

## **Representing 'the Real': Realism and Visual Culture in Tourism, Leisure and Ethnography**

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### **Abstract**

The collection and use of visual evidence is widespread in a wide range of academic and professional activities. The paper explores the similarities and differences of a range of related phenomena: realism, documentary and authenticity. The status of the 'realism effect' is evaluated in a range of leisure activities with an emphasis on tourism and the significance of realist texts in popular culture in narrative and non-narrative forms. The creative treatment of the representation of reality in the documentary tradition is highlighted. The paper emphasises the pleasures to be gained from 'experiencing the real' using semiotics and film theory, in particular. There is a discussion of the possible ideological effects of these pleasures as well as more fundamental matters relating to the extent to which we are able to actually experience the 'real' in any meaningful way. The argument develops that the pleasures of realist cultural forms may also be found in academic work too. The representations of reality using written and visual forms in ethnography are explored: consumers of academic work as well as popular cultural forms employ a series of codes and conventions and these forms may be subjected to post-structuralist analyses.

**Key Words:** Realism, Documentary, Authenticity, Ethnography, Leisure, Tourism

### **Introduction**

The collection and use of visual evidence is widespread in a wide range of academic and professional activities but has enjoyed something of a resurgence since the turn of the century in the social sciences (Emmison and Smith, 2002; Banks, 2001; Rose, 2005). This resurgence has been noted by Palmer (2009) when suggesting new ways of incorporating visual materials into academic accounts of tourist practice and by Gilhespy and Harris (2010) in their critical review of the status of the study of visual culture in examining leisure and tourism experiences. This interest in visual evidence prompts discussion on a series of methodological issues as well as having some epistemological implications.

We shall be exploring the similarities and differences of the status of the 'realism effect' in a range of leisure activities with an emphasis on tourism but also by evaluating the significance of realist texts in popular culture in narrative and non-narrative forms. There are inevitably critiques to be considered as well. The

pleasures to be gained from 'experiencing the real' have a number of ideological effects according to some commentators and there is the more fundamental discussion of the extent to which we are able to actually experience the 'real' in any meaningful way. We shall also account for the ways in which the machines available to account for 'the real' have an impact on its representation. There is an interesting paradox to be explored here: in positivism, the subjective action of the scientist is a liability in the process of performing and reproducing experiments. Machines, on the other hand, are highly regarded for their attributes in the reproduction of experiments. Machines are more reliable than unaided human sensory perception: they are more trustworthy. In the context of positivism, the photographic camera has been understood as a scientific tool for registering reality more accurately.

In spite of the recognition of subjective acts involved in taking a picture the aura of machine objectivity clings to mechanical and electronic images, much more so than with painting or drawing or, for that matter, representation using language. Indeed it is difficult to break with this notion, as Woodiwiss (2001) argues. There is a dominant form of 'visuality' which features this kind of objectivising process, and normal visual operations, including those of visual data gathering techniques, reproduce that dominant form, whatever the critical intentions of the researcher. What is seen, Woodiwiss argues (2001: 3) is not 'a product of simple vision', but a product of a 'system of visualisation'. Even critical approaches tend to reproduce uncritically the categories of this system, in particular the 'representationalist' stance that sees real objects as identical with the mental pictures we all have of them.

We shall interrogate the uses of photography and video to record material that claims to offer accounts of the authentic and of 'the real'. The contention is that by looking at aspects of semiotics and film theory in particular, it may be possible to offer a commentary on recent uses of visual evidence in academic accounts of tourism practice. The status of realism is central: realism has been influential not only in mainstream narrative cinema but also in the codes and practices that have constituted documentary practice. We shall argue that realist conventions have influenced academic accounts of tourist practice too: Schwartz, an ethnographer who uses photography, warns (1989, p.120) that there is a '... tendency to treat

photographs as objective evidence (which) ignores the convention-bound processes of both image making and interpretation'. We shall argue that her warning has not been heeded. Further, the characteristics of these 'convention-bound processes' are not always discussed or presented as being problematical. The use of visual evidence - including photographs, video and camcorder footage - presents problems when that evidence is offered for its naturalistic or realistic qualities. An account of the emergence of visual realism follows but there is a need to explain the presentation of this work.

Palmer (2009) has argued that the emerging formats of electronic journals allow for a range of digital materials to be embedded in academic articles in ways that are implausible in formats that remain dependent on print and on the written word. Embracing this line of argument, this article includes a series of hyperlinks both to materials on sites that offer materials that illustrate our arguments as well as to repositories of educational materials (Appendix ) in the form of reusable learning objects (RLOs).

### **The Documentary Tradition**

The documentary tradition involves the conceit that 'the real' is being represented, a conceit that substantiates the truth claims made by films and photographs in this tradition. Winston (2008, 9) claims that he '...know(s) of no theoretical position, no definition of documentary that does not in some way reference the relationship to the real' and quotes the originator of the term documentary, John Grierson, who described the form as 'the creative treatment of reality' (Grierson, 1929 from Winston, 2008). The methods involved in this creative treatment are discussed later.

Documentary film belongs to a discourse that claims to describe the real and to offer insights into the truth. Winston (2008, p.9) argues that there has been a long public acceptance of the form which rests too easily on an unproblematic acceptance of the mimesis of cinematic forms or as Gilhespy and Harris have noted:

The documentary tradition of film-making also rests particularly strongly on allowing viewers an insight into the 'real' whilst disguising the editorial and

production processes involved in their creation, as a kind of cinematic objectivity. (Gilhespy and Harris, 2010, p.109)

The assumptions made about documentary film bear a strong resemblance to the claims made in academic discourse that, by using certain methods in a rigorous and self-critical manner, it is possible to make claims about the superiority of the knowledge produced. Specifically, there is the assumption that documentary film offers accounts of 'the real' in which are strongly contrasted to fictional cinema. And yet, the argument may be developed that documentary film actually embraces the categories of fact and fiction, of entertainment and knowledge as documentaries employ many of the methods and conceits of realism:

'...the traditional documentary enables viewers to have the coherence, manageability, and often the moral order of their lives reaffirmed, while simultaneously allowing them to feel that they're interested in other classes, other peoples' tragedies, other countries' crises. By producing their subjects as heroic and allowing us to be glad for their victories, or by producing them as tragic and allowing us to weep, the audience experiences itself as not implicated, exempt from the responsibility either to act or even to consider the structures of their own situation.' (Godlimow quoted by Shapiro, 1997)

Godlimov's point is taken up later when we discuss 'positioning theory' but it is worth noting that these controversies were embedded in documentary formats from the outset. Grierson's purpose, in directing the influential 'Drifters' (1929), training a number of film directors and campaigning for public money for the Empire Marketing Board and, subsequently, the General Post Office was to educate people into their civic responsibilities in an age of mass democracy. The documentary movement in Britain emerged with a paternalistic zeal for education sponsored both by government departments and by commercial organisations that recognised the potential of film for public relations purposes. The creation of documentaries rested, therefore, on their ability to provide educational or persuasive outcomes rather than providing materials that allow for some insight into an objective reality.

Documentary may be regarded as intrinsically aesthetic too resting as much on a series of conventions as narrative cinema and television. It was Grierson who first

coined the term 'documentary' to describe the work of Flaherty but he combined a passion for education with some of the cinematic techniques of Eisenstein who had his own pedagogic and propagandist intentions. This hyperlink goes to a film clip from Eisenstein's film 'Oktober' and is an example of montage editing: the film is about the Bolshevik revolution and the editing technique attempts to illustrate a specifically socialist form of realism to stress the underlying constitutive nature of class conflict: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0QAjpeosgU>

This clip illustrates the problem of attempting to produce a critical realism and, more generally, of the inevitable problems of attempting to represent an abstract social reality in a visual form. Dovzhenko's film methods were also influential in terms of the use of sound.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4InlloVcUuE&feature=Playlist&p=F543EDA894505B7D&playnext=1&playnext\\_from=PL&index=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4InlloVcUuE&feature=Playlist&p=F543EDA894505B7D&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=1)

Grierson directed *Drifters* (1929), a work that used a series of montage sequences in representing the lives of North Sea fishermen. The montage sequence ennobles the fishermen with the consequence that Grierson has been accused of a sort of patronising elitism towards his subjects, although he maintains that his motives were educational (Ellis, 2000). The sober and educational aims of Grierson were shackled with the aesthetic flourishes derived from a range of European as well as Soviet influences. The influence of German Expressionist cinema may be discerned in the work of directors such as Wright, Cavalcanti and, in particular, Jennings with the use of contrasts, shadows and vivid close-ups. Thus, from the onset the documentary combined the proposition of presenting 'the real' but in ways that involved re-shaping that reality, re-staging and interpreting it often with strong ideological messages.

Cousins (2006) suggests that the tradition of the documentarist is not to direct reality, but to let reality direct the documentarist. There are parallels with ethnographic practice here with the emphasis on being unobtrusive and not affecting the activity taking place with one's presence. The issue here is that the ability of viewers to understand and enjoy documentaries rests upon a series of cultural conventions that have been learnt over time. The viewing of photographs shares this feature again

resting upon a series of realist conventions that allow the viewers to ignore the processes that have gone into the creation of the images, the myth of objectivity clings to the mechanical reproduction of images. Schwartz recognised this in her justification for the use of photographs to facilitate responses in interviews to support ethnographic practice:

'...naive viewers who have not learned the cultural conventions that facilitate the process of interpretation may mistake photographic images for the objects and events they represent...untrained viewers substitute their own immediate reactions for the author's intended meanings' (Schwartz, 1989, p120).

We may wish to dispute the term naivety given that, for example, we do not need to be linguists to speak a language but accept the point about the polysemic character of images. Schwartz highlights the process through which people actively interpret images but fails to articulate or misses the point that the ability of viewers to 'read' photographs at all rests upon this series of learnt conventions and that even the photographs used in the study are conventionally realist. Photo elicitation techniques are preferred for the practice of ethnography in this example given the claim that they display a 'routine ambiguity', that they prompt multiple interpretations but this claim appears to ignore the cultural codes and conventions that underlie their consumption and enjoyment.

Loizos (1993, p.5) points out that the sub-set of the documentary film known as the ethnographic film has come under a shared criticism: that documentaries share with fiction film the use of narrative suspense and closure and continuity editing. As well as these features ethnographic film tends to have a focus on individuals, a focus that may lead to identification by the viewer but one that disguises the inability to depict structures like land ownership systems, for example, confirming Woodiwiss's view that 'what is socially visible is not necessarily what is sociologically important' (2001, ix).

The visual codes of documentary and non-fiction formats have a range of effects, including emotional effects that are unlikely to be the expected outcomes of certain sorts of academic discourse.

### **Semiotics – traditional approaches**

It is worth repaying some attention to central concepts of the semiotic tradition following the seminal work of de Saussure. There are many summaries of this tradition amongst which the work of Rose (2005) is particularly concise. The central concept is that of the sign which may be defined as something that stands for something other than itself. Human culture is crucially made up of signs. The sign has two parts, signified and signifier. The first of these is an object or more usually a concept. The second is the signifier, a word or an image perhaps, and is attached to a signified as a matter of convention. The relationship is usually referred to as arbitrary and is not fixed but unstable, subject to change relative to other signifiers. The hyperlinks in Appendix lead to learning objects that represent this process and highlight the role of semiotics in visual research.

The signs exist as a series of similarities and differences to other signs and organised into codes. Thus, the particular meaning of any sentence is generated both by the choices of particular words but also by the positioning of those words in a particular structure or sentence, paragraph and so on. There are, however, certain problems when applying this work to visual signifiers rather than written ones. Whilst linguistic signifiers may have an obviously arbitrary relationship with their signifieds, visual images may have an obvious resemblance even if that resemblance may mislead (Woodiwiss, 2001).

As Rose (2005), has argued the work of Pierce becomes useful here with his tripartite approach to semiotics. The iconic sign is referred to as 'motivated', one in which the signifier represents its signified by having a likeness to it, thus, the photograph of a beach is an iconic sign of a beach. The indexical sign is culturally specific such as road signs and the symbolic sign is an arbitrary one, for example, an image of a lake may come to represent peacefulness, closeness to nature or even spiritual longing. Of course, a visual image of a lake or a beach may be a very complex one and one that involves a series of signifieds.

The early history of cinema makes clear how certain technical conventions were established and their significations fixed. For example, close up shots, when they

became technically possible, were used to signify human emotions, while more distant shots established the context. Realist editing made the cutting between shots invisible, for all practical purposes, to the viewer. 'Natural sound' is also highly conventional, of course, with its distinctions between individual speech and background, and its insistence on clarity where, for example, individual speakers speak uninterrupted so the audience can hear them effectively. The cinema also rapidly developed a series of conventional narratives or codes, summarized best, perhaps in the work of Barthes (1975). To take the simplest example, it has become conventional to take the actual atmosphere as a code to signify emotional atmosphere—dark brooding skies announce the existence of dark brooding thoughts in the minds of the main actors.

### **Screen theory**

A particular variant of semiotic analysis, Screen Theory, emerged to dominate the academic analysis of popular media in the late 1970s and has persisted since. This variant leads the way to 'positioning theory' as noted earlier when quoting Godlimov. This approach combines a semiotic interest in narratives and their effects with an explicit version of Marxist critique of ideology and is based on the work of Althusser and Lacan. Briefly, this version saw the notion of the autonomous individual as the key to capitalist ideology. Such an individual was, in practice, an effect induced in us by various organizations or ideological apparatuses. These served to interpellate or 'hail' us as individual subjects able to make free choices. The interpellation mechanism was demonstrated in apparatuses such as the Christian church, where one subjected oneself to God's Law and received a sense of unique personal significance in exchange. Screen theorists wanted to apply the same sort of analysis to the cinema. As we noted earlier, dominant forms of cinema and television offer a certain sort of viewing experience that 'position' the audience or viewer. MacCabe (1981) called these forms 'classic realist texts'. The argument is that such texts offer a certain sort of viewing position and, in so doing, a particular version of the truth offered in the narrative. At the same time, this positioning creates the illusion that, as individuals, we are interpreting the text in our own way. Thus, as we watch a carefully structured and organized film, a sense of personal insight underpins our experience and is crucial to the pleasure of that experience. However, personal



insight is an effect: a knowledge effect related especially to the narrative structure but also to other cinematic conventions.

The classic realist text is found in a wide range of literature as well as film. Many Victorian novels feature a mixture of dialogue spoken by the actual characters and a narrative voice which comments on these dialogues as well as assessing them. There are, therefore, a number of competing voices in the narration of the story. However, one narrative position dominates. This is the master narrative and is usually the only unchallenged one. Readers gain pleasure from being able to examine the characters in this omniscient way. As readers we are led to agree with the narrator, and to see this master narrative as the truthful or realistic one. A realist narrative is easiest to detect, perhaps, in the detective novel, where a number of competing narratives are eventually resolved in favour of one which explains what really happened (Palmer 1977). Put simply, the realism effect positions viewers or readers in relation to the given text in such a way that, as viewers or readers, we are given some sort of special insight - or privileged position – in which to experience the narrative, an insight which is, of course, denied to the participants themselves.

According to screen theory, however, the actual content of any ideological message is less important than the general effect of the ideological position in which readers are allowed to feel insightful, an effect that flatters and rewards us as viewers or readers. The enduring popularity of realism as a genre may be understood as a result of this process. The pleasures of the realism effect may be identified in a wide range of popular cultural activities and indeed may be in evidence in the pleasures to be gained in enjoying academic accounts of the 'real' too. This will be discussed later in relation to ethnographic writing.

McGuigan's (1996: p,49) term 'truthfulness' is intended to capture a popular aesthetic – that is the ways people describe their pleasures in cultural experiences - and a professional ethic in cultural production. Frith similarly uses the phrase 'true-to-life'. (1997p,50) as a popular aesthetic for the experience music listening and film. For Frith (1997: p, 39) folk music is the third musical discourse after classical and commercial, one, in which, there is no separation of art and life. The folk values of spontaneity, naturalness and authenticity, are widely found in academic accounts of

tourism. Frith (1997: p, 50) argues that audiences judge the content of films by identifying with their own life experiences or by relating to accounts of the real world outside their own experience. This identification with the 'real' has been at the core of a range of structuralist and post-structuralist accounts of film and television but is also a feature of ethnographic studies that employ photo-elicitation methods (Harper, 2002): the process of identification means that photographs operate as a sort of trigger for memory. This is taken up later in the paper.

### **Controlling gazes**

The work of Mulvey (1975) develops the theoretical insights on the classic realist text but emphasises gender identification in the pleasures offered by classic realist texts. Adopting a psychoanalytical line and developing Lacan's interpretation of the work of Freud, Mulvey suggests that the cinematic gaze is a male gaze. Using Hollywood films for the source material, she argues that there is a voyeuristic pleasure to be enjoyed in the positioning process. Viewers enjoy the pleasures of looking - or peeping – at women on screen. The viewing position suggests that the women on screen are unaware of the presence of the viewers, or to put it simply they do not stare back and, further, they act in a range of titillating and indiscreet ways. Freud's early ideas about scopophilia, the pleasure of looking, also revolve around what we are not allowed to see given the conventional concealment of the body in everyday life. The pleasure of looking is also a pleasure of seeking out what is usually concealed. Viewer pleasure is thus combined with an interpellating ideological effect focused on constructing a gendered individual. The film often confirms the power dimensions of voyeuristic pleasure by a vocabulary of camera shots that take the position of the male observer casting an eye over the female. The narrative structure of the film performs its role too in confirming women's status as objects of the 'male look'. These elements combine in a process that interpellates women: 'their role in narrative is limited almost entirely to make the hero act' (Mulvey 1975: 60). Later Mulvey suggests that where these conventions were broken, women usually had to suffer unfortunate consequences, for example being killed. In this way, 'mainstream film coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order' (Mulvey 1975: 60).

## **Positioning**

There has been much interest in the gendered notion of the cinematic look, following the classic work of Mulvey on the 'male gaze'. This work has become familiar in tourist theory with Urry's (1990) famous discussion of the various tourist gazes. It is important to note that the notion of the gaze is a further departure from the idea of human consciousness as the source of meaning in films, photographs, or audio tracks. Individual authors, auteurs or tourist operatives do not create gazes from their own interests and intentions: rather gazes are collective and conventional. Although the individual tourist, viewer, reader or listener can resist gazes to some extent, it may require substantial amounts of cultural capital, including a good working knowledge of alternative gazes to do so. MacCannell (2001) has criticised Urry for overlooking the possibility of individual tourist commentary as a source of critical reflection. More hope for those wishing to resist corporate or other sinister gazes might lie in some capacity to escape all social constraints in various ecstatic encounters and adventures, what Lyng calls edgework, as a kind of extreme 'flow'. Those debates haunt discussion of visual data in particular. Although ethnographers had used visual data, their status as evidence is clearly problematic. The emotional effects of photographs have been recognised as problematical in academic discourse for some time. Twine (2006), a feminist ethnographer, recounts the views of Becker and the marginalisation of photography in sociology journals and texts. Her research depends precisely on the ways in which photographs evoke memories and the feelings associated with those memories. There is a recent tendency to use visual data in elicitation exercises, as triggers for subjective recall, but there is a growing tradition which attempts to treat visual data as significations in the full sense.

## **Ethnographic writing**

The usual way to begin to explore subjective meanings is to employ some variant of an ethnographic technique. Originally deployed in anthropological studies of pre-industrial societies, ethnography grew in popularity as a technique to explore subcultures and various communities of meaning in the host society as well, thanks largely to the pioneering work of Spradley (1979, for example). The technique attempts to reconstruct the meanings deployed by actors in their natural settings, by using various combinations of participation and observation, sometimes supplemented with open ended interviewing, and even photography or film. The key

methodological assumption is that researchers can get to share these natural meanings by relying upon a universal human process of understanding others: perhaps the best known account of this universal process is supplied by the work in the American pragmatist tradition, notably Mead on symbolic interactionism.

### **Realism and Ethnography**

Conventional writing techniques, including the deployment of narratives and representations, are used to convince the reader of ethnographic work that they have experienced some authentic underlying reality. One interesting feature of Clough's work in particular is her use of the term 'realism' to describe the effects engendered by classic ethnographic writing. There are other persuasive effects at work, drawing upon the same techniques that we have described in popular genres of film and television.

It is clear that this critique can easily be applied to the ethnographic use of film, photography, and audio recording as well. Ethnographers seem to have implied they were simply recording the reality of life in other societies or communities. It is obvious, however, that optical and electronic media produce effects of their own, both through the technology that is deployed, and through the conventions of the media.

Critiques of realism can be applied to both ethnographic and 'aesthetic' photographs of the kind used in professional advertising of tourism destinations. They may also help to analyse the photographs taken by tourists themselves.

The use of visual imagery in ethnography has led to a considerable debate referring to obviously methodological issues like objectivity. Crowe (2003, p.476) talks of the '...fear of the polysemous nature of photography, especially concerning the discourse of ethnographic-anthropology'. He adds that '...photography—even the most severely illustrative examples— contains a sense of individual expression in either the taking of the photograph and/or the reproduction of the image' (p.476), and charts the ways in which his own understandings changed as he photographed Kalahari Bushmen:

‘...my own self-development became the subject of the photographs rather than the people I have photographed. My photographs do not represent a semiotics of a community; instead, they are my visual diary’ (Crowe, 2003 p.478).

Indeed, in a point of particular relevance, he concludes that ‘photographs might be simultaneously aesthetic and documentary’. He also became aware of the politics of representation as the Bushmen demanded payment for their photographs, and insisted in some cases that they compose the pictures themselves.

Grady (2008) argues similarly that qualitative researchers using visual approaches have reservations about visual data and whether it can produce valid information or how representative the data can be of any given universe. There is also a suspicion and distrust that the intention is to celebrate the focus of study rather than to carry out a dispassionate examination of the relationships and world they purport to represent. This kind of distancing from visual inquiry is especially true of sociology.

The usual safeguards with written accounts – the interview schedule and the record of the research – are not found in visual data. Nevertheless, Grady (2008) makes a strong argument for the use of visual methods in social research, such as the ability to engage in a prolonged and reflective ‘looking’ at social situations, a permanent record of spatial and temporal relationships. At the same time, they highlight the subjective activities of the observer. Thus, Grady argues for greater collaboration between advocates of ethnographic and aesthetic analyses of visual material. Ethnographic approaches have done much to uncover the particular meanings of tourist experiences. To summarise some recent examples, Kane and Tucker’s (2004) study of heli-kayaking points up the ways in which the participants come to define themselves as genuine kayakers whilst downplaying the commercial aspects of their experience. Similarly, Holyfield’s (1999) account of accompanying a river rafting expedition found the guides talking up the romance of the expedition and minimising the obviously commercial and safety features of the experience.

Recent developments in the ethnographic tradition have followed a particular cultural or narrative turn. Here, the classic attempts to take subjective data and organize

them into some sort of systematic social scientific account have been seriously challenged on the grounds that they are imposing some kind of hierarchical order on the accounts of the participants themselves. Bourdieu et al (2000) have suggested that this kind of transition, from subjective accounts to academic accounts often depends in practice on finding respondents who are willing to speak both languages. Even so, Bourdieu et al (2000) argue, there is an inevitable element of symbolic violence involved in any attempt to take subjective meanings as data and to subject them to what claims to be some higher order discourse.

In more familiar terms, advocates of autoethnography make the same point. The data themselves are subject to a kind of unhelpful ordering and sorting by ethnographers occupying a superior status, as academics, and, quite frequently, as males.

One obvious consequence is the systematic denial of affect, an emotional coldness towards the events being described. Another is the systematic attempt to evade subjectivity on the part of the author himself. Instead of writing in this clinical and abstract way, autoethnographers have suggested that texts be clearly authored, that the full subjectivity of the writer should appear in the text, even that the usually suppressed contributors to the text be credited with full authorship as well: Denzin (2006) is perhaps the best known advocate of such polyvocal writing, for example in his account of what might be called a tourist trip to native American residences in the USA.

Another source of powerful critique of ethnography has been launched from a post structuralist position. In general, this position draws upon the substantial critiques of the idea of the human consciousness as a repository of subjective meaning, a deeply rooted concept in much conventional social science. Briefly, the post structuralist technique draws upon structuralist arguments that meaning is an effect of language, its narrative structures and codes. For post structuralists, there are no society-wide, functional, agreed general structures and codes: whatever structures and codes are developed in writing (including photographing and filming) are the result of local mobilisations of power in discourses. Poststructuralist writers have then proceeded to deconstruct actual discourses, exposing the moments at which

meanings have been temporarily fixed by exercising particular kinds of linguistic and social power.

Ethnographic writing is as open to poststructuralist deconstruction as any. Poststructuralist critique has been led by Clifford (1988) and by Clough (1992) in particular. The radical thrust of these critiques may be extended to autoethnographic approaches: although autoethnographic work is right to expose the deployment of social power to present ethnographic work as objective and scientific, it is mistaken in relying upon the conventional notion of the human subject, in full possession of a subjective consciousness, complete with emotions and interests. The notion of the human subject itself is an effect of discourse for post structuralism.

### **Conclusion**

Realism, we have argued, remains a dominant form in a variety of cultural experiences and is, crucially, a source of pleasure for the consumers of these cultural experiences whether those experiences consist of watching documentaries, mainstream narratives or when enjoying the authentic in tourism encounters. Critiques of these realist forms may offer insight into their construction and consumption. But our argument has also been that the pleasures of realism may also be encountered in academic accounts too, including those that are specifically designed to create insight into the subjective experiences of others: ethnographic accounts may involve realist techniques both in written forms of representation as well as visual forms such as photography and video. Poststructuralist analyses of the techniques of meaning construction in visual representations offer a means of tackling some of the dilemmas that arise.

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### Appendix

This link goes to a reusable learning object designed to educate undergraduate students in the basics of this process (designed with MS Producer, it may require Internet Explorer to play ):

[http://www.arasite.org/mmedia/SS1\\_files/Default.htm](http://www.arasite.org/mmedia/SS1_files/Default.htm)

The next learning object places the role of semiotics into the broader context of using visual data in research methods whilst that below offers a review of visual research methods with further hyperlinks:

[http://www.arasite.org/mmedia/VIS\\_files/Default.htm](http://www.arasite.org/mmedia/VIS_files/Default.htm)

<http://www.arasite.org/mmedia/visres/index.htm>