

- Chambliss, William. 1978. *On the Take – From Petty Crooks to Presidents*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Evans-Pritchard, Edward E. 1951. *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Ferrell, Jeff and Hamm, Mark. 1998. *Ethnography at the Edge: Crime, Deviance and Field Research*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.
- Finckenaue, James O. and Waring, Elin J. 1998 *Russian Mafia in America: Immigration, Culture and Crime*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.
- Hayward, Keith and Young, Jock. 2004. Cultural criminology: Some notes on the script. *Theoretical Criminology*. Special issue, 8(3): 259–73.
- Ianni, Francis. 1972. *A Family Business: Kinship and Social Control in Organized Crime*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Marx, Emanuel. 1967. *Bedouin of the Negev*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- . 1976. *The Social Context of Violent Behaviour*. London, Henley and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- . 2006 Hashish Smuggling by Bedouin in South Sinai, Paper presented at the CIROC seminar, March 15, 2006, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
- Polsky, Ned. 1969. *Hustlers, Beats and Others*. New York: The Lyons Press.
- Presdee, Mike. 2000. *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime*. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.
- Rottenberg, Hella. 1999. *Meesters, maradeurs. De lotgevallen van de collectie-Chardzjev*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Jan Mets.
- Rutland, Peter and Kogan, Natasha. 1998. The Russian Mafia: Between Hype and Reality. *Transitions*, March: 24–34.
- Siegel, Dina. 2005. *Russische bizniz*. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff.
- Sluka, Jeff A. 1990. Participant Observation in Violent Social Contexts. *Human Organization*, 49(2): 114–26.
- Sutherland, Edwin and Cressey, Donald. 1960. *Principles of Criminology*. Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott.
- Zaitch, Damian. 2002. *Trafficking Cocaine: Colombian Drug Entrepreneurs in the Netherlands*. The Hague: Kluwer Law International.

## Chapter 12

## The Straw in Anthropologists' Boots: Studying Nobility in Poland

Longina Jakubowska

The term 'anthropological fieldwork' is a gloss that covers a promiscuous array of different research strategies, mostly qualitative, often anecdotal and invariably personal and subjective (Shore 2002: 12).

In this essay, I intend to reflect on the project of anthropological fieldwork through the lens of the less travelled road of ethnographic research. After engaging in a long-term ethnographic fieldwork with the Bedouin in the Negev Desert of Israel, I undertook research in my native country of Poland. There were various reasons for that, one of them being my increasing sense of alienation from the country in which I was born, raised and educated following my long absence and amplified by the changes that swept through Eastern Europe in the 1990s. Another reason was my newly found interest in inertia and durability of social structures in spite of reforms and revolutions. My attention was caught by Polish nobility, which at the time made a powerful come back on the national scene. In those early years after 1989, the gentry experienced a surge of popularity. With each consecutive visit to Poland, I found more books on the market, some written by the gentry and some about them. They multiplied with a daunting speed: sepia colour photo albums, gentry registries, genealogies of aristocratic families, histories of noble houses, who-is-who in the past and the present, and above all, memoirs of all kinds. It seemed that everyone was engaged in the business of reminiscing. The fascination of the public with everything noble appeared insatiable at that time. The gentry – who suddenly became visible – were almost giddy with delight. Put on public stage again, they resurrected relics of their former life style. There were noble balls, St Hubert's Day foxhunts and glamorous weddings, the splendour of which equalled royal ceremonies in Western Europe. Obituaries began to specify titles and former possessions. The Order of Malta conferred new members. Within few years, no less than four journals appeared on the market all explicitly catering to the gentry's interests.

My question thus became how did the Polish gentry manage to persist and reproduce itself in a hostile political environment void of its former means of existence? What strategies did they historically develop in order to maintain group identity and cohesiveness? Which properties and attributes facilitated their transformation into a meaningful category of the new social structure? While the research inquired into the processes of elite reproduction, it also asked a larger

question of features constituent of social groups and societies, which allow them (or not) to endure over long periods in history across various social and political regimes.

Beginning in the 1980s, the shift to 'anthropology at home' brought a growing number of anthropologists to engage in the study of their own society. Often writing for local audiences in their own languages, they narrowed the gap between the researcher and the researched and raised questions of reflexivity and personal aspect of fieldwork. Along the way this new approach to the practice of anthropology problematized and deconstructed many categories, which had been part of traditional epistemology since inception of the discipline. Among others, such categories as 'anthropologist – native', or 'outsider – insider' also collapsed. It is now generally agreed that all ethnographers are positioned subjects constrained by their membership in a particular society at a particular period in history, their gender, age, class, and by the power inequality that often exists between the observed and the interpreters of history and society (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990; Jackson 1987; Okely and Callaway 1992).

Born and raised in Poland, I shared many features with the gentry that come about from living in the same country, understanding its ideological and cultural underpinnings and the practices by which it is governed. And yet I was as much a stranger to their world as I was to the Bedouin of the Negev Desert with whom I worked a decade earlier. In both field situations my position as a researcher was mediated by a perception each population held of me; each required a different research strategy and a different presentation of the self.

In both cases my nationality, more than any other identity, such as gender for example, worked in my favour and in each it was to my benefit to be 'Polish' although for different reasons. In Israel, my nationality mediated between conflicted loyalties and ambiguous identities of the settled Arab Muslim Bedouin community living in a Jewish state. In Poland, it provided a common general cultural background, which facilitated a flow of communication based on a shared understanding of the system in which both interlocutors and I, then as an individual in a national community and now as the researcher, functioned. To an extent, these commonalities, together with my foreign credentials and academic standing also mediated class distance (Lotter 2004). Being educated in the United States, where I also held a university appointment, positioned me within the circuit of intelligentsia, a cultural niche of Polish gentry. Together with worldliness and foreign experience, which have always been of importance to them, it facilitated yet another cross point of our respective identities. And yet there was a sea of difference between us; my parents were middle class professionals and the family did not have deep genealogical memory, which – given the near absence of bourgeoisie in Polish society – made me suspect that my ancestors must have been once the peasant subjects of the gentry I studied.

Elites are usually defined as groups that control specific resources by means of which they acquire political power and material advantage (Pina-Cabral and Pedroso de Lima 2000: 2). Anthropological literature concerning elites

concentrates on the power that elites exert in a given society, and subsequently the power they might exert on the researcher and the research outcome. The latter is of importance, and indeed occupies a significant space in discussions on methodologies and dilemmas inherent in elite studies, primarily because of the asymmetrical relationship intrinsic to the relationship between the researcher and the subject of study. This is nothing new, of course, except that this time power balance is skewed in the opposite direction from the usual approach in anthropological research of studying the underprivileged.

It is the very nature of elites to be exclusive and inaccessible. Indeed, the aura of mystique and inherent worthiness, which surrounds them, is predicated upon it, and the reluctance to engage in commonplace interlocation constitutes a boundary marker. This is particularly true of hereditary elites, and above all nobility, among whom kinship, descent, 'shared essence' and the power derived from their place in history provide a basis for exclusivity which makes the line that divides those who are 'in' and those who are 'out' rigid. Yet there is certain vagueness about them; never flashy, always low-key, they create an impression of easiness and informality and still remain just slightly unattainable, producing sort of a glass door effect. Performance is here, of course, of essence. Just as a habit of servitude is incorporated in the behaviour of a servile group by way of their own body deportment, so is the habit of superiority among the elite. A noble incarnates embodied authority and, more importantly, does it not by mechanically executing codes but by the ease of practised performance. This sets him apart from the class other, who, as hard as he may try, is unable to embody the acknowledged model effortlessly and gracefully (Connerton 1989). Whether the elites cultivate such a demeanour and the effect is premeditated, or whether the reactions of the outsiders are formed by their own class perceptions of self, their stance creates an obstacle to interaction. Since structures of authority and prestige are embedded in all members of the collective social body, Herzfeld's analogy to bureaucracy is instructive here: 'If there are no clients to affirm their superiority,' he writes, 'that superiority has no grounds' (2000: 230).

A considerable attention in the literature on elite studies is paid to methodological difficulties in accessing elites, be they political, economic, managerial, or noble (Pina-Cabral, Shore, etc.). This was not my experience, possibly because Polish nobles were in some respects different: they were once a large and powerful force that formed the nation's core and shaped its destiny perhaps to a greater extent than their counterparts in other European countries but their fortune waned and the socialist regime made them disappear from the public forum. Forced into silence for half a century, they had a powerful need to tell their story. By the time I began my research in 1994, the public attention given to them began to wear off. The nation's attention shifted and its fascination with nobility and history in general was steadily overridden by the severe economic problems at hand. The gentry became more careful about granting interviews expressing a wish for a more 'scientific' approach but their own desire to be heard was not yet assuaged. Most importantly, I fitted into their current agenda.



Heavily relying on the discourse of victimization privileged after 1989, gentry advocated resurrection of the group in the public sphere, recognition of injustices inflicted upon them, and most importantly, called for a revision of the land reform, which they proclaimed an unlawful act. Reprivatization high on the national agenda, they lobbied for the return of the property unlawfully, or so argued, seized from them in the course of the land reform in 1944/5. The subject proved to be more controversial than the gentry had expected. Not surprisingly, peasants and parties that represented them rejected the proposal. In an effort to deal with the resistance, gentry representatives reduced their request to what in the land reform parlance became known as 'residuaries', mainly manors and parks which surround them. Since these had been converted into recreational, scientific, or housing facilities, the request put their former owners in a direct conflict with those agencies and the local population that made use of them.<sup>1</sup> This created a situation in which the gentry became willing and even eager interlocutors, who used the interviews as an opportunity to voice their views, rectify the negative image constructed of them by the communist propaganda, and set their personal and collective record straight. Thus the nobility were willing to speak and so the problem was not gaining access to informants but the fact that they were telling the same story; what would have under other circumstances generated enthusiasm, made me wonder. Contrary to the practice of community-oriented anthropology when oftentimes ethnographers become spokespersons on behalf of the community they study, the challenge was to resist their agendas.

This is not to say that pursuing own agendas, controlling information, and possibly affecting the research program is a unique situation. During my fieldwork among Bedouin, I was discouraged to pursue a particular line of inquiry so as not to stumble on political activities of an informant, of which I only became aware many years later. The cunning use of cultural tropes by each of us, in this case gender behaviour, family honour, and authority structure in the family, held us jostling for power until finally the family patriarch resolved the situation. What is striking about the gentry and what sets them apart is their belief in the inherent worthiness of the story they are willing to share in comparison to the cautious attitude I often encountered in my work with the Bedouin. This is, perhaps indirectly, related to power. One is less vulnerable if one can control the story, its content flow, and ultimately its uses, than one who has no such capability. Furthermore, the willingness to impart one's life story is related to the belief in an inherent value of that story; the higher position one presumes in the social structure, the more conviction this belief assumes.

As is common in elite studies, I pursued what Rosa Luhrman called 'appointment anthropology' (Luhrman 1996). The gentry are dispersed forming

<sup>1</sup> Not all gentry support reprivatization; many accepted their redefined position in the national community, and although they welcome the revival of nobility, they also acknowledge the impossibility of returning to the old social structure and the life style that it had facilitated.

no residential community. To my great surprise, aristocrats, descendants of titled families with old genealogies, were easiest to approach. First, they had become visible through the media coverage. Secondly, their historically high profile prompted instantaneous name recognition while names of less 'distinguished' gentry might not be immediately identified as noble. If one met a Radziwiłł, one knew it and was smug to point it out. Also, Polish aristocracy prides itself on its commitment and service to the country and perhaps also for this reason they appeared amiable to granting interviews. Conversely, petty gentry were more difficult to trace and less eager to relate their experiences; the more information they revealed of themselves, the more apparent became their minor position in the gentry hierarchy. As one of the consequences of socialist era was levelling of the entire group, which might have once been as large as ten per cent of the entire population, it was to their benefit to gloss over their particular social standing.

Conversations took place in gentry's own environment, be it an apartment or a house, mostly in the urban metropolis of Warsaw, Kraków, and Wrocław. They were distinct in their location – usually in parts of the city that were fortunate to survive the ravages of war, the buildings retained at least some of their former elegance, which set them apart from the impersonal concrete and steel high-rises of socialist apartment blocks. Each interview was taped, transcribed and if requested also authorized. They lasted, on average, four hours and, when this interval was insufficient, another session was scheduled. Interlocutors often followed up themselves calling with additional information, or providing documents they thought useful to my research. Given the forum, gentry were in control of the content of the conversation, the story, and the message they wanted to impart. In effect, they were directing the show to which I was an audience.

Because of the subject matter and the duration of the interview, conversations were emotionally and physically taxing. Nonetheless even the eldest of them (and many were of advanced age) demonstrated great presence, clarity of mind, and a remarkable endurance, on occasion greater than mine. It was hard not to be impressed by their stamina on the one hand, and the ambience of their residences on the other. Unintentionally, this registered in the written text because, as one of the readers of my manuscript remarked, I seemed to be in awe of nobility. I was certainly bewildered by the parallel cultural universes, that of the gentry and mine.

Diary entry, 1994

I was introduced to Mrs S. by TH, a friend from my university days in Warsaw. Of gentry's origin himself, he knows her daughter professionally, for they both work at the Polish Academy of Sciences, as well as socially because he is befriended with her grandson. TH made the appointment for us on an afternoon a few days after Easter. This was my first interview and I was not sure what to expect. I had to think of what to wear, perhaps something elegant yet simple. Etiquette was important here and I felt ill at ease. I had to live up to the expectations of TH – his reputation was at stake. He was wearing a jacket and a tie. We came to a three-story house with a gate and an intercom system. The apartment was

spacious, with a long entrance hall and rooms to both sides. It looked warm and cozy but the variety of shapes surprised me and the doors – so many of them – were mystifying. Where did they lead and what was behind them? So different from the socialist mass produced apartments with their predictability of spatial arrangements and standard multi-purpose furniture, all of which one can take in with just a single glance, the likes of which I grew up in.

The sitting room – a prerogative of the blessed few in Poland – was round with large windows. I could not tell whether the furniture was valuable or just had an air of antiquity about it; there was an old-fashioned tiled coal burning stove, next to it a rocking chair with a hand-woven blanket thrown over its back, heavy curtains. We were seated at the tea table laden with delicate china. The lady, who entered shortly and was introduced as Mrs S., fit the surroundings perfectly – old and distinguished looking. She must have been a beautiful woman once. Her grey hair braided in a bun, she appeared cheerful and dignified. I felt as if I entered a stage set, or a film script about an old gentry family. Tea was served on Wedgewood china accompanied by cakes, biscuits and homemade preserves. Her grandson entered and there was some exchange about a letter she was helping him write in English.

We spoke of politics, local and worldwide. She was neither pleased with Wałęsa nor Clinton. She had one good thing to say about the latter; the word had it that he was about to appoint a Polish émigré aristocrat, Mr Rey, to the post of ambassador in Warsaw. Mr Rey was 'representative' (as in good-looking) and 'well connected' (as in with good family connections), Mrs S. stated. He was a family relation of hers.

My interlocutors were with no exception charming, intelligent, 'cultured' people bearing unmistakable marks of gentry's habitus. As I came to see during numerous visits that followed this initial interview, they commonly surround themselves with objects from the past, a bricolage of anything and everything that is reminiscent of life in a manor. It appears that as the past recedes, they seek to evoke it by preserving its relics. Antique furniture of all styles, ancestors' portraits no matter what their artistic merit, grandmother's trousseau china, family photographs, chandeliers rescued from the family mansion crowd the living space and overwhelm the frail figures in their midst. More than memory objects of youth foregone, or vanished era, it is a style which features in dwellings of younger and older generations alike. Fragments of the past, reminders of by-gone ways, memorabilia, if you will, they are also signifiers of the gentry identity, statements of status, material manifestations of intrinsic value which link the personal, the familial-genealogical, and the class with the making of Polish history. The significance of these objects is not located in their monetary value, but in the fact of having been in the possession of the family which in itself bestows exceptional properties upon them derived from their origin in the family seat and the locus of gentry identity – the manor. The atmosphere they generate is indicative of their expressive power and it is impossible not to note the objects' performative

capacity and their effect on human behaviour that sets those who belong apart from those who do not.

Distinct by their grooming habits, manners, speech patterns, the total way of presentation of self, nobility stood apart from the 'common folk'. Gentry women seemed particularly easy to identify, perhaps because they found it harder to shed, or hide, the numerous traces of cultivated distinction inscribed onto their bodies by centuries of tradition and lifelong practice. Their past, as it were, was locked in habitual memory. Mnemonic of the body manifested itself in practices of everyday life: in the hats women wore, in the manner they sipped their tea, in the gentility of their vocabulary, in the fact that they kept nannies. Just as the gentry can instantaneously recognize each other, so are the non-gentry alert to distinction manifested in body deportment. My question whether such-and-such was of gentry origin often elicited the answer that he must be because he looks the part. The explanation that followed was as vague as the image itself. This 'something' so difficult to define is what distinguishes many gentry from among others – a bearing worn as if second skin – is what Bourdieu (1984) calls habitus and the gentry 'race' (pol. *rasa*).<sup>2</sup> 'Race' connotes a demeanour and an attitude but most significantly the physical appearance, separate and yet inseparable from the sanguine poise generated from within. Just what precisely this idealized purity embodies is difficult to pinpoint but 'race' certainly included regular facial features, well-formed body, a resounding voice and vigorous stride, a polite but arrogant air, a confident grace and a sense of authority, in brief, an entire habitus, which marks the contrast between the appearances of the mighty and the lowly and which do not necessarily originate in different genetic stock, but in socially inherited differences in wealth, prestige, and power.

Although the past is continually and involuntarily re-enacted in the present conduct, that conduct is also purposefully kept, even cultivated. In the absence of property to transmit, a code of conduct, firmly regulated behaviours, and strict manners become the social badge that distinguishes the gentry from the 'common people'. As observed by Simmel, 'the more precarious is the material basis for one's existence, the weaker the moral relevance of higher classes, the more significant becomes the *personal art of existence*' (1971: 209; italics in original). In the midst of a changed and at times hostile environment, the maintenance of such conduct became ever more important. Impeccably dressed with pressed shirts and polished shoes, the gentry would sit down to a table decked with crested china even if they were to be served a simple dish of potatoes. The self-imposed discipline and the insistence on preserving standards of behaviour and proper habits reminded them

2 There is a vague relation between the common definition of the term and the gentry's usage of it. One can speculate that 'race' refers to the myth of Sarmatian origins, the belief of the Polish gentry as descendants of eastern warriors conquering indigenous peasant populations, genetically separate and inferior. Remnants of this eastern tradition could be found in male clothing worn on ritual occasions, in the popularity of oriental carpets adorning mansion walls and curved swords hang on top of them.



about whom they once were and informed the younger generation about how to be, ultimately helping to assert and safeguard their social superiority. These inherited and inculcated bodily practices of distinction perpetuated class differences and challenged the overtly democratic and egalitarian social order. Even the necessity to work did not affect their sense of decorum and every effort was made to appear dignified, polished, and untainted by the growing influence of popular plebeian culture. The latter was traditionally conceptualized as 'chamstwo', an equivalent of common and uncivilized behaviour, a property of the masses. Categorical opposition between 'lord' and 'plebes' lay at the very foundation of the gentry identity and transgressing it was a mark of declassification. Moreover, 'gentry culture' was synonymous with 'culture'; guarding it against intrusions of non-culture, or 'chamstwo', was vital to the integrity of the gentry as a group, a group, which also made a special claim on the national history and Polishness. Hence even their language registrar served to protect the purity of Polish language both in style and in spirit – through cultivating the correct grammar, vocabulary, and forms of address – against sovietization, Russification, or simply vulgarism. Description of an adversary in spoken or written narratives – an official of the regime, a communist party or agricultural collective's member – indicate every slip of grammar, incorrect use of a word, an accent in an attempt to discredit the person as capable, qualified, morally authorized, or even Polish (the equally damning alternatives of which were Jewish or Russian). As an utter disapproval of someone with a high position in the socialist reality, ambition, and perhaps education, which the gentry thought not commensurable with class origins, many nobles used the expression of 'straw still sticking from his/her boots', referring to the habit of poor peasantry to insulate their shoes in a freezing weather.

The socialist structures of interdependency might have diluted the gentry's distinctiveness if it were not for their conscious resistance to the social mixing of classes. In the absence of other status markers, purity of blood with its correlate of endogamy protected against penetration by class others. Hence the ability to recognize and place people in an appropriate social category was essential to the preservation of group's integrity. The idiom of 'family' is commonly used to determine whether one has origins in common, or is of common origin.

One day in 1995, I gave a lift in a taxi to a nobleman whom I had just interviewed. After dropping him off in front of his villa on an elegant and quiet Warsaw street, the driver turned to me and, apologizing in advance for asking the question, inquired whether the man was Count X himself. Indeed, he was, I answered and amused at the situation, I inquired about how he came to know the Count. The taxi driver's wife used to be a classmate of X's daughter. Once they both visited the Xs in their summerhouse in a posh suburb of Warsaw. He vividly remembered Mrs X greeting him with a polite inquiry 'which family are you from?', his utter lack of comprehension of it, and a dim-witted answer: 'a working class family, madam'. Since 'family' as a manifestation of social origin did not exist as a category among the working class, he found himself at a loss about the answer. The memory of this question survived the twenty years that separated the

incident from the taxi ride with Count X and was still painful because it was an apparent mark of exclusion.

Asking about one's 'family', 'family' implying here one's origin, is a means of finding information about a person's social standing. Having a 'family' implies a place in the historical chain of ancestors, known predecessors, a succession of persons who long after their demise still kept their individuality, and hence corporeality, because their names were registered in the records of memory, a text, a portrait. It is not that working class people do not have ancestors but that their ancestors had become lost in historical anonymity, their names had vanished from records and memory, and hence they appear as if they had not existed at all. They do not have 'family' in the sense the gentry has it for their roots are not traceable in societal history and memory of their descendants alike.

Quickly it also became apparent that it was of importance to my interlocutors whether I was of gentry or not and, as my research progressed, I began to expect a question to that effect. Most made an effort to locate me in the gentry social milieu, browsing through their memory to recall all the Jakubowskis they have ever known as if to forge a bond, to spark a connection which when reactivated would comfortably place us on the same level. My origins, as well as all the other gentry attributes I have so far described, consistently placed me out of their cultural universe thereby making the issue of anthropologist's 'belonging' moot; I wondered whether they could see the straw sticking out of my boots. In accordance with the gentry's *modus operandi*, interviews had a performative dimension, and the presentation of self was highly ritualized. Having to create an adequate persona through attentiveness to hypercorrect Polish, proper manners, and appropriate forms of address, I never felt at ease preoccupied by the stage and the performance as much as the content of the conversation.

In the practice of traditional community-oriented anthropology, ethnographers usually develop a close, and often personal, relationship with the community, as I have done during my research in the Bedouin community. Over the years I followed their lives, saw children get married, attended life transition ceremonies, mourned deaths, gave advice on educational and professional careers, and received them in my home. As was the dream of my generation of anthropologists, I habitually referred to the various family members with whom I lived during intermittent fieldwork as 'my Bedouin mother', 'father', 'brother', and so on. Empathy for interlocutors as individuals and as members of a larger body, on the other hand, which is normally taken for granted, becomes problematic in the study of elite groups especially if it is a study of elite in an ethnographer's 'home' society. As observed by Marcus (1983), elite research requires normative distancing beyond the usual relativism and even then it occurs in an ideologically charged atmosphere. The interview situation, the character of my visits, the nature of reminiscences about lives sketched with broad strokes and shared with a stranger were not conducive to establishing intimate relations with the informants and did indeed not yield any beyond some sympathies and some antipathies. I empathized with the traumas brought by the war, dispossession and displacement, which are,

in essence, similar in its pattern to the dispossession, dispersal and discrimination of the Negev Bedouin. I felt saddened by individual tragedies that befell many and touched by the aging figures in the midst of spaces crowded with objects of the past, their hands shaking while drinking tea from the precious china cups but was also irritated by their unyielding claim over the definition of Polishness. Some statements made me wince, such as disdain for their former subjects, unequivocal support of ultra-conservative Catholic Church, dormant anti-Semitism. Although I could analyse and understand the dilemmas of the gentry, I was troubled by their request for reprivatization and found ideological differences difficult to overcome. I obviously disagreed with the Bedouin on many issues as well, but I found it easier to relativize, the task of which is harder when one is subject to the same structures governing inclusion and exclusion. While in the process of my research I learned a great deal about Poland, I also became more conscious of the deep divisions within the society and the undertaking left me more of an 'outsider' than when I started.

Even if empathy does not become a personal problem for the ethnographer of elites and she manages to suspend normative judgment, as noted by Marcus,

reactions of the readers are nonetheless just as likely to be normatively based, since elite research of any kind has so routinely been received in an ideological atmosphere. Working sympathy for one's subjects can be misconstrued as ideological sympathy; ideological distancing from one's subjects, to the point of disapproval, is a difficult condition of work in an ethnographic style of research [...]; and ambivalence or silence in judgment on subjects makes the ethnographer's research equally vulnerable to a charge of elitism, or conversely to its use in a polemical condemnation of elites (ibid.: 23).

Consequently, more so than in other studies, the art of ethnography of the elites lies in being able to convey the humanity of individual experience without losing the sight of their implicit agendas.

## References

- Connerton, Paul. 1989. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gusterson, Hugh. 1997. Studying Up Revisited. *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 20: 114–19.
- Hertz, Rosanna and Imber, Jonathan. 1993. Fieldwork in Elite Settings: Introduction. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 22: 1–3.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 2000. Uncanny Success: Some Closing Remarks, in. *Elites: Choice Leadership and Succession*, edited by J. de Pina-Cabral and A. Pedroso de Lima. Oxford: Berg, 227–36.
- Jackson, Anthony (ed.). 1987. *Anthropology at Home*. London: Tavistock.
- Lotter, Stefanie. 2004. Studying-up Those Who Fell Down: Elite Transformation in Nepal. *Anthropology Matters Journal*, 6(2): 1–9.
- Luhrman, Tanya. 1996. *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Marcus, George. 1983. *Elites: Ethnographic Issues*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko (ed.) 1990. *Culture through Time: Anthropological Approaches*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Okely, Judith and Callaway, Helen (eds). 1992. *Anthropology and Autobiography*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Pina-Cabral, João de and Pedroso de Lima, Antonia (eds). 2002. *Elites: Choice Leadership and Succession*. Oxford: Berg.
- Shore, Cris. and Nugent, Stefen (eds). 2002. *Elite Cultures: Anthropological Perspectives, ASA Monographs*. Vol. 38. London: Routledge.
- Simmel, Georg. 1971. *On Individuality and Social Forms*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.