in?

Yes. I'll do it myself. Ma, can I go out and play?

No, you can't.

Ma, where are you going? Ma, can I go out and play, please?

You're going to see your dad. Don't you want to see your dad?

(Extract of film script, copyright © Pathé Pictures and BBC Films 1999 *Ratcatcher*)

Similarly, the term 'classroom' is often associated with discursive framings. For example, discussing observations of behaviour in the classroom, MacLure et al. suggest, 'The acquisition of a reputation also involves a *discursive frame* that grants meaning and duration to a child's conduct. …Family and community provide one such framing resource' (2008: 4).

Home lives are very haphazard for some of these children. The behaviours aren't their fault. I blame the parents […]

They need to live by the rules. Basically they're feral aren't they? [to teacher].' (Classroom observation, 2007).

It is interesting to consider how characterisations in *Ratcatcher* and in classroom observations rely on tropes associated with familiar framings of childhood cultures of disaffection. They seem to evoke familiar representations that are well-rehearsed in the form of stereotypical objectification of children and their social circumstances. Given these framings and their tacit familiarity, MacLure (2005) suggests that our ways of seeing young children in are so deeply ingrained with discursive familiarity and 'mythic immediacy' that we are more-or-less insulated from 'shock'. For the 'spec(c)tator' of children, whether that is the politician, the ethnographer, the film audience or the teacher, this 'mythic immediacy' could be construed as entangled amongst a complex of subliminal strategies that inscribe and impoverish children with layers of fixed and reductive correspondences (Mauriès, 2002: 25). For Benjamin (1978), as for surrealist writers such as Breton and Aragon, disruptive moments that might interrupt these inscriptions were to be found in the defamiliarisation of discarded commoditites, familiar places and mundane events of everyday life. I would suggest that both the process of going to the cinema (to watch a film) and going into the classroom (to observe children) have become a means to commodify by discarding places and peoples in particular and well-rehearsed ways. By 'discard', I am suggesting that in our engagements with children, we continue to over-determine them within discursive parameters that (dis)possess 'the child' in simplified and banal ways.

Across the domains of research, policy and practice, Cannella (1997), Burman (2007), Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2005), propose that children continue to be impoverished by definitions and judgements that bind and fix them in (ab)normalising and (im)proper ways, obscuring the intricacies of the cultural, social and economic conditions enriching their complex and enigmatic lives (MacLure, 2008 unpublished). In order to disturb uncomplicated versions of the child, we might attempt to make mundane encounters (with children) strange, whereby we engage with unpredictable moments that spark from the clash of incompatible realities, and momentarily jolt people out of the slumber induced by ideology (MacLure, 2005). To push towards a trangressive jolt that comes from an encounter with a 'demented form of the familiar' (Fer, 1993: 176), I imagine entangled and negotiated **cinema**eth**n**ographic gazes as processes that might read against the grain (Cook and Johnston, 1990) by defamiliarising children in order to pursue the fantasies these processes allow us. Perhaps the interstices between film and the classroom offer occasions to disturb buffered versions of (dis)possession in order to re-vitalise ideas around children that are too discontinuous to be appreciated amongst more plausible or 'real' landscapes. The archaeological process of oblique photography is used to rupture and penetrate incongruous landscapes in order to know something more about surfaces, layers and curious undulations considered 'worthy' of closer observation. O'Sullivan suggests that *Ratcatcher* plays with '…the layers beneath every surface… noticing materials in conjunction with each other: flesh beneath curtain fabric… spectacles beneath water. These textures don't cancel each other out, they just add mystery, blurring our perceptions…'(1999, www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/review /243, accessed 27th June 2008). Ideas around layers and surfaces being 'worth looking at', but contingent on processes of rupturing and penetrating seems to covet what entangled and negotiated **cinema**eth**n**ographic gazes may illicit, as moments of furtive unfamiliarity, unexpected displacements, antagonistic positions. I want to probe at how we might look more obliquely at children and how our practices of looking could become obscured by penetrating tendencies to simultaneously possess and dispossess.

Leaning to contaminate edges

In order to probe at discrete versions of filmic and classroom ethnographic specta(c)torship, perhaps a more interesting question would be how could we elude revoking one position (possession) for the other (dispossession) by conjuring mystery and negotiation and thereby blurring our perceptions? Rather than falling into familiar framing devices that serve to embrace some, and prohibit other ways of seeing, perhaps our entangled gazes could become ways to incite antagonistic play on the edges of possession and dispossession in ways that Stronach describes as,

> …necessary adjacencies. They are 'lean-to' concepts … they only stand up by leaning against each other… They do not border each other so much as they invest the heart of the other with its parodic opposite. … neither story … holds still with the other… across the 'empty' span of their (dis)connection; they insist on being 'with' and also 'against' the other in acts of mapping and spacing… (Stronach, 2008).

If we were to imagine the complex 'lean-to' mechanisms that discursively frame the ways we read film and the classroom, the idea of (dis)possessions seems to straddle those inhabited spaces. Films around childhood may 'stand up by leaning against' the audience's willingness to be seduced by parody and pastiche, inciting a more stable cinematic gaze, whilst allowing affective responses to (dis)possess the cinematic narrative in intricately (auto)biographical ways. The classroom seems to conjure different 'lean-to' devices, where the ethnographer is conditioned by the surge of discursive educational narratives that somehow entangle her in cogent and (dis)possessed versions of the child. These intriguing 'lean-to' devices allow us to go about our differentiated acts of specta(c)torship in uncomplicated ways, secure in the knowledge that authoritatively, we can appropriate our 'performances', resiliently holding each still. But my question here remains, how can we edge into entangled and negotiated **cinema**ethn**ographic** gazes that

map and space these 'lean-to' mechanisms so as to ensure 'neither holds still with the other'? How can we rupture different framing devices as the processes of film and classroom specta(c)torship insist on being 'with' and also 'against' each other, with a persistent menacing of each and both. Perhaps the possibility of putting both 'working-class' and 'classroom' into play with one another, we find imaginary spaces to push at linguistic and performative enervations to evoke a sense of interruption to those 'discarded commodities' or 'correspondences'.

I began this disruptive process by inviting a group of researchers to join me in specta(c)ting the opening scene of *Ratcatcher*, in order to consider how we might lean to particular practices of looking. The opening scene has the soundtrack absent and is focused on the slowly turning image of young boy, Ryan standing in front of a window, wrapping himself tighter and tighter into a set of white lace curtains. Suddenly, a hand comes from off-screen and slaps the boy across his head, which has the effect of jolting the specta(c)tors into the reality of the moment. Ryan's mother insists that he stop playing around and go with her to visit his dad. This scene is filmed in choppy slow-motion, the image of the boy in the curtain is both beautiful and foretelling.

Ryan wrapped in the curtains
Copyright © Pathé Pictures and BBC Films 1999 *Ratcatcher*

On specta(c)ting the opening scene, we responded:

> What I thought was interesting about this image… was that I conjured all kinds of things… like hostages being wrapped
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> up and I found it terrifying, the swirling… you know reminiscent of something captured….

I couldn't keep out other things like the notion of the sinister… it felt sinister watching that image… a figure wrapped up, shrouded… (Extract of discussion, co-researchers on 'Becoming a Problem' project, watched *Ratcatcher*, June 2008).

Visceral terms used here such as 'hostages' and 'captured' are interesting moments that rendered the specta(c)ting experience somewhat different to undertaking classroom observations. Ryan is possessed by the lace, the narrative, the ravaging processes of specta(c)torship, the tragedies of working class life, his relationship with his mother and the fate that awaits him. His face and body are enclosed in a delicate, but simultaneously violent rush of metaphorical rapture, '…flesh beneath curtain fabric…' (BFI, 1999). Our reflections 'conjured' and were 'reminiscent' in 'terrifying' and 'sinister' ways. Reflecting back upon some classroom data, we note how our observations seem starkly disparate from our filmic preoccupations:

Jamie came into reception when I was in Year 2. We were told we were getting a deaf child when he first came. But we soon realised that we had to lock all the doors – he was very wild. They can't control him at home. He takes his hearing aid off and flushes it down the loo. I feel very, very sorry for his parents. They don't seek outside help. (Interview with teacher from 'Becoming a Problem' project, April 2008).

Jamie stands alone, feet close together, hands by his sides in the far end of the playground watching the trees swaying in what had become quite a forceful wind. Children are playing all around him and occasionally one or two approach him. He briefly looks excitedly at their feet, then re-focuses on the row of swaying trees… he stares, his neck strained to look to the top branches, watching the rustling leaves, sometimes shaking his body, extending and then curling back his fingers with excitement, then becoming still, watching intently again… (Playground Observation from 'Becoming a Problem' project, June 2006).

Jamie in the playground[7]

Documentation of the teacher's thoughts of Jamie, alongside observations of Jamie in the playground render his behaviours somewhat pathologised. The observer is drawn to the oddness of his behaviour, seemingly oblivious to the furore of other children playing. The position of his feet close together, his refusal to join in with other children's games, instead looking at their feet and occasional shaking his body with excitement are all noted as though these behaviours are developmentally inappropriate and somehow justify his pathologised condition. It seems curious that we read Jamie's behaviour from within familiar normalising educational narratives, more 'cleanly' and unemotionally pathologised, yet Ryan's evokes a dirtier, less familiar rendition peppered with memories, traces of sinister happenings and apprehension. Jamie becomes coveted in diagnosis, wrought with observations that shrewdly dispossess him of the colourful and emotive moments that engaged us with Ryan. In pursuit of disruptive moments found in the defamiliarisation of mundane events of everyday life, I am interested in how Jamie remained familiar, yet 'odd' in the data, whereas Ryan's behaviour evoked less familiar and more visceral responses. Our focus around the classroom data, and in particular how representations of children might become less familiar moved into an analysis of our practices of objectification:

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[7] Video stills taken from 'Becoming a problem: how children develop a reputation as 'naughty' in the early years classroom' (Economic and Social Research Council, 2006 – 2008)

I think we did get that sense of strangeness when we came back carrying the school data and then related what we'd observed…

Perhaps it's when you take it out of the frame in which it was observed… does it become unfamiliar then… quite bizarre…

Is it that it kind of opens up a space… a space from within which you can get some distance from it… see it as a kind of object… objectifying it?...

Perhaps if we saw a child swirling in the curtains in the classroom, it would be seen as play…

Or they'd be told to stop it… (Extract of discussion as co-researchers on 'Becoming a Problem' project, watched *Ratcatcher*, June 2008).

'Spaces', for example between the classroom and the university, between the observer's documentation and more 'open', public discussions of the data served to carry data from *in*side, across to *out*side particular discursive frames, which perhaps rendered the data, and Jamie, objectified. '…Across the empty span of their (dis)connection…' (Stronach, 2008), these carrying spaces created a distance from how the classroom was being observed. Perhaps these spaces ruptured a symbiotic relationship, causing interruptions to the fluidity that might capture the observer and those being observed within a particular set of discursive frames. Never-the-less, this (dis)connection manages to hold the different stories still, rather than them being 'with' and also 'against' each other. Perhaps ethically we are 'with' Jamie in trying to disturb pathologised interpretations of his behaviour but simultaneously 'against' any anti-realist readings of the system and practices that frame and fix him in particular ways. When specta(c)ting the film, although other discursive frames might be in circulation, perhaps we permitted ourselves more license to take risks within our practices of looking, as we seem more willing to abandon familiarity and well-rehearsed narratives. For example, returning to our responses to the opening of *Ratcatcher*, we were moved into childhood (re)collections of swirling in curtains:

And film does deliberately work on the emotional… visceral… you bring feelings, thoughts to the image and to the

sounds … you immediately get a montage… that layering stuff

For me, I immediately had that sense of well I've done that as a child, but I remember what my feeling was… and

immediately you respond to that sense of turning and having that thing around you and how that felt… something about

seeing it up close and so slowed down makes you remember it yourself… I could smell the curtains…

You mean a kind of embodied feeling?

Yes, I think so.

(Extract of discussion as co-researchers on 'Becoming a Problem' project, watched *Ratcatcher*, June 2008).

Here, we brought feelings and (re)collections to our looking, we made connections with processes of 'montage', 'layering' and 'remembering', as well as describing feelings as 'embodied'. There is a very different response that disturbs any sense of a straightforward reading of the images. Perhaps we are 'with' Ryan in the curtains, (re)collecting similar childhood experiences but simultaneously 'against' any realist tendencies to look uncomplicatedly at the character wrapped in the curtain. There seemed to be no linear inscriptions within the visual narratives, which perhaps allowed waves of images, metaphors and juxtapositionings to elaborate the visual encounter.

Ambivalent lenses and hybrid identities

The seemingly disparate worlds of film specta(c)torship and classroom observation each bring interesting challenges to the idea of the child. Rather than straightforwardly carrying one set of practices of looking over to the other context, my intentions are to aggravate and menace each and both contexts in order to forge renewed ways of seeing. Within both scenarios, I sense impoverished practices of looking - film evoking emotions, (re)collections and (auto)biography; the classroom rendering us rational, (dis)connected and somewhat unreflexive. In attempts to blur perceptions, conjure mystery and obscure these contextual boundaries I would suggest the pursuit of conceptual spaces inhabited by ambivalent narratives and

ideological predicament, used as discursive lenses for contextually transgressive data analysis. Perhaps by using the idea of ambivalence across particular paradigmatic lenses to deconstruct visual and textual data, aspects of film and the classroom could become both 'with' and 'against' the other, which might allow for tensions and contradictions to be played out across these different contexts. For example, if I were to open up the idea of colonialism as both a filmic and classroom trait, it is rendered ambivalent as it captures something of the early ethnographic films' culture of the voyeuristic masculine and racialised gaze, imperialism and the exotic-ising of marginalized cultures, as well as inciting the '…discomfort of postcolonial ideology in dealing with its colonial past which spills over into its present…' (Chadha, 2006: 341). By turning to this idea, I could probe at its relational tensions between that which enacts the affective content of colonised ideas, places, peoples and the discourses that might circulate amongst the (post)colonial critique, through which the ambivalence pushes and overflows. By reaching across dissonant texts and subtexts where the colonizing gaze circulates amongst visual landscapes, the process of reading filmic and classroom data could negotiate epistemological meanings that are brought about by the interplay of an obvious 'communicating utterance' and the 'different utterance' which is anterior to the obvious communicative gesture (Kristeva, cited in Barthes, 1981: 36). The inter-connections of Surrealism and ethnography, sharing interests in the realities that were repressed by the taxonomic orders of Western rationality (Clifford, 1981), become interestingly drawn into Kristeva's idea of communicating utterances and different utterances. The interstices of film and the classroom become our surrealist 'primitive cultures' (or a sense of being uncultivated) used as a source of disruptive energy, rupturing something of the ways we frame children by using 'in-between-ness' as a broker of ethnographic specta(c)torship.

The colonial encounter: Kenny and the mouse

Look, it's a rat.

It's not a rat.

What's its name, Kenny?

Snowball.

Ah, that's lovely, let's see it out.

No, only James can see it.

Let me see it, it's lovely. Let me see it.

No.

Come on, you're one of the boys.

Am I, James? Okay, then, but only for a minute.

The little bastard bit me.

Give me my mouse back. The fucking thing cut my finger.

Give it back! Give me my fucking mouse back! Move. I want it back! You're going to kill it.

Throw it on the ground.

It can fly, Kenny. Let it fly to James. Go on. All right, James! My mouse can fly. Where's it gonna fly to?

Go on, James. Fucking kill it.

Where will it fly to, James?

Just fling it at the wall.

The moon.

My mouse is going to the moon?

You better put it back in its cage. It's done enough flying today.

My ma's gonna slap you for this.

Your mother only wears panties to keep her ankles warm.

Is that a friend of yours, James? You going to the moon with him?

[Kenny goes back inside his house and re-appears at the upstairs window]

Look, James.

He's a fuckin'psycho.

"I'm going to the moon". Look, everybody. Bye-bye, Snowball [He ties the mouse's tail to a balloon and release it out of the window].

(Extract from film script, copyright © Pathé Pictures and BBC Films 1999 *Ratcatcher*)

Aitken suggests, this dialogue from *Ratcatcher* evokes the "… brutality of peer pressure…" (2007: 79) contrasted with the beauty of James' kindness and protection of Kenny. Ambivalent colonial readings of this narrative extract might suggest that Kenny is being used to re-confirm or stabilise the other boys' own hierarchical status, their 'raison d'être' as colonisers-in-the-making, understood as enacting the 'spectacle' of stereotypical working class cultures. With a menacing resemblance of Kenny's compassion, an older boy reassures Kenny, "Ah, that's lovely", which could be read as an attempt to seduce him, persuading him that he can 'trust' the older boy by appealing to his gentleness, weakening his resistance to subversive colonising practices. Here, the 'obvious communicative utterance' (Kristeva, cited in Barthes, 1981: 36) could be read as Kenny performing the indigenous 'noble savage', an uncorrupted child, untainted by the processes of 'working class' civilisation. As Rousseau suggests of the noble savage, "…the peacefulness of their passions, and their ignorance of vice, keep them from doing ill…" (1992: 71-73). Perhaps Kenny's gentleness led others to feel permitted and responsible for cultivating his appropriately 'brutal' behaviours, a beguiling goad into the homogeny of working class youth culture. In tension with this reading lies the subtext or 'the different utterance… anterior to… the obvious communicative gesture' (Kristeva, cited in Barthes, 1981: 36). Perhaps in his colonised status as 'terra nullius', Kenny is mistakenly read as 'tabula rasa' (Pinker, 2002), which performs a useful distraction from more sinister workings of the colonial project and for the other boy's vying struggles for 'working class' notability and growing understandings of their own 'working class' performances. Kenny is being looked at and colonised by the colonisers who paradoxically need him to re-affirm their own brutalities and performances of domination. When Kenny is encouraged by being told that he is 'one of the boys', he looks to James and asks, "Am I James?", seeking reassurance and affirmation. Unsure of their motives, Kenny momentarily questions the premise on which the older boy's brutalities are founded. Kenny's question, "Am I?" does not seem to express a sense of relief or hope of accession, but perhaps looks to James in a moment of his own ideological predicament. The older boys'

use of seduction to cajole Kenny into working class youth culture suddenly becomes a demented form of the familiar. Kenny presents a disorientation or 'ontological stammering' (Lather, 1998: 495) in which normal sense, including sense of himself and the other boys, is fractured amongst the colonial relationships at play. Here, I detect the discomfort of what Chadha (2006) might describe as colonial workings being enacted in post-colonial landscapes, an ironical crevice in post-colonial narratives, propagated in the film's 'different utterance', where ambivalent meanings of the working class child are located. Tunbridge and Ashworth discuss how most colonial heritage in the postcolony landscape can be subsumed under the taxonomic grasp of 'dissonant heritage' (1996: 22) and Kenny seems to occupy a space of conflicting emotions and indeterminate meanings that seem to be a clear reminder of ongoing, yet complexly (dis)possessed occupation.

Within the ambivalent narratives of colonial critique, we could also re-imag(in)e the workings of 'restless hybridity' (Papastergiadis, 1995: 9) within the film. The idea of stories being 'with' and 'against' each other is used here to describe the ways we are trying to straddle the film and the classroom as sources of ethnographic data; as complex and fluid acts of specta(c)torship; as ways to read characters in the film and the classroom; and as a way to use ambivalent critiques to push at the edges of discourse and narratives. According to Bolatagici (2004), hybridity can reveal elements of contradiction and conflict within cultures and individuals. As Sakamoto (1996) explains, '[g]iving up the desire for a pure origin, hybridity retains a sense of difference and tension between two cultures... a new form of identity ...' (pp. 115–116)... (2004: 77). This 'new form of identity' could be understood as Bhabha's 'third space' (1991), a liminal space, embracing 'betwixt and between' (Turner, 1982: 95)...' (Bolatagici, 2004:78). Sonn and Green suggest that '...an in-between or hybrid identity can only manifest itself through boundaries; it … redefines them...' (2006: 340). Kenny's hybrid identity retains a difference and tension between two cultures – that of the older boys' well-rehearsed brutality and his own leanings towards compassion, which is eventually played out

when he succumbs to a form of protest '… he's going to the moon…' (referring to the mouse, who Kenny has tied to a balloon), perhaps against his own uncomfortable compassion. This act of distorted benevolence seems to evoke a demented form of the familiar, as Kenny sanctions the cruel intentions of the older boys, and perhaps even shocks them into a re-consideration of their own expressions of brutality, earning the status, '… he's a fuckin' psycho…' but does this within his own fantasy of mouse (and maybe self) liberation.

The (post)colonial classroom: Jamie's restless hybridity

Returning to extracts classroom data:

> Children were called out in their groups to line up by the door. "Good boy Jamie, good boy" said Nathaniel stroking Jamie's head. Nathaniel tried to hold Jamie's hand as they go to line up at the door. Jamie pulls his hand away (Classroom observation, Autumn 2006).
>
> Marcus says, "I'll help Jamie" and takes Jamie by the hand. "I'll wash his hands too because I'm very helpful to Jamie". Miss Keith responds, "You are, aren't you". Marcus and Jamie walk hand-in-hand out of the classroom (Classroom observation, Autumn 2006).

Here Jamie, like Kenny is subjected to disparaging treatment as both Nathaniel and Marcus enact the colonising ways they have observed adults behaving with him. Their resembling of the adult's behaviour towards Jamie is uncomfortable to observe as it serves to further pathologise Jamie. However, Jamie's hybridity enacts a complex digression, where his behaviours permit the other children's colonial undertakings, whilst simultaneously denying access to other knowledge's that might re-frame the ways both the observer and other children are able to understand him. Perhaps the observer's documentation becomes the mediator whereupon different kinds of observations of Jamie could potentially enable other 'denied' knowledges to resist something of the dominant discourse. Here, I am reminded of Mass

Observation's commitment to representing multiplicities of voices against a historical background that plays with distortion, fragmentation and contested notions of 'truths'. Mass Observation's aim was to document the everyday life of the people in their own words (MacClancy 1995). Perhaps here, the observer's text could become disruptive, whereupon different kinds of negotiated observations of Jamie could begin to consider what the familiar 'grain' might look like in order to find ways to think about negotiating other 'denied' voices. By attempting to challenge the prevailing 'ingrained' discourse and estrange the basis of its authority, we could make the structure of meaning and reference a more ambivalent process. Returning to another extract of classroom data, I notice how Jamie's restlessness and resistance to being known definitively finds a way of jolting the observer out of her ideological slumber:

> Jamie comes over to my camera and is intrigued by the little viewing screen. He is watching, through the screen, what I am recording. I turn the screen around and pointed the camera at him so he could see / watch himself. He quickly turns his back on the camera, so I move it away as I feel he wasn't comfortable with that experience. He seems to want to watch other children on the screen and returns to stand behind the camera. He sits on my knee and watches the screen as I film his peers again. I explained to the teacher what he'd done when I turned the screen to face him. She said, "They said as part of his autism that he wouldn't recognise himself in photos or on video". I am replaying some of the footage to show the teacher what he did. ***Jamie comes over and when he sees himself he points and smiles.*** (Classroom observation from 'Becoming a Problem' project, March, 2007).

Although his gestures of self-recognition could also be construed as Jamie merely enjoying something in the images being played back to him, he also unsettles us in a moment of abjection (Kristeva, 1982), a moment of cognitive dissonance, which leaves a sense of discomfort amongst our uncomplicated diagnostic leanings that (dis)possessed something of his pathologised behaviours. Whether he recognised himself or not, he momentarily questions the assumptions that were continuing to colonise him in ways that rendered him so autistically familiar. So, how do the ideas of colonialism and hybrid identities enable us to interrupt

our familiar and impoverished practices of looking at children? How do they engage us with Hall's 'enemy' (2002: 65), so as not to (dis)possess (un)worthiness as we curate our gaze so readily? How does the ambivalent lens of colonialism enable us to incite play on the edges of possession and dispossession? Perhaps here, we could lean to Bhabha's (1991) notion of how the ambivalence of colonial rule also enables a capacity for resistance within the performance of Lacan's mimicry '… the effect of mimicry is camouflage… It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled – exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare…' (1977: 99). Reflecting upon *Ratcatcher*, Aitken suggests that, "… the boy's .. profanity… like all other peer relations in the film…. suggests an edge along which violence may flow at any moment…" (2007: 69). This menacing edge that might or might not lead to violence lends itself to Lacan's thoughts around mimicry as camouflage (1977: 99). We question how we might possess something of the older boys who seem to resemble and perform the familiarity of the camouflage that evokes 'working class', disaffected youth on the edges of violence, which we might expect all younger boys to mimic. However, we might also dispossess moments where the mimicry becomes menace in our sentimentalising of marginalised cultures, as Kenny dements what has become so familiar to the older boys. He enacts hybrid identities that camouflage and disturb as he moves in-between mimicking and rejecting the mottled background.

On occasions, classroom data also seems to possess something of Jamie's mimicry, his 'acceptable' or expected classroom performances become mottled against a mottled background. But simultaneously, his hybridity seems to become compliant and threatening, creating moments of classroom dispossession:

> Jamie is taken to the glue and tissue paper area. Mrs Collinge is using a combination of actions, gestures and simplified language to tell him what

to do: "Jamie stick". He seems reluctant to do this activity. Intermittently he puts glue on the paper and sticks paper onto glue, whilst looking at the shadows created on the window blinds from the wind moving the trees outside. This seems far more interesting to him. Mrs Collinge keeps trying to re-focus him on the sticking activity. Mrs Collinge is standing over Jamie and starts showing him how to apply the glue o the paper and then sticking tissue paper over his glue. He stops gluing and she crouches down next to him and tries to encourage his fuller, rather than intermittent participation (observation observation from 'Becoming a Problem' project, Spring 2006).

Jamie being shown how to glue[8]

Jamie's resistance is characterised in the data by his fleeting digressions, moments of wandering towards the shadows of trees outside. Discussing data, Taussig's writing around 'montage' resonates with Jamie's performative transgressions:

> … alterations, cracks, displacements and swerves… the sudden interruptions in a battering
> of wave after wave of interruptedness… stopping the song in mid-flight to yell at the dogs to
> stop barking… and in the cracks and the swerves, a universe opens out… the surface itself,
> in a state of continually interrupted and fragmented construction… the actors create the
> surface by rendering their own representations while at the same time commenting upon this,

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[8] Video still taken from 'Becoming a problem: how children develop a reputation as 'naughty' in the early years classroom' (Economic and Social Research Council, 2006 – 2008)

thereby gliding between representation and representation-as-digression… (Taussig 1987: 441).

Similar to mimicry, perhaps hybridity and possession must continually produce their slippage, their lack, their excess, their dispossession (Bhabha, 1991: 86). Expressed through the film and classroom characters, the 'slippages' rupture any sense of the colonisers' or specta(c)tors' victory narrative as Jamie and Kenny slip in and out of being camouflaged, remaining 'incomplete' to (working)class(room)[9] conformity. Through the slippages they refuse to keep the stories of the classroom or of the film, or of the processes of ethnographic specta(c)torship still, as they resist straightforward readings. Instead, their stories contaminate spaces that were previously bounded and fixed, which is suggestive of the porosity of colonial boundaries (Smith and Wobst, 2005). Bhabha (1991) proposes that the discourse of colonialism as a site of hybridisation offers resistance waged from "… the interstices of an unstable boundary that desires to discriminate the subject from the non-subject" (cited in McCarthy, Supriya, Wilson-Brown, Rodriguez and Godina, 1995: 248). Such unstable boundaries that inscribe something of being 'working class' or being an autistic pupil in a 'classroom' have become porous, allowing readings that are against the grain and negotiated, both with and against the 'mythic immediacy' of such framing devices. According to Bakhtin, the language of hybridity becomes a means for critique and resistance to the monological language of authority (cited in Young, 1995), so interestingly, if colonising / colonised groups are characterised by 'dominance and resistance' (Sonn and Green, 2006: 337), yet boundaries can become unstable, do Kenny and Jamie authoritatively trouble the familiar binaries of coloniser dominance and colonised resistance? In their menacing mimcry, perhaps the specta(c)tor needs to re-consider 'what is worth looking at and what is not' (Hall, 2002:65) and experience what *is* worth looking at in different ways as Jamie and Kenny no longer

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[9] The term '(working)class(room) is used here to put both the filmic portrayals of 'working class' and project data representing aspects of the 'classroom' into play with one another

remain straightforwardly knowable in any uncomplicated sense. Perhaps the possibility of the (**cinema**ethn**ographic)** image presenting 'the constant surprise of things seen for the first time' (Hall, 2002: 65) affords them a powerful enigma amongst colonial readings. Is their porosity a powerful menace that is both alluring and resistant to different specta(c)tor readings? If so, how does their disruption of the unspeakable slash (Stronach 1996: 359) that juxtaposes dominance/resistance, colonising/colonised menace our reluctance to read them as complicated? How are Kenny's and Jamie's performative acts of dominance contradictory, as they both deconstruct and re-inscribe the hierarchical world of colonisers and colonised? They seem to resist complying and becoming assimilated, which focuses the specta(c)tor on their vibrant textures and foregrounds their differences. Interestingly, despite what seem like the colonisers' violent interventions and plundering, Jamie's and Kenny's slippages perform a quiet and peaceful dominance, they have become complicatedly unknowable to banal specta(c)tor readings, perhaps suggestive of Arendt's subversive protests against the classifiable (cited in MacLure, 2005), which may render them far more menacing to the protagonists. If protest is an admissible form of battle in a democratic society, we are left contemplating how might Jamie's and Kenny's protests be understood as an important contribution to our ethnographic specta(c)torship?

Conclusion

I began by proposing that this paper would document something of how, as an untrustworthy antagonist, I wanted to w(rest)le (un)comfortably with 'what is worth looking at' when studying children, whilst simultaneously (dis)possessing something of what I *do* consider worthy of my gaze. Perhaps paradoxically, the characters I have considered 'worth looking at' could be described as peripheral, both in *Ratcatcher* and the classroom. By focusing on the edges and boundaries of characters, ideas and discursive framings, I have tried to interrogate something of the texts and subtexts of colonialism that penetrate the subversive and (dis)possessed workings of the 'main' characters, including ourselves as specta(c)tors. Jamie and

Kenny, or rather the processes of specta(c)ting the classroom and the film no longer seem to exist in isolation, as stories that hold still. Across the empty span of their (dis)connection, perhaps my tentative explorations around ambivalent narratives, ideological predicament, colonialism and restless hybridities have performed a sense of 'sa(l)vage anthropology' borne from a curiousness around that which seems unfamiliar, misplaced and ill-fitting. The processes of specta(c)torship have helped define something different of Jamie and Kenny, as well as foregrounded my struggles with desires to covet and cleanse via practices that implicitly and straightforwardly seem to colonise them as 'knowable'. The role of the specta(c)tor in and amongst this sa(l)vage anthropology remains somewhat menacingly voyeuristic. Moving into the complexity of the **cinema**eth**nographic** gaze and notions of lack and displacement, I get a sense of the filmic and classroom characters' (un)belonging and displacement, which might be conceptualised as (post)colonial spaces being substantiated in the fluid relationships between the (working)class(room) and the specta(c)tors with their rhetorics, discursive practices and memories (Adil, 2007). Perhaps the (working)class(room) could be understood as a site of complex displacement, restless hybridity and cultural eclecticism, where, for example, Jamie's and Kenny's (un)belonging and displacement could be contrasted with the cultural competences of those who are seemingly assimilated. The (dis)possessive processes of assimilation might also include the specta(c)tors, but the (working)class(room) spaces marked with 'precise and determined functions' (Adil, 2007: 89), all regulatory, also seem to render them, and the masculinised, racialized gazes, contingent. Similarly to Said's discussion around realist novels (1993), I could construct the specta(c)tor as protagonist, engaged in highly regulated plot mechanisms and entire systems of social referencing that depend on the existing and traditional institutions of colonialist societies with authority and power. However, I could also suggest that Kenny's and Jamie's restless hybridity have jolted me into conceptual spaces that question the social referencing on which my practices of looking are based. For the children, on one level they could still be understood to stabilise the specta(c)tor's accession to re-confirmed identity - we are able to watch them in particular ways because we assume they are interestingly different,

unconventionally predictable, yet always already inscribed within discrete discursive framings. However, by transgressing via the interstices of film and the classroom, I feel that Kenny and Jamie have forced a reverse specta(c)torship, they have begun to call upon the actor, the specta(c)tor as participant to mark herself, to become intricately embroiled in their (and our own) discursive transgressions, the complexities of the 'different utterances' and denied voices in the data. Foucault writes of Velásquez's 'Las Meñinas', '... the action of representation consists in bringing one of these two forms of invisibility [the painter who paints, the king who is not in the picture] into the place of the other, in an unstable superimposition – and in rendering them both, at the same moment, at the extremity of the picture (...) The mirror provides the metathesis of visibility...' (1973: 8). At the extremities of the filmic and classroom data, amongst the 'primitive cultures' of the **cinema**ethn**ographic** gaze, Jamie and Kenny have etched something into, and of the specta(c)tor, provoking a double decomposition. By doing so, my filmic and classroom lean-to mechanisms have become unstable, flailing amongst this entangled text about a multiplicity of other texts that have begun to re-imag(in)e the text I set out to write. As a storyteller I have attempted to tell a story about other stories; Kenny and Jamie became subjects and storytellers within the story I have tried to tell; the older boys in *Ratcatcher* and other children in the classroom have enriched and problematised the ways I might look at those subjects as storytellers; the researchers (including myself) as members of a specta(c)ting audience have become protagonists within the stories being told within this text. Ways I have storied the ambivalences and predicaments within the stories have become sites of interest, particularly in relation to the spaces these stories have created as they are told. I am left wondering what I might learn of different symbolic characters as storytellers lying within the discursive, entangled spaces? What might I learn about myself as (dis)possessive specta(c)tor within the stories I have told and will go on to tell? The multiplicity of spaces created within this act of telling a story about other stories, has become an engagement "in the erotics" of my own playful language games (Patai 1994:69), yet there are possibilities to reflect upon this morass of semantic playfulness with some sense of purpose. Also discussing Velásquez's

'Las Meñinas', Stronach, Garratt, Pearce and Piper suggest how the painter, '… sweeps himself into the picture in an act of perfect reflexivity …It is the instability of these perspectives that animates the picture by forcing the onlooker into reflective and reflexive action. She has to work out what is going on…' (2007: 182).

I feel as though I have been swept into Jamie's and Kenny's stories by ideological jolts that momentarily provoked 'ontological stammering' (Lather, 1998: 495), abjection and cognitive dissonance (Kristeva, 1982) in my 'knowing' of children. The paper has permitted moments of what Bhabha describes as the 'emergence of interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference or 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation' (1994: 2). I have begun re-consider what I might have previously left behind, dismissed, (dis)possessed, deemed (un)worthy of my gaze as participatory specta(c)tor entangled within the process of watching and the spectacle of looking at children. I have attempted to move amongst the **cinema**et hn**ographic** gaze as an 'in-between' space, the (working)class()room) as an active space of collaboration and the characters of Jamie and Kenny as participating in the enactment of their own hybrid identities. Perhaps these have become innovative sites of collaboration and participation that disturb something of our comfortable gaze, but a cautionary note would be that perhaps they simultaneously conspire to re-enframe and re-articulate once again, the bounded ways we have available to us to practice our looking and ways of seeing children. Perhaps it is the idea of engaging with the deflections and fractious moments of (mis)recognition, contemplating the intricacies of representation and representation-as-digression (Taussig 1987: 441) that becomes useful within the **cinema**et hn**ographic** stories I have begun to imag(in)e.

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