



**Goldsmiths College
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Estanciero for one day

An approach to a contemporary cultural practice in Argentinean domestic tourism

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MA Communication, Culture & Society

Course: Methods of Cultural Analysis SO71001A

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London, 11th January 2002

During the last five years, a new trend has begun to grow in the Argentinean domestic tourist market. It centers around a phenomenon known as *turismo de estancias* - its equivalent in English would be ranch tourism - which since its emergence, has been gaining powerful recognition. In fact, articles in journals, programmes on T.V, sites on the net and even tourist agencies have been devoting increasing attention to it.

The *estancias* are large agricultural farms (covering areas of more than 1000 hectares) that were owned by those who belonged to the upper classes of society during the last two centuries. The *terratenientes* (landlords) used to live in Buenos Aires, or in any other capital city, such as Cordoba or Mendoza, and they temporarily moved to the *estancias* to spend their holidays. During the year, though, they seldom visited their properties. The *estancias* were like small villages with certain characteristics: a railway station located in the heart of the place, a church, a school, a store (called *almacén de ramos generales*), the labourers' houses and the farmers' houses (men who managed the ranches or *capataces*). But this was not all. There were some other places such as the *matera* and the *pulperia* which deserve mentioning. Both were, and still are, representative symbols of well-known, deeply - rooted Argentinean customs. The former was a special room to drink *mate*, a sort of infusion or green tea which, as in the case of the British 5 o'clock tea, generated a singular social ritual among the *gauchos*. Not surprisingly at all, the upper classes despised the *mate* on the basis that it was a sign of low prestige.

The latter was a kind of bar, where labourers and *gauchos* met to have a drink, to play traditional games and also to dance folklore music. Labourers lived in the *estancias* and spent most of the time there. Indeed, they just went to the town on very special occasions.

ling on the *estancias* were the main houses or medieval English and French castles, these houses were inhabited by the owners during the time they visited their properties. The houses' huge rooms - which were many, indeed - were furnished and ornamented with French and English articles specially brought from Europe. This was a reflection of the aspirations that these social and economic elites had in emulating the Europeans.

Nowadays, these *estancias* are still seen in the countryside; however, many things have changed in the last thirty years. For instance, the lands have been divided among the descendents of the original owners; the advent of the technology explosion has produced a rising level of unemployment since not so many labourers are needed in the ranch; for this very reason, too, the school and the church do not serve their purpose any longer and as a consequence of the fact that the means of transport allow the labourers to go to the town to buy their goods more frequently and freely, the shops have begun to disappear. In such a changing context, however, the *pulperías* are still the places where labourers meet to have a drink, but neither the games nor the music remain the same. The labourers prefer to go to town to have fun.

So as to find an alternative use for the *estancia*, they were transformed and exploited - as I said before - as tourist sites and as time passes by, more and more wealthy people visit them to enjoy the different services they offer.

With this in mind, I wonder: what are these tourists looking for when visiting these places? Authenticity? Identity? Are they longing for the past? Is the countryside the context they would like to belong to even though they know it is a utopia? If so, why? Can't they stand the idea of being strangers? And finally, is this contemporary cultural practice a feature of post tourism?

This paper aims to provide some answers.



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rist gaze (1991) and Schutz 's papers (1964)

ecomer will constitute the theoretical data to

back up this case study.

“The world is a stage and the post – tourist can delight in the multitude of games that can be played” (Urry, 1991: 100)

Travelling to the countryside is a new contemporary cultural practice that has gained an increasing number of devotees in the last decade.

According to authors like Newby (1982) and Shoard (1987) the countryside has become tremendously popular among the members of the service class, which has started setting up in the outskirts of the largest cities (Thrift, 1989, Kapferer, 1996). Let us take the case of the surrounding areas of Buenos Aires, where the phenomenon is easily appreciated. Longing to be in contact with nature and with the aim of leaving the noises and hazards of the urban areas behind, the new rich have started moving to these *chacras* or country – houses, that are advertised and sold as the ideal places to live.

As Urry puts forward (1991) the service class is in the vanguard of the romantic gaze – “a system of social activities and signs which locate the particular tourist practices” (1991: 2) - of the countryside. And it is this romantic idea, that drives them to visit the countryside.

The website of one of the *estancias* says:

“The estancias are ideal get-aways from the noisy city to relax in contact with the green and singing of birds, or just to go cross country riding, taste the typical dishes as the always present asado (barbecue) and learn, participating, the several rural skills performed at the settlement”. (see: <http://www.argentine-ranches.com.ar/argentine-ranches>. Accessed 19th March 2002)

theoretical field (Urry, 1991; Pollock, 1991) biologically created as an absolute other to the city; as the embodiment of life unchanged, untouched, simple, natural, primitive, traditional, not man made, totally different from the city. It is behind this difference that the attraction lies. With the aim of satisfying the tourist romantic expectation, all vestiges of technology and modern life –such as machinery, tractors, polluted water, motorbikes - have been removed from the landscape. As a result of this, the countryside has become a “national commodity” (Cosgrove, 1984: 269) and rural people have started building pre-programmed settings and scenarios, where rural life is represented to the tourist (Urry, 1991: 98)

“Cattle rustle and enclosure, participation in cereal sowing or harvesting, shearing, cattle branding and earmarking. Bird and fauna watching Farm management; comments sharing demonstration, wool baling, horseback riding, riding and polo lessons. Observation of farmhands at work with old agricultural implements”
(www.turismo.gov.ar. Accessed 19th March 2002)

That it the way in which the *estancias* are advertised to attract tourists, trying to introduce them into a game; a game which involves those activities which were once carried out by the labourers; a game which recreates the traditional atmosphere tourists long for: old machines and forgotten activities and customs make up the perfect scenery to satisfy the post tourist. Frow (1997) admits that primitive houses and unsophisticated machines cause a very attractive sensation on the tourist gaze because they are referents of a period of time that is about to come to an end.

As regards this, Urry (1991) affirms that the pleasures of tourism are the result of socially organized processes of production and consumption. In other words, he states that the tourist gaze is socially built and that it involves

ts that make each gaze look differently (Urry,

In the *estancias* the tourist will enclosure the cattle with horses or he / she will milk animals. Nowadays, however, farmers have at their disposal complex technological equipment to carry out these activities. The point illustrated here, is that the tourist will play and enjoy a game, pretending to be immersed in a time that no longer exist. These fake activities are part of the tourist gaze. Urry (1991) believes that the post tourist is aware of the fact that he / she is passing through a not genuine experience, however she/ he takes great pleasure in playing the games that are offered to him / her.

Moreover, in these *estancias* the tourist can witness rural activities in the making, such as harvesting, crops sowing, animals feeding, cattle branding, rustle and enclosure and horse cleaning to mention some. Pollock (1991) states that paradoxically and significantly, one of the activities which tourist enjoys the most, is seeing others working. This author claims that there are people from certain social and cultural backgrounds, who pay to watch how others, from lower classes work. As it can be seen, this case study provides evidence of such a tendency.

MacCannell (1976) states that, probably subconsciously, the tourist is fascinated by the idea of getting to know certain things about others; their lives and work styles, for instance. In a way, this tendency relates to the opposition ordinary / extraordinary life which, according to Urry (1991) is the essence of tourism. Besides, Curtis and Pajaczkowska, (1994) state that playing - as an alternative to routine - and working - as the achievement of transformations - both form the idea of traveling.

In reference to Urry's theory (1991) that tourist sights are built through a binary opposition between ordinary life and the extraordinary, Rojek adds

construction where the elements of myth and (1997). If we bear in mind that the tourist who consumes this new tourist practice, belongs to the middle – high classes, this opposition is reinforced: half the tourists that go to the *estancia* to spend a weekend, are new rich, who work in banks or in multinational companies, who are used to spending their holidays in the Caribbean sea or in Europe. Besides when they have a couple of days off, they prefer having a completely new experience.¹ These tourists belong to the new ‘urban’ elite, and the stresses and strains of modern life, drive them to seek for recreation and amusement. The countryside appears as the right place (Urry, 1991).

It is important to take into consideration the role played by the media in the outline of this perfect place. In relation to this, Urry states:

“Tourism necessarily involves daydreaming and anticipation of new or different experiences from those normally encountered in everyday life. But such daydreams are not autonomous; they involve working over advertising and other media generated sets of signs, many of which relate very clearly to complex processes of social emulation”
(Urry,1991: 13)

The state of emulating can be given two different interpretations, as we shall see in this essay.

On one hand, there is a post tourist trying to be other; other that does not exist any more. The *estanciero* or owner of the *estancia*, is the Other the tourist tries to imitate so as to find out how different this other is from him/herself.

¹ According to McDonald (1987) rural tourism is a high class tourism (128)

is the emulation of the hosts, who try to
ed: neither the social economic and political
conditions of the *estancia* nor their daily life. It follows from this, that a series
of pseudo - events play a significant role in this construction of the gaze.

I want to be Other

“Tourists revel in the otherness of destination, peoples and activities because they offer the illusion or the fantasy of otherness, of difference and counterpoint to the everyday. At the same time the advantages, comforts and benefits of home are reinforced through the exposure to difference” (Craik, 1997: 114)

“A place, a gesture, a use of language are understood not as given bits of the real but as suffused with ideality, given on to the type of the beautiful, or the extraordinary or the culturally authentic” (Frow, 1997: 67)

Having reached this point of the essay, it is necessary to make a brief comment about some relevant thoughts related to the Otherness of identity which might be useful to back up the methodologies applied in the analysis of this case study.

Levinas defines the Other as “the unknowable presence of alterity” (Levinas 1989: 37-59, quoted in Hetherington 1998: 94-95). Better to say, as a sign of difference that is perceived though not fully comprehended, with which the Self interacts in a dialogical relationship. “The Other’s entire being is constituted by its exteriority, or rather its alterity, for exteriority is a property of space and leads the subject back to itself” (Levinas 1989: 43).

Herrington (1998) states that the so-called symbols of identity that operate within a physically-bounded space, are those that are socially loaded and have particular implications for a given community, since they

force shared identifications that make those sense of “strangeness and marginality” that which does not belong to the community where a certain form of social identity is formed (1998: 95)

According to Gunn (1979) there is a further perception of the location of Otherness (Gunn 1979: 188) which drives to other issues such as how far that Other stays, how inaccessible it remains, and which are the ways to reach it .

Many mainstream authors (Craik, 1997; Pollock, 1991) relate the tourist experience to the theory of Otherness. Craik (1997) affirms that the tourist engages with Otherness or escapes from routine duties as a means to find transcendence. For Pollock (1991) touring consists in taking the person to the Other’s place.

In our case study, this Other is the *estanciero* or owner of these enormous farms we have been mentioning, who evokes, in the Argentinean collective imaginary, the idea of richness; but not any kind of richness, just that which is inherited and old. To be *estanciero* is to have status and prestige, to belong to an elite from which only *estancieros* can be part, because the money of the new riches has been earned not inherited, “because the wealth is now sanctified by its longevity” (Kapferer, 1996: 106). To be *estanciero* in Argentinian society, does not only mean to have money, but also to belong to a dominant group which held powerful and influential positions in the societal scale during the ninetieth century (Pérez Amuchástegui, 1988, Sánchez Sorondo, 1990). Moreover, if we focus this exercise of becoming the Other from a sociological point of view, being *estanciero* is going back in time, so as to live in an ideal past, during which the technology explosion and the progress of civilization were not common issues, but a remote future. To be *estanciero* is to go back in time in order to live in a different country; that is to

thought to become one of the most important
the richness of its lands and the *estancieros* that
owned them.

It is with all this in mind, that things are designed in the *estancia*. Knowing beforehand that the tourist wants to be Other, at least for one night, the tourist gaze in the *estancia* is organized around this idea. ²

Urry (1991) states that the construction of the gaze has to do with different social and historical moments and contexts. The gaze is made through signs that break the patterns of everyday life and routine practices (Urry, 1991: 1). As a result of this, analysing “the different ways in which social groups construct their tourist gaze, is a good clue to infer what happens in the ‘real society’” (Urry, 1991: 2-3).

As regards this topic, Craik states:

“The cultural experiences offered by tourism are consumed in terms of prior knowledge, expectations, fantasies and mythologies generated in the tourist’s origin culture rather than by the cultural offerings of destination” (Craik, 1997: 118)

Within this theoretical context, it is important to add that only by taking into account the social, cultural and economical background of the tourist - who consumes this new cultural practice -; we are going to understand the construction of the gaze (Urry, 1991; Craik, 1997).

² Ritzer and Liska argue that there is a Mc Disneyzation of the tourist sites because the tourist experiences have become predictable, efficient, calculable and controlled (1997: 99 - 100)

ing will be prepared for a tourist, who, has to know where, when and how to gaze.

For this reason, not only the activities described above, but also the symbols and signs the tourist will read and interpret are going to make him/ her feel satisfied with the aim of his / her tourist gaze: to be Other. This implies that the tourist will become a semiotician (Urry, 1991; MacCannell, 1989; Culler, 1988, 1981)

Many authors (Urry, 1991; MacCannell, 1989; Culler, 1988) argue that tourist practices involve the consumption of signs as well as the using up of goods and services. That is to say, they think that buying tourist activities is equal to buying signs.

According to Baudrillard (1985), we increasingly consume signs or representations, since this exchange of values and signs is the way through which social identities are constructed. In the case of the *estancias*, the representations involve many issues, so as to let the tourist build his / her gaze which would allow him / her to build the Other whereas he / she enjoys a splendid time.

Within this context of signs, furniture, gardens, decoration and architecture play an outstanding role.

“The decoration of the Farmhouse counts with period and contemporary furniture, heirlooms, walnut-tree chest of drawers with beveled mirrors, armchairs imported from France, Viennese coat stands, crystal chandelier, bronze beds, period china and ornaments that match with the carpets in pastel colors and the drapes cheer up all the atmosphere”. (see: www.turismo.gov.ar. Accessed 19th March 2002)

is composed of an impressive French style in balcony, a delicate example of the magnificence of the beginning of the century, with seven meters height roofs, boiserie and fireplaces. The furniture of the park and the gardens correspond to the "Belle Epoque" style" (see: http://www.argentine-ranches.com.ar/argentine-ranches/esp/paquetes/la_oriental.html. Accessed 19th March 2002)

"It is usual to find Tudor, Norman or Italian styles, some of them really looking like Loire castles, in the heart of the Pampas. And famous landscape designers designed even the parks, with splendid groves" (see: <http://www.turismo.gov.ar/estancs/almagau/index.htm> Accessed 19th March 2002)

This complex system of symbols is completed with those activities we have already made reference to and with other activities – such as polo and horse riding lessons and croquet. These sports are usually associated with the wealthiest groups of the social hierarchy. Moreover, there are other symbols the tourists will read in order to build their gaze. For instance, in the *estancia La Horqueta*, the owners welcome tourists, so as to give the impression that they themselves are not tourists but guests of the *estancieros*. It is well-known that being a guest implies to be from the same social class than the host: an *estanciero* as well (see: <http://www.lahorqueta.com/> Accessed 19th March 2002)

Following Baudrillard (1983), in this world of signs, it is difficult to draw a clear division between reality and fiction. Truth to tell, the tourist does not want to know where that boundary is, or if he/ she happens to be aware of it. In any case, he/she will try to transgress it, at least for one day, with the



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states, the illusion of social upward mobility

The pseudo event

“The paradox, the dilemma of authenticity, is that to be experienced as authentic it must be marked as authentic, but when it is marked as authentic it is mediated, a sign of itself and hence not authentic in the sense of unspoiled” (Culler, 1981: 137)

“Nostalgia for a lost authenticity is a paralyzing structure of historical reflection” (Frow, 1997: 79)

As many authors (Ecco, 1986; Baudrillard, 1988; Boorstin, 1964; Cohen, 1988) affirm, it is possible to speak about pseudo- events on the ground of tourism. In this case, these are those enjoyed by the tourist who, ignoring the outside world, takes pleasure in non -authentic experiences. Arising out of this, Turner and Ash (1975) believe that there exist a process of generalization, oversimplification and mass production behind the building of these pseudo - events, and the native exotic end in uniformity.

In the *estancias* the pseudo-events are part of the scenery offered to the tourist. Indeed, all sights in the *estancia* are pseudo-events, from the welcome done by the owners, till the enclosure of the cattle with horses, the costumes worn by the staff - traditional clothes of the *gauchos* - and even, the going out in antique carriages. A further kind of entertainment likely to be found in the *estancias*, is a sort of dance or play performed by the *gauchos* and their *chinitas* - wives - with their typical costumes. Besides, there are lifelike wax figures evoking different moments, memories and places of the past. For example, the *pulperías*, the *ranchos* (roughly- built houses where the *gauchos* used to live) or the *payadas*, to mention some.^{3 4}

³ The *payada* was a traditional folk song which was played by the *gauchos* with their guitars. The aim of the game was to display the astuteness in a kind of answers and questions.

Pajaczkowska (1994) the true role played by the past, and such a role implies feeling certain nostalgia for things that no longer exist. In fact, this is what the construction of the gaze sets out to fulfill (Urry, 1991). As Urry (1991) mentions and as we can see in this case study, the idea of going back in time is constantly present in the gaze, and the sentimental longing for the past is the sensation around which the gaze is organized. Performances, museums and special events are organized in the *estancias* so as to reproduce a time gone.⁵

Due to the importance given to the visual element and the gaze, Urry (1991) argues that tourism has always involved spectacle. And as it might be expected, these displays are also present in the *estancias*: traditional dances, costumes, games and even jobs such as *talabartero* (person who manufactures goods using leather) and *platero* (person who makes silver articles) are transformed into a whole spectacle, in which the tourist has the opportunity to perceive how different his / her ordinary everyday life is from that of the countryside.

According to Rojek (1997), in a tourist site where the spectacle is of great significance, the perceived sense of paramount reality is replaced by an organized event where myth and manipulation have a lot to do. For MacCannell (1976), as a consequence of the hard effort to preserve the past in a natural state, an opposite tendency and a simulation of the original object are offered to the tourist. However, I would argue, that the tourist is aware of this, but he / she prefers enjoying these pseudo-events that are ultimately played because he/she is there to watch them. Better to say, he is ready to

⁴ Moreover, all these pseudo - events are advertised in websites, brochures and Sunday journals, to catch the attention of the potential tourist.

⁵ For instance, the *estancia* Villaverde - in which website the history of the place is explained - has a museum of carriages and stables which exhibits a French Landeau carriage, an American Cabriolet, a butcher-milkman cart, two sulkies, a Russian excursion coach wagon, a brake, some old model cars, collections of stone pavements and other accessories. It also has a rural museum with a collection of farm tools and machines: ploughs, sowing machines, tractors, combine harvesters, rakes, water carts and so on. Moreover, it offers a visit to the re built Huitri Fort (see: <http://www.pampanet.com/villaverde/>. Accessed 19th March 2002)

e. As Frow (1997: 77) states, in this
n arising out of the reconstruction of the past,
the authentic traditions are thus turned into simulation.

The issue concerning the authenticity of the tourist practice, I would argue that it is a topic for further studies.

However, it is necessary to mention that there are two different theories in this field: on one hand, MacCannell (1973, 1976) who thinks that all tourists are looking for authenticity in a space and time different from their own. Consequently, for this author the pseudo-events are not the result of the tourist's pursuit of the non - authentic but of social relationships and a sort of barrier built by natives to resent the mass intrusion of tourists in their lands. On the other hand, Urry (1991) believes that it is not correct arguing that the basis for the organization of tourism is the search for authenticity, and -as it has been stated before- he thinks that the pseudo-events are part of the gaze due to the importance the visual element has.

To be or not to be a tourist

"Although the tourist is an outsider she / he is not completely estranged" (Craik, 1997: 114)

Is this tourist that visits the *estancia* a stranger?

Does the tourist look on the *estancia* as his - her home even if it is not?

Why?

Following this, Urry (1991) states that even though tourism is the consequence of the differentiation between the ordinary / extraordinary, this does not mean that the tourist cannot feel attached to these places as if they were his / her home. In his opinion, such a sensation is the result of other production mechanisms built by the tourist industry.

One estancia La Horqueta says:

“A beautiful fireplace in the living room, a warm place separated from the fields with huge windows. The place is completely equipped with all the facilities of a big city: the best quality in the installations and in the rooms, which are prepared so that you can feel as well as you do at home”
(see: <http://www.lahorqueta.com/> Accessed 19th March 2002)

According to McDonald (1987) the tourist does not consider him/herself as such in a pejorative way – that is to say, associated with non-authenticity – because according to him/her he -she has developed a level of consciousness or cultural awareness.

I would argue that the tourist of the *estancias* does not want to feel a stranger because if he / she feels as such, this implies that he / she is not the Other, the *estanciero*. Frow (1997) affirms that, at the same time, the tourist denies belonging to the tourists’ class.

Having reached this point of the essay, it is crucial to bear Schutz’s theory of the stranger in mind, so as to understand the tourist’s behaviour. He argues that (1964), the stranger tries to get immersed in the culture of the new social group, so as to feel accepted by it. However, it is important to consider that the codes and rules of the new social group which the stranger is trying imitate, are analysed by him / her from his / her own perspective (Schutz, 1964). Besides, the stranger finds it very difficult to fit in the new environment: his / her culture is out of context. Perhaps the first shock the stranger comes across is when he / she realizes that his / her usual way of thinking and schemes of interpretation are not valid within this new context (Schutz, 1964).

...ia a stranger? At first, the stranger is just an
...ne starts considering the possibility of being
accepted as member of the new social group, the cultural patterns of which –
he / she thinks - have to be dominated by actions (Schutz, 1964).

The tourist does not want to be a stranger, although he / she knows that it is inevitable. His / her own patterns of culture are the ones he / she uses to gaze on the site, to enjoy the experiences and the pseudo events that are performed in accordance with other patterns of culture but without denying his / hers. The tourist will read the symbols and signs of the gaze distorting their original meanings and giving them a completely different interpretation. So the tourist's own cultural patterns, also determine the construction of the event (Urry, 1991).

“The stranger, however, has to face the fact that he lacks any status as a member of the social group he is about to join and is therefore unable to get a starting point to take his bearings. He finds himself a border case outside the territory covered by the scheme of orientation current within the group. He is, therefore, no longer permitted to consider himself as the center of his social environment, and this fact causes again a dislocation of his contour lines of relevance” (Schutz, 1964: 99)

According to Schutz, it is difficult to come back home after vacations (1964). This is so, perhaps, because things and people look differently. Indeed, everything seems to have a new appearance or a new face (Schutz, 1964a). I would argue that this face this author refers to, is the face of reality: a reality which reveals the tourist social, cultural, political and historical background and lets him / her see how different these patterns are from those of the Other. This corroboration of self identity is perfectly explained by Curtis and Pajaczkowska, (1994) in the following phrase:



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a journey of metamorphosis and transformation, in which the self is changed by the experience of alterity encountered in a dialectic of difference, then tourism implies a circular confirmation of self identity" (1994: 206)

The necessity of doing field work

At the end of this analysis, it is necessary to mention the importance which doing fieldwork in the *estancia* has, so as to understand the meaning and interrelations of this new contemporary practice even more intensely. Such a thing involves, in this particular case, moving from home to the *estancia*. However, Clifford (1997) states that travelling goes beyond leaving home and going to another place. It involves material, spiritual and scientific enrichment. "It involves obtaining knowledge or having an experience (exciting, edifying, pleasurable, estranging, broadening)" (Clifford, 1997: 197). He also thinks that the spatial practice of fieldwork is mainly Western dominated, strongly male and upper middle class. However, good critical works (Pratt, 1992; Mills, 1991) are paying attention to these drawbacks, and including topics such as political, economic and regional contexts, and also race, gender, class, culture and individual psychology (1997: 197)

As it is shown in the first part of the essay, and taking into account Geertz's idea that to understand human behavior it is necessary to see it as a symbolic action, it is this behavior where the cultural forms find articulation; in this case study it is vitally important to take into account topics such as class, culture and individual psychology. "Cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape" (Geertz, 1973: 20).

e, as Geertz (1973) suggests, to study the case in context and the context itself. For this author, it is of great concern to include an interpretation of the social discourse in the cultural analysis without denying other perspectives - be they political, economic, cultural - within which, in this case, the tourist is included.

According to Clifford (1997), the anthropological field work requires holding interviews, doing research, making surveys and writing journalist reports. In this case study, I would suggest that not only is the tourist a potential interviewed, but also the hosts, the staff of the *estancia*, the people from the neighboring towns, the tourist agencies that promote this kind of activities and even the governmental tourism organizations. I would argue that to get an adequate profile of the tourist, it would be necessary to carry out fieldwork in his / her natural environment. Besides, the works of literature concerning tourism, that used to be excluded from ethnographies, are now available to back up the fieldwork (Clifford, 1997).

Moreover, the case has to be analysed in an interdisciplinary way, that is to say defining and redefining the disciplines competitively and interactively: anthropology articulated with social history, economy, biology, semiotics, literature, sociology, cultural studies, psychology (Clifford, 1997). Fisher as well (1999) agrees with this statement when he says that people from different writing genres or styles such as media critics, novelists, autobiographers, film makers, photographers and others, can complement, juxtapose and in some cases supplement contemporary ethnographic practices. In this case study in particular, there are several texts that can be helpful to understand this new trend. Let's take the case of traditional epic *gaucho* literature, such as El gaucho Martin Fierro (José Hernández, 1872), Don Segundo Sombra (Ricardo Güiraldes, 1926), El matadero (Esteban Echeverría, 1938) Juan Moreira (Eduardo Gutiérrez, 1880) Santos Vega y otras leyendas

377) among others. In the light of Fischer's
without historical genealogies, but these often
require reassessment and excavation of their multiplicity" (1997: 472), a
review of the history of the country and the configuration of the different
social classes would be an interesting and helpful approach to this case study.
Moreover, the movie industry has produced many films that can also provide
information about the topic. Indeed, movies like La Guerra Gaucha (directed
by Lucas Demare in 1942) Camila (directed by María Luisa Bemberg in 1984),
La Patagonia rebelde (based on the book written by Osvaldo Bayer in 1969
and directed by Héctor Olivera in 1974) and Asesinato en el Senado de la
Nación (directed by Juan José Jusid in 1984) may be relevant to understand
the past and present life of the *gauchos* and the *estancieros*. Likewise, the
folklore music is a very important ingredient of this case study, particularly if
we bear in mind that the different styles and lyrics of the songs are a true
reflection of the *gauchos'* thoughts, feelings and emotions.



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I wish I were *estanciero*

To conclude this essay, I would argue that the concept of the tourist gaze (Urry, 1991) and an ethnographic approach would be the methodologies that are particularly suitable for the analysis of this new contemporary cultural practice called *estancia's* tourism.

In relation with the concept of the tourist gaze, which as it has been stated above involves social activities and signs which locate the particular tourist practices (Urry, 1991) works perfectly to analyse and understand the social, cultural and even personal connotations of this case study in particular, but this methodology can also be used to study other postmodern tendencies, as this gaze includes general implications that go beyond the practise of tourism.

It is also important to highlight, that not only can the tourist gaze be the object of analysis here, but also the construction of the gaze itself and the purposes followed in its construction and interpretation. For this reason, I would suggest that it is necessary to do ethnography at three different levels: at the *estancias* taking into consideration all the agents involved in them: both, guests and hosts are the circumstances around this phenomenon. Secondly, other fieldwork could be done as regards the environment the tourist comes from, so as to understand his behavior patterns, necessities and goals in relation with this tourist practice. The background of the tourist could help to identify the reasons of this trend and also would give some clues so as to comprehend the features that are taking into account in the construction of the tourist gaze.

analysis of the socio cultural and economical practice takes place, is really necessary to be able to grasp the meaning of this new tendency. The ambitious project of a large ethnography is proposed to understand the meaning that this practice has for the Argentinean society, as it would give a complete vision of this contemporary practice. Moreover, I am convinced that the study of the history of the country is another useful perspective from where to focus this case study.

“Postmodernism and the heritage industry are linked in that they both conspire to create a shallow screen that intervenes between our present lives, and our history. We have no understanding of history in depth, but instead are offered a contemporary creation, more costume drama and reenactment than critical discourse”
(Hewison, 1987: 135).

Argentinean’s strong desire to resemble European’s identity is strongly connected with the practice in question. Although this could be a topic for further study, this is well reflected, as I stated before in the body of this paper, in movies, literary and architectural works, the media and in habitual matters in general.

Even a deep look into the native’s identity is necessary to understand this trend. The *gauchos*, with their traditions and customs, provide relevant evidence to this practice. As well, their different artistic expressions would be interesting to approach the topic.

Identity, history, authenticity, romantic ideas about the countryside, relaxation, roots, are all gathered together within a capitalist system where, according to Greenwood, everything can be sold and bought (1989). This



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context rituals and traditions are depicted of
even their authenticity.

In the end, what really matters is if the tourist is able to satisfy his / her gaze. On the whole, the pseudo-events, the construction of the gaze and the action of simulating let the tourist achieve his / her aim: to be *estanciero* for one day. At least for one day.

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