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The Social Making of the Illusion of Hospitality

Diplomová práce

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Prohlášení

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V Praze dne 25. června 2009 Iveta Hajdáková

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Summary

This thesis is based on a research conducted in a luxury restaurant in Prague. It focuses on service work performed by workers in the restaurant, and examines how service work contributes to the production of luxury hospitality. The thesis broadens anthropological and sociological understanding of work. Being focused on service work, it responds to the increasing importance of services in modern economy. Data gathered through participant observation and interviews are analyzed using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the economy of symbolic goods. The analysis reveals elements of gift exchange that define luxury service. Drawing upon Rachel Sherman's concept of entitlement, it deciphers inequalities between service producers and service consumers, which are produced in the performance of hospitality. The study also focuses on workers' strategies of authority and power that they use in order to make sense of their work and to cope with their subordinated roles.

Abstrakt

Tato práce je založena na výzkumu prováděném v luxusní restauraci v Praze. Zaměřuje se na služby poskytované pracovníky restaurace a zkoumá, jak jejich práce přispívá k produkci luxusního pohostinství. Práce rozšiřuje antropologické a sociologické porozumění práce. Zaměřením na práci v službách odpovídá na rostoucí důležitost služeb v moderní ekonomice. Data nashromážděná zúčastněným pozorováním a rozhovory jsou analyzována pomocí pojetí ekonomie symbolických statků Pierra Bourdieu. Analýza odkrývá prvky směny darů, která definuje luxusní služby. Za použití konceptu nároku Rachel Shermanové, dešifruje nerovnosti mezi producenty a konzumenty služeb, které vznikají během vytváření pohostinství. Studie se také zaměřuje na mocenské strategie, které pracovníci používají, aby se vyrovnali se svojí podřízenou rolí a dali své práci smysl.

Keywords

Economy of symbolic goods, entitlement, gift, gift exchange, hospitality, inequality, luxury, restaurant, service work, tip.

Contents

Let us consider this waiter in the café. His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes towards the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally there he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton while carrying his tray with the recklessness of a tight-rope-walker by putting it in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium which he perpetually reestablishes by a light movement of the arm and hand. All his behaviour seems to us a game. He applies himself to chaining his movements as if they were mechanisms, the one regulating the other; his gestures and even his voice seem to be mechanisms; he gives himself the quickness and pitiless rapidity of things. He is playing, he is amusing himself. But what is he playing? We need not watch long before we can explain it: he is playing at being a waiter in a café. There is nothing there to surprise us. The game is a kind of marking out and investigation. The child plays with his body in order to explore it, to take inventory of it; the waiter in the café plays with his condition in order to *realize* it. This obligation is no different from that which is imposed on all tradesmen. Their condition is wholly one of ceremony. The public demands of them that they realize it as a ceremony.

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*

1 Introduction

NEVER KILL A CUSTOMER!

A famous Monty Python sketch, the *Restaurant Sketch*,[1] depicts service in a luxury restaurant: A male guest makes a by-the-way complaint about a dirty fork on his table. His complaint is followed by a series of heartbreaking apologies from a waiter, the head waiter, and the manager. Guest's wife is flattered and considers it a mark of good service. The course of servile apologies is interrupted by a cook who comes to the table and calls the guests "vicious heartless bastards." After the manager stabs himself with the dirty fork the cook goes mad and is about to kill the male guest but the head waiter stops him screaming: "Never kill a customer!" The guest makes a final comment: "Lucky we didn't say anything about the dirty knife."[2]

The sketch caricatures all social agents present in the restaurant and their relationships. The daring cook, who accuses the guests of "petty feeble quibbling" and is about to kill one of them, may be understood as a symbol of workers' desire to deal with guests in a rather radical way. "Never kill a customer!" is the reverse, dark side of the imperative that demands that service workers "do everything for a customer." On the other hand, the manager who takes service seriously enough to commit *harakiri* represents desires of the guests who think that the excessive apologizing is a sign of good service although they remain unsatisfied even after the tragedy. Above all, the sketch points to the existing gap between guests and service workers which makes their understanding for each other very difficult, if not impossible.

Sociologist Jan Keller suggests that consumption offers us an asylum from the impersonal world of organizations where individuals are not important and cannot influence the course of events; whereas consumption allows one to express their individuality, for example through tailored products or by purchasing a large quantity of new things.[3] We can think of services in a similar way. Luxury restaurants offer personalized service of professional waiters who know guests' names, smile at them, and express interest in them. Moreover, the price of the service work is to be decided by guests. Luxury services recognize

[1] Flying Circus, Series 1, Episode 3, *How to recognize different types of tree from quite a long way away*, 1969.
[2] *Restaurant Sketch*, http://orangecow.org/pythonet/sketches/restrant.htm.
[3] J. Keller, *Až na dno blahobytu: ke společenským kořenům ekologické krize*, Brno: Hnutí Duha (Přátelé Země ČR), 1995, 37-40.

each guest's individuality in order to satisfy their individual needs and turn their stay in the restaurant into an enjoyable experience worth repeating. But what is it like being on the other side and playing the role of a service worker?

Unlike factory work, which has been studied by many social scientists, service work has not been a subject of much scientific attention, not to speak of work in luxury services.[4] The most characteristic of service work in contrast to factory work is the direct face-to-face contact between its producers and consumers which makes it an *interactive* work.[5] The importance of the role of service work in production of luxury is derived from the assumption that service workers have the capacity to influence guests' well being.[6] Then, to make sense of their work, service workers must be able to make sense of the relationship between themselves as producers of service and customers as consumers of their labour, from which their respective roles and entitlements are derived. This becomes even more urgent in the case of luxury services that demand of workers even broader physical and emotional engagement in their work. Needless to say, workers have to make sense of class differences that are often implied in the relationships between workers and customers in luxury settings.

This thesis is based on my research of service work in a luxury restaurant in Prague. I examine how the labour of service workers contributes to the production of luxury hospitality. I analyze elements of gift exchange which are present in production and consumption of luxury service and show that gift exchange and morality derived thereof extend beyond the service performance within the restaurant, and reach into the realm of general worker-customer relationships. I also focus on workers' strategies of negotiating authority within the structure of inherently unequal relationships between service producers and service consumers.

[4] R. Sherman, *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels*, Berkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007, 3.
[5] Sherman, *Class Acts*, 5-6
[6] Sherman, *Class Acts*, 78.

1.1 Services in the Czech Republic

> **Existuje něco jako první třída v luxusu?**
> Asi ano. Jde víc o služby než o výrobky. V Česku skoro neexistuje, a tak jezdíte do zahraničí.
> **Kam třeba?**
> Určitě do Spojených států, západní Evropy a vybraných míst, kde jsou lidé zvyklí sloužit. Oblečení je určitě dobré vybírat v Itálii.
>
> Michaela Maláčová[7]

The extract from an interview with the wife of one of the richest people in the Czech Republic touches upon three important features of the popular discourse on services in the Czech Republic: (1) It is believed that Czech services are not satisfactory compared to (2) services in other countries which are better because (3) people there "are used to serving", which implies that the Czechs are not. This is believed to be caused by the lack of free market during socialism. Correspondingly, capitalism, as it is often portrayed by the discourse, is supposed to ensure better services by the means of competition. Most often, what is considered inferior and is expected to improve in the course of time is the behaviour of service workers. Service workers are often criticized for being arrogant:

> … v Česku lze stále dostat vynadáno za příliš velkou bankovku při placení, nevhodné dotazy na úřadě, požadavek dochvilnosti u zedníka nebo příliš dlouhé prohlížení ředkviček v zelenině. Po překročení českých hranic směrem na Západ už leckdy není na první pohled poznat větších rozdílů mezi našinci a sousedy. Dokud nevstoupíme do prvního obchodu nebo restaurace. Pochmurná realita služeb z dob minulých je i u nás ve své krajní podobě, kdy zákazník byl vydán díky všeobecnému nedostatku napospas blahovůli obsluhujících, snad již definitivně pryč. Nepříjemně se ale připomíná.[8]

The opinion presented in an article published in *Nový prostor*, a magazine that deals with social issues, draws a link between communist economy and workers' behaviour. It

[7] J. Ciglerová, "Michaela Maláčová: Prý jsem miss, co ulovila boháče," 2007, ona.idnes.cz, http://ona.idnes.cz/michaela-malacova-pry-jsem-miss-co-ulovila-bohace-f6y-/ona_ony.asp?c=A070921_110111_ona_ony_jup.
[8] Z. Brodilová, M. Křížková, "Český pán a sluha," *Nový prostor*, March 3, 2009, 9.

corresponds with the idea that capitalism and free market are capable of ensuring that people are nicer to each other because it is financially more convenient than being arrogant. In other words, free market is believed to have the capacity to change service workers' behaviour. Frequent reference to services in Western countries suggest that service industry is globalized but it is usually not reflected that behind the peculiarities of Czech services might also be customary forms of behaviour that are different from the globalized image of perfect services.

The above mentioned features of service work are relevant to more and more people as the number of people working in services is growing every year.[9] In her book *No Logo*, Naomi Klein points to the same trend in the United States where the increasing importance of the service sector as a source of employment has not been reflected and the jobs are still not regarded as serious work deserving proper income, benefits, holiday pay, security, and perhaps, union representation.[10]

> Most of the large employers in the service sector manage their workforce as if their clerks didn't depend on their paychecks for anything essential, such as rent or child support. Instead, retail and service employers tend to view their employees as children: students looking for summer jobs, spending money or a quick stopover on the road to a more fulfilling and better-paying career. These are great jobs, in other words, for people who don't really need them.[11]

Although luxury services are a symbol of economic growth and progress, those employed in the service industry do not always work under progressive working conditions. In the restaurant where I conducted my field research, working time was often exceeded. For waiters, working days were not divided into shifts. Rather, waiters worked, what they called *dlouhý/krátký týden* (long/short week), a fairly common practice in Czech restaurants: Waiters were divided into two groups; when one group worked long week, i.e. five days in a week (Monday, Tuesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday), the other group worked short week, i.e. two days (Wednesday, Thursday). The groups took turns in working long and short weeks. As a

[9] Unlike in most countries of the European Union, the number of people employed in the tertiary sector in the Czech Republic is relatively low (ČSÚ, "Situace na trhu práce v ČR v porovnání s ostatními zeměmi EU," Český statistický úřad, http://www.czso.cz/csu/csu.nsf/ainformace/75AD002EB6CF). Neverthless, the employment within this sector is growing from 2.654 million at the beginning of 2004 (ČSÚ, "Vývoj ekonomické aktivity obyvatelstva v 1. čtvrtletí 2004," Český statistický úřad, http://www.czso.cz/csu/csu.nsf/ainformace/6E860028D2E1) to 2.843 million at the end of 2008 (ČSÚ, "Vývoj ekonomické aktivity obyvatelstva ve 4. čtvrtletí 2008," Český statistický úřad, http://www.czso.cz/csu/csu.nsf/ainformace/754E003FC0B8).
[10] N. Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs*, New York: Picador, 2002, 231–233.
[11] *Ibid*., 232.

result of this practice, workers enjoyed a lot of free time during the short week but worked about seventy hours during the long week, exceeding maximum daily and weekly working time and not meeting the minimum requirements for rest periods.

The wage received by waiters was a little above the minimum wage. Consequently, social benefits, such as holiday pay and social security were insignificant. The most important source of waiters' income were tips, most of which were not taxed. Although tips did not constitute a fixed salary, they motivated waiters to remain in their jobs and to work under the conditions described. It seemed that waiters did not expect their employer to ensure a secure job but rather, they expected him to give them the possibility to earn tips.[12] Hostesses were not legally employed. They received an hourly wage, which was not taxed.

In my interview with Dagmar Gavlasová, the leader of the *Českomoravský odborový svaz pohostinství, hotelů a cestovního ruchu* (Czech-Moravian union of hospitality, hotels and tourism), she confirmed that working conditions and financial issues in Czech restaurants are often against the law but there is no initiative, either on the employees' part or on the part of the state, to change these. Waiters I worked with were not interested in union representation.

Being paid minimum wage and at the same time earning quite a considerable amount of money on tips casts workers in a peculiar position in terms of class. This is further supported by the fact that service work is generally considered unskilled whereas many waiters in luxury restaurants are qualified professionals. Furthermore, while their work itself lacks prestige, it involves direct participation in luxury, which is not accessible to most people. This paradoxical social position of waiters, which inspired Bohumil Hrabal's famous novel *Obsluhoval jsem anglického krále* (*I Served the King of England*), has made it difficult for waiters' profession to adopt a firm position within the labour force. In the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, waiters' associations were inspired by the labour movement and fought for workers' rights, such as minimum wage or eight-hour working day. But unlike other workers at the time, waiters worked in nice, warm, dry places; wore tuxedos; and did not celebrate Labour Day.[13] Their working conditions might have been

[12] Money in the restaurant is dealt with in Chapter Five.

[13] The following quote illustrates how waiters reflected on their work in 1935:

> Živnost hostinská nemá a neoslavuje svátek práce… Hostinská živnost jako by neměla práva a neměla důvodu svátek práce oslavovat. Proč? Odpovědi máme různé: Jednak, že by jí ušel zisk slibovaný 1. květnem, jednak nemá na cenění a tím oslavování své práce zájem. A přece má živnost naše tolik důvodů, proč by měla svátek práce oslaviti svým způsobem. Předně je to nezdravý poměr zaměstnavatele se zaměstnancem, za druhé nezdravý poměr ke své práci a její hodnocení a také její nezdravé hodnocení významu pro společnost a stát. To jsou asi hlavní příčiny neoslavování svátku práce v naší živnosti. Dokud si nerozřešíme ve svůj prospěch tyto problémy, nerozřešíme si ani otázku oslav svátku práce a jeho významu. Že významu oslava práce má, vidíme na jeho oslavování Baťovými závody.

better than conditions of other workers but they have not improved equally since that time. Tipping, which seemed humiliating almost one hundred years ago,[14] is still the main source of waiters' income. In his rather unflattering description of waiters, George Orwell writes:

> He [waiter] too is proud in a way of his skill, but his skill is chiefly in being servile. His work gives him the mentality, not of a workman, but of a snob. He lives perpetually in sight of rich people, stands at their tables, listens to their conversation, sucks up to them with smiles and discreet little jokes. He has the pleasure of spending money by proxy. Moreover, there is always the chance that he may become rich himself, for, though waiters die poor, they have long runs of luck occasionally. At some cafés on the Grand Boulevard there is so much money to be made that the waiters actually pay the *patron* for their employment. The result is that between constantly seeing money, and hoping to get it, the waiter comes to identify himself to some extent with his employers. He will take pains to serve a meal in style, because he feels that he is participating in the meal himself.
>
> …
>
> The moral is, never be sorry for a waiter. Sometimes when you sit in a restaurant, still stuffing yourself half an hour after closing time, you feel that the tired waiter at your side must surely be despising you, "What an overfed lout;" he is thinking, "One day, when I have saved enough money, I shall be able to imitate that man." He is ministering to a kind of pleasure he thoroughly understands and admires. And that is why waiters are seldom Socialists, have no effective union, and will work twelve hours a day – they work fifteen hours, seven days a week, in many cafés. They are snobs, and they find the servile nature of their work rather congenial.[15]

(J. Pokorný, "Práce – ideál humanitní", *Otakar*, Vol. 36, No. 5, May 1, 1935, 2.)

[14] In his unique socio-psychological study, Rudolf Mudroch focuses on young waiter apprentices. He concludes that waiters' working conditions are worse than in other occupations. (R. Mudroch, *Poměry číšnických učňů v Praze: sociologicko-psychologická studie*, Praha: Sociální ústav, 1929, 119.) Among other things, he complains about the practice of tipping:

> Zpropitné má demoralizující vliv. Vzbuzuje nikoli hrdý pocit *práce*, nýbrž ponižující *služby*. Jen ten má vědomí osobní hodnosti, kdo v obchodě mění hodnotu za protihodnotu; ten, kdo bere, aniž dává, žebrá. Číšník *neprodává* svou práci, nebere za ni platu. Nemá práva na protihodnotu za svou pracovní hodnotu. Je odkázán na to, co mu host z milosti uštědří. Je závislý na jeho povaze, rozmaru. Musí *sloužit*, doslova sloužit jeho libovůli, chce-li vydělati. Jsou povahy, jež si pro to nedělají svízele; u jiných sebevědomí časem otrne a teplý peníz zahřeje zkřehlý cit osobní hrdosti. Společenská hodnota číšníkova tím ovšem trpí… *Dejte dělníku mzdu, jíž je hoden*, a vrátíte mu duši, *vrátíte mu přímý pohled rovnocenného člověka*; a hosta zbavíte trapného pocitu, že neodměnil dosti toho, jehož služeb použil.

(*Ibid*., 70.)

[15] G. Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, Penguin Books, 1940, 68-69.

Waiters in the restaurant where I conducted my research often complained that people did not recognize and appreciate their skills. Although they agreed that almost anyone could do the job, they thought it was not possible to learn to do it "over one summer," which they thought was a common misunderstanding. In their opinion, the job required experience, communication skills, knowledge of gastronomy, interest in the work, and physical strength.

1.2 A brief history of waiting

It is no wonder that waiters emphasized these requirements since waiting has been regarded as a qualified profession since Austria–Hungary, although as historical sources[16] show, waiters nevertheless had to struggle to earn the respect of guests and workers from other professions. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, waiters' frustration with their working conditions motivated them to organize associations and unions. Some of their goals were to forbid unskilled labour from taking jobs of professional waiters; to do away with prostitution by excluding women from the profession; to provide insurance and fixed salaries to workers; or to adjust working time.[17] The associations published magazines; organized their members; supported their professional pride; and provided further education.

During communism, all restaurants were owned by the state; workers were paid fixed salaries; and there existed only one union for all workers. Some of the older waiters I talked to had experience with working as waiters during the last years of communism. A few younger waiters knew about the period from their parents who were waiters, too. They agreed that waiters profited from the system because it was possible for them to cheat. Mario, a professional waiter, told me that every weekend, his parents would travel to neighboring towns and villages to buy alcohol that they could later sell in the restaurant along with regular supplies. Money earned from selling their own alcohol represented their private profit.

The years after the Velvet Revolution offered many opportunities to waiters and other service workers. Tourists were coming to the Czech Republic, especially to Prague, and the

[16] The following magazines were available to me for this research:
Číšnické listy: ústřední orgán československých hostinských a číšníků, Praha: Stivín, 1895-1912;
Otakar: věstník československého číšnictví a malohostinstva: orgán ústřední jednoty československého číšnictva "Otakar," Praha: Ústřední jednota československého číšnictva Otakar, 1909-1935;
Hostimil: odborný časopis věnovaný živnosti hostinské a výčepnické, Praha: Jelínek, Grund & spol., 1884-1949.
[17] F. Dašek, *Vznik a vývoj ústřední jednoty čsl. Číšnictví „Otakar"*, Praha, 1927, 18-19.

competition within the service sector was not strong, yet. As my informants said, waiters could make a lot of money by cheating, especially since guests coming from abroad were used to higher prices and did not realize if they were tricked. In general, my informants did not talk about this period or about communism unless I explicitly asked them, which surprised me.

The market in the nineties was very promising, especially in Prague, which became a popular destination for tourists from all over the world. Some foreigners took the opportunity and started their businesses in Prague. Among them was a Dane Mads Sukkensen who managed to buy properties in several attractive locations and has, over time, changed them into premier luxury restaurants. Currently, he owns four restaurants and is considered a very successful businessman.[18] The following study is based on my research in one of his luxury restaurants.

1.3 The field and methods

I met Mads in 2003 when I was working as a hostess for a small PR agency that hired Mads' restaurants for catering. The agency has been cooperating with him until today, which gave me many opportunities to meet waiters who became subjects of the following study. Most importantly, via my boss at the PR agency I was able to contact Mads directly and explain my research to him in person. At the time, I thought the research would be focused on managerial practices and waiters' techniques of coping with them, which seemed interesting to Mads. He let me do the research in one or more of his restaurants for as long as I would need. We agreed that I would work as a hostess and would not be paid for my work.

I conducted my participant observation in the spring and summer of 2008 (March – July). I started working at Restaurant X and decided to stay there and not continue at other restaurants because I thought it was better for my relationships with the other workers. I soon realized that due to the amount of work we all had, and because as a hostess I was not close enough to waiters, my research focus would have to shift from waiters and managers to service work in general. I decided to study workers' everyday performance of hospitality and their strategies of making sense of their work.

[18] In November 2008, only a few months after I finished my research, the financial crisis stoke in the Czech Republic. In my last interview with Andrea, she told me that Mads was going to sell one of his restaurants and told all his employees to look for other jobs.

The restaurant employed about 24 waiters, 14 hostesses, and 6 managers. The numbers were changing during the research. My relationships with hostesses were good and I felt as a regular member of their team. Because of their different role in the restaurant and because they were mostly students, hostesses were not very close to other workers. Nevertheless, I had good relationships with them, too. The only problem for me were the managers, some of whom did not seem to like me. I think it was because they probably did not know what the nature of my research was and since it was Mads who gave me the job, they might have thought I was reporting to him. When I tried to explain my research to Anna, one of the managers, she said she was not interested. After I had an argument with Marek,[19] another manager, Anna suggested that I leave and continue my research in another restaurant. Fortunately, I had intended to finish my research even before the incident and therefore, the conflict did not interfere with my plans.

I excluded cooks and bartenders from my research because it was difficult for me to get to know them. Cooks did not interact with guests, which made their work less relevant for my study of service work and the performance of hospitality. For the same reason I also excluded dishwashers, cleaners, and janitors from my research.

Besides participant observation, the study is based on interviews I conducted with service workers from July to November 2008. I conducted two interviews with hostesses, four interviews with waiters, and two interviews with managers. I also briefly interviewed Mads and the leader of the *Českomoravský odborový svaz pohostinství, hotelů a cestovního ruchu*. I did not compensate anyone for the interviews.

It was very important for my research that I had had prior experience with service work both in luxury and non-luxury settings in the Czech Republic, as well as abroad (in the United States). I worked as a hostess for nearly six years and I also have experience working as a waiter. As a guest, I have once visited Group's Restaurant Y with my boss but besides that, I have no experience with consumption of luxury services.

The validity of my research is limited to a certain extent due to the fact that I did not focus my attention on guests.[20] This was because I felt it could jeopardize the research as I was not sure if Mads would agree to that kind of research. Although consumption of service work is an integral part of service performance, I think that studying service work solely from the perspective of its producers may still be valid. I tried to include guests and their

[19] See footnote 95.
[20] Since Sherman's analysis focuses on the "interactive performance of class," guests play an important role in her study.

consumption of services in the thesis in two ways: First, to understand how waiters made sense of their work and their relationships with guests, I have paid a considerable amount of attention to their own understanding and interpretation of guests' behaviour when consuming service work. Second, in interviews that I conducted, I asked waiters how they behaved when they were in the role of guests. The latter approach helped me realize that the gift exchange that was a part of the performance of hospitality reached beyond this performance, and went from being a rule of conduct into being internalized as a moral obligation, as I will show later.

1.4 Ethical issues

Before I entered the field, the most important ethical dilemma was the problem of my identity as a researcher. I considered working *incognito* but before I could talk to Mads about it, he introduced me as a researcher to some waiters and managers. As I have already said, this became a problem for one or two managers but it did not interfere with the research itself although it made it quite uncomfortable at the end.

Whenever workers, mostly hostesses, asked me about the research, I willingly answered all their questions although I did not go into details and I did not express much enthusiasm for the research because I was worried that it could raise suspicion. However, when my research topic changed in the course of the research, I did not consult it with Mads.

As far as my status of a participating observer was concerned, I did not feel to be in a position of power in relation to the subjects of my study. This was because most of the time, my role of a hostess was more relevant and that role cast me in one of the most subordinate positions in the restaurant, especially since I was new in the restaurant, and also because I was not paid for my work. On the other hand, as a product of my research, this study recasts me as a powerful researcher, distant from the field. Moreover, to conduct the participant observation, I only had Mads' consent – all the workers and guests I observed did not really have the opportunity to refuse to participate in the research.

To protect the identity of the restaurant and identities of the service workers, I changed names of every person as well as names of restaurants mentioned in the study. I also decided not to reference several documents when I thought it could jeopardize the anonymity.

1.5 Overview

The thesis is divided into two main parts. The first part introduces the field and the topic of study, and explains key concepts and theoretical framework used for data interpretation. In Chapter One, I describe the restaurant and discuss its status of a luxury restaurant. Chapter Two offers a brief account of the main features of service work that distinguish it from factory work and introduces the concept of entitlement. In Chapter Three, I look at Bourdieu's concept of the exchange of symbolic goods that serves as the theoretical framework for my analysis of social relations in the restaurant.

The second part of the thesis presents and analyzes ethnographic data gathered in my research. Chapter Four and Chapter Five focus on service work and monetary compensation for service work respectively, in terms of gift exchange, that is, in terms of the economy of symbolic goods. These chapters prepare ground for further analysis of relationships between workers and guests in Chapter Six. In Chapter Six, I analyze inequalities produced by the means of symbolic exchange within the profit oriented restaurant business and explain service workers' strategies of authority that allow them to cope with the inequalities.

In Conclusion, I summarize my findings and propose new approaches to study of service work.

Because of the specific meaning of services in the post-socialist society and its importance for capitalist economy, I considered it an interesting topic for my study. People tend to think of services in terms of consumption and are inclined to judge service work from the perspective of consumers. Their criticism of services and their expectations of improvement of the industry are derived from their identification with guests. From the perspective of consumers, luxury services are seen as a positive model for all other services. However, services as a source of employment are not paid much attention to. As Klein pointed out, service jobs are regarded as jobs "for people who don't really need them." Often, they are thought to be jobs for students or immigrants and not serious employment for an average Czech, although more and more people are being employed by the service industry.

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the study of service work in the context of growing interest of the public in consumption of services.[21] I decided to focus on luxury services because they provide a model for good, even perfect services from a customer's point of view, but their role as a serious source employment is rather neglected. This study offers an insight into the way such services are produced by people whose job is to "make your day."

[21] M. Cvrček, T. Králíček, "Češi žijí jako západoevropané. Utrácejí vice za služby," 2008, Ihned.cz, http://ekonomika.ihned.cz/c1-24794490-cesi-ziji-jako-zapadoevropane-utraceji-vice-za-sluzby.

2 Chapter One: “We will make your day!”

A DESCRIPTION OF THE RESTAURANT

“We will make your day” was the motto of Restaurant X, as well as of the other three restaurants of the ABC Group owned by Mads Sukkensen. As one manager explained to me, the restaurant's goal was to offer pleasant experience to its guests, referring not only to the food but also to the beautiful view, trendy interior, and above all, excellent and friendly service. Most waiters I talked to seemed to identify with the motto, more precisely, with its explanation since the phrase itself is not translatable into Czech. Although their opinions on service and food in the restaurant varied they agreed that the restaurant’s location was exceptional and worth paying for.

Like the other three restaurants, Restaurant X was located in the historical center of Prague. Thanks to its prominent position at the riverside of Vltava, the restaurant offered a spectacular view of the Charles Bridge and the Old City. The building, originally a small factory built at the end of the eighteenth century, was a significant landmark of the Lesser Quarter added to the list of Czech cultural monuments. The factory had undergone reconstruction and had been turned into the trendy elegant restaurant.

The restaurant consisted of three main parts: the ground floor, which held a café, lounge and a small terrace; the main restaurant; and an open terrace, the latter two being located in the basement. The café and lounge could seat about one hundred people; the main restaurant and the terrace could seat approximately one hundred and fifty people each; however, they were never open at the same time. This was for two reasons: First, the kitchen could only cook for one hundred people at a time. Second, the terrace closed when it rained, and therefore, tables had to be ready in the main restaurant in case that all guests had to be moved inside. The fact that a significant part of the restaurant was often left empty was compensated for by a large number of tables being placed close to each other both on the terrace as well as in the main restaurant. Since the main restaurant was located in the basement, it had only three large windows (they were, in fact, doors to the terrace) that allowed for the attractive view. The interior of the restaurant was designed in elegant and very trendy style, combining wood, metal, stone, and glass. The restaurant’s cuisine – “creative international and Czech favourites” – was expected to attract diverse clientele.

Thanks to its location, the restaurant was particularly attractive to foreign tourists who constituted a significant percentage of the restaurant's clientele. During the summer, especially when the weather was nice and the terrace was open, many tourists would come to the restaurant and look at the menu. Some of them were discouraged by the prices and left or wanted to have a drink only. For these purposes, the restaurant also had a small river house. However, many of these *walk-in* tourists[22] would stay and have a meal or make a reservation for the evening or another day. Some waiters considered it inappropriate for tourists to come to the restaurant only because of the view it offered, without spending much money on the food. Many tourists also came to the restaurant because they were recommended to come by the staff at hotels they were staying in, a favour the hotels were somehow compensated for by the ABC Group.

Besides tourists, managers and business people – both Czech and international – were recognized as the restaurant's important clientele. Frequently, business lunches and staff dinner parties were held in the restaurant. Several international companies were members of the Group's membership program and their employees (perhaps top managers) would come for lunch or dinner on business as well as in their free time.

Last, but not least, many well-off local people came to the restaurant, some of whom were regular guests. *Paničky* (ladies) came because of the restaurant's bio menu, as one manager told me, but also families with children came to enjoy Sunday brunch with babysitting. Unlike Group's Restaurant Y, Restaurant X was not that popular among celebrities. However, sometimes Mads would hold a private party and invite a few celebrities. Importantly, the Group also provided catering services at various high-end events; therefore, most waiters regularly came into contact with celebrities.

During my research in 2008, before the financial crisis stroke in the Czech Republic, the restaurant's managers and waiters did not have to be worried about a lack of guests. In fact, in the summer months, the restaurant was often full. Managers knew that there would be many walk-in guests at dinner time (i.e. between 7 and 9 pm); therefore, they required hostesses to talk guests who wanted to make a reservation for dinner into making it at different times.

I found it surprising to have to disappoint a frequent customer in favour of a *walk-in* tourist. Later, many waiters told me that the concept of the restaurant was not to offer top luxury service but to offer quality service to a large quantity of people. One waiter, Mario, repeatedly said: "The restaurant is a factory for making money." A manager confirmed that

[22] *Walk-in* was a word for a guest who had not made a reservation and was used within the restaurant's system for making reservations as well as among employees.

service was not as important as it seemed to be. This applied to the quality of service as well as the quality of food. People often waited for their meals simply because the kitchen was designed to cook for one hundred people while there were often more guests in the restaurant at a time. As I will describe later, waiters often complained about the fact that they could not perform quality service but at the same time they complained about guests who would not leave the table and thus not allow more people to come in.

In my interview with Mads, he told me that he preferred to create friendly atmosphere in Restaurant X in contrast to starched atmosphere in many top restaurants. Also, as he said in an interview for a newspaper, he accepted the fact that he might never get a Michelin star for any of his restaurants simply because they were too big.[23] That his suspicion may have been correct was suggested by a magazine which deliberately excluded all the ABC Group's restaurants from its list of the best fifty restaurants in Prague explaining that: "Charismatické podniky – co do ambiente – neskýtají totiž kuchyni, která by vyvolala u hostů frenetický jásot. Nabízejí totiž tak fascinující pohled na město, že hosté, převážně zahraniční, často ani nevnímají, co vlastně jedí a jakého servisu se jim dostává."[24]

I do not want try to resolve the problem of whether Restaurant X was or was not a luxury restaurant. Luxury is a construct and as such it was manipulated by various agents concerned in this study. Although there was an acknowledged discrepancy between the restaurant's philosophy (i.e. its business image) and its concept, practices used to manage waiters and hostesses were dedicated to hospitality and luxury.

Rachel Sherman considers the following to be "the defining elements of luxury": "personalization; anticipation; legitimation, and resolution of guests' needs; unlimited available physical labour; and a deferential, sincere demeanor on the part of workers."[25] These were roughly included in the interpretation of Restaurant X's motto "We will make your day!" At the orientation meeting for hostesses that I attended, the restaurant's director of operations stressed the importance of creating an atmosphere entirely different from an office atmosphere. Supposedly, a typical local guest at the restaurant was a manager, or a business person, who spent most part of their day working, managing things and people, and wanted to spend the end of the day in a restaurant where everything would work as they expected and he or she no longer needed to manage anything. The restaurant recognized the people as professionals whose "time was money" and their leisure time even more so. Therefore, they

[23] I decided not to cite the source in order to protect the identity of the restaurant.
[24] I decided not to cite the source in order to protect the identity of the restaurant.
[25] Sherman, *Class Acts*, 25.

should not have had to wait for their meals or ask for anything, not to mention wasting their leisure time complaining. In this respect, guests' leisure is "the prolongation of work," to use Adorno and Horkheimer's term, not only in that its function is to "recruit strength" to cope with work but also in that the experiences it produces, or "manufactures," are "after-images of the work process itself."[26] The restaurant is a place where things and people are managed according to guests' requirements and, moreover, without guests' having to ask for anything, since anticipation of guests' needs is one of the features of luxury services, as described above. The subordination of the staff to guests resembles the subordination of workers to a manager but is working much more effectively.

Symbolically, the restaurant constituted for guests a world different from the "world of economics," which they had to deal with on daily basis. This was achieved by workers' adherence to what I call the *ideal of luxury*, which implies the following: The staff acknowledged their guests' individuality by executing their individual wishes and demands, and did so without demanding anything in return, while expressing positive emotional demeanour – all that to produce positive leisure experience for the guests. Further, the staff recognized the difference between the restaurant as their work place and work time; and, on the other hand, as guests' leisure place and leisure time; thus they recognized the difference between their respective entitlements to products of the restaurant, including the service. In order to create friendly atmosphere, the differences between workers and guests were obscured; for example by the staff using guests' surnames while wearing name tags with their first names, a practice that had probably been imported to the Czech Republic from the United States.

As I will try to show later, in the restaurant's attempt to deny the "world of economics," waiters and hostesses took part in a performance that created an illusion of hospitality. The goal of this thesis is to examine how luxury hospitality was produced and how it maintained and reproduced inequalities between waiters and guests. As Sherman points out, unlike factories – sites of sole production – service-providing facilities are sites of both production and consumption. I will be interested in how the producers made sense of their work while being confronted with the consumers of their work.

[26] T. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," 1944, Marxists Internet Archive, http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm.

3 Chapter Two: The Restaurant versus the Factory

3.1 Commodity fetishism in the restaurant

Whereas in a factory, one is an appendage of a machine,[27] it may be said that in a restaurant, workers are appendages of people. Service workers are not managed by their employees only, but also by their guests, whose "wishes shall be commands"[28] to the workers. Despite this, many waiters I interviewed appreciated their job in contrast to a hypothetical job in an office. They enjoyed working with people although they often said they were tired of people and their demands. Waiters liked the ever changing nature of their job, but they despised the ever changing managerial practices.

The factory has probably fascinated scholars since the first modern factories appeared in the eighteenth century. Concomitantly, factory work, working conditions, and commodity production, have become important subjects of study. Although many important works have been written in cafés, pubs, and hotels, service sector has not become equally interesting to intellectuals. But even before the rise of its economic importance in the seventies, the service sector has been an important part of social, if not economic, life of the society.

My suspicion is that one of the reasons for the lack of interest in services is the traditional symbolic division of work based on gender, whereby providing services belongs to the underrated female realm while males dominate production. Even more radical psychoanalytical explanation may be suggested: "fluid" services have not interested our phallic society as much as "firm" products! Besides these speculations, it is indeed a fact that social scientist have not paid much attention to services compared to factory work and many of those that have, have been women. Interestingly, this difference corresponds to the tension that exists between cooks and waiters. As I was told, cooks considered waiters to be mere "porters of meals" unlike themselves who were the producers of the meals. Also, cooks enjoy much higher prestige, especially with pop stars like Jamie Olivier promoting the craft of cooking.

However, what is important for my study, as far as differences between the restaurant and the factory are concerned, is (1) the outcome of work; and (2) its consumption. What is

[27] T. Adorno, "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society? Opening Address to the 16th German Sociological Congress," 1968, Marxists Internet Archive http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1968/late-capitalism.htm.

[28] "*Přání má být rozkazem*" is expected to be the imperative of service work. "*Můj zákazník – můj pán*" (My customer – my master) is another imperative that is frequently invoked.

produced and commodified in the restaurant is the work itself. Unlike a product produced in a factory, the outcome of service work, i.e. the work itself, is intangible in terms of its exchange value; it cannot be exchanged or resold. The embodied work is performed at a certain time in a certain space. It can only be performed while being consumed; consumption is an integral part of service work. Although service work is individual, it is complete only if consumed by another individual or individuals. As Sherman puts it, service work and its product are *interactive*.

Briefly referring to Marx's concept of commodity fetishism, Sherman also notices that as there is no product of service work, social relations between people are not obscured; thus, inequalities are explicit. According to Marx, commodities have a "mystical character" in that their value is not determined by their use value but instead, by the value of a product they can be exchanged for, i.e. by their exchange value; and "mysteriously," this value seems to be an objective characteristic of the commodity. In this way, real social relations between people and their labour, and between producers, capitalists, and consumers are strangely transformed into exchange relations between commodities. In the words of Marx, "there it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things."[29] For Marx, commodity exchange is an everyday religion. Žižek explains:

> The Universal is just a property of particular objects which really exist, but when we are victims of commodity fetishism it appears as if the concrete content of a commodity (its use-value) is an expression of its abstract universality (its exchange-value) – the abstract Universal, the Value, appears as a real Substance which successively incarnates itself in a series of concrete objects.[30]

Since there is no product in the case of service work itself, and production and consumption are not separate, definite social relations between people are not obscured by relations between things. Inequalities between agents of the exchange are unmasked. But commodity fetishism is still present in the restaurant in form of "food fetishism." Meals are the commodities that obscure relations between their producers, their consumers, and the capitalist, who owns the means of production and gains profit from selling the commodity. A fourth agent is included in this network of relations – a service worker who helps to serve the product. There is a symbolic inequality between the product, the price of which is definite;

[29] K. Marx, "Chapter One: Commodities," Capital Volume One, Marxists Internet Archive, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm#S4.
[30] S. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London, New York: Verso, 1989, 31.

and the service work, which is voluntary and does not have a fixed price; not to speak of the "mysterious" nature of food which makes it worth being served by people.

Although Marx says that through commodity fetishism relations between people assume a form of relations between things, Žižek claims that they are not homologous. While the relations between things are "fetishized," the relations between people are not; they seem to be relations of equality:

> What we have here are relations between 'free' people, each following his or her proper egoistic interest. The predominant and determining form of their interrelations is not domination and servitude but a contract between free people who are equal in the eyes of the law. Its model is the market exchange: here, two subjects meet, … everyone of them proceeds as a good utilitarian; the other person is for him wholly delivered of all mystical aura; all he sees in his partner is another subject who follows his interest and interests him only in so far as he possesses something – a commodity – that could satisfy some of his needs.[31]

In capitalist societies, says Žižek, relations between people are characterized by equality before the law. Egoistic calculation aimed at profit is expected to ensure equal relations between individuals participating in an economic exchange. The truth of the relations of domination and servitude that exist between agents of the exchange is "repressed" into the sphere of the relations between things; which is, what Žižek calls the (hysterical) symptom.

On the other hand, in pre-capitalist societies, relations of domination and servitude are present, whereas relations between things are "defetishized" precisely because commodity fetishism, a characteristic of capitalism, is not developed. Žižek points out that the two fetishisms – one related to the relations between things and the other related to the relations between people – are not compatible.

What we observe in the luxury restaurant is a peculiar combination of the two forms of fetishism. As in the case of pre-capitalist societies, relations between agents in the restaurant are fetishized: there exist the relations of domination and servitude between guests and service workers. But these relations exist within the market exchange and therefore, formal equality between guests and service workers is expected. Financial profit serves as the ultimate economic justification of the inequalities. In other words, provided that agents take part in the performance of the relationships of domination and servitude freely in order to seek profit, it

[31] *Ibid*., 25.

seems that the relations of inequality are, in fact, relations between free equal agents. Therefore, the inequalities in the restaurant are at once explicit and obscured and in this way, they are naturalized.

3.2 Production of entitlement and the interactive production of class

The key to Sherman's deciphering of class inequalities in luxury hotels is the "production of entitlement" within the site of "production-consumption." As Sherman says, analyses of class in service work cannot draw upon the traditional paradigm influenced by factory work analyses. Such traditional interpretations consider the point of production to be the site of exploitation that generates alienation and resistance. In the service sector however, "new forms of inequality," says Sherman, "come into play, adding further object of criticism to the traditional one of exploitation. At stake at the hotel is not only the production of inequality through the appropriation of labour effort but also workers' and clients' unequal entitlement to material resources."[32] She has "therefore focused not on relations of *exploitation in production* but on relations of *entitlement in production-consumption.*"[33]

Relations of domination based on class are inherent to the ideal of luxury and manifest themselves in unequal distribution of entitlements. Sherman points to two aspects of these entitlements: (1) workers' and guests' relative roles inside the service providing facility are determined by unequal entitlements to material resources which exist outside the facility. That means that for guests, a luxury hotel is a site of consumption whereas for service workers, it is a source of income. (2) Guests are entitled to more attention and labour because of their greater material resources. Sherman concludes that luxury service "both *depends on* unequal entitlements to material resources and *guarantees* unequal entitlements to recognition."[34] Such concept of entitlement allows Sherman to show that class structures the hotel; and at the same time, it is produced interactively within the hotel; it is enacted in the interactions between workers and guests, and in their appearance and demeanor. Sherman shows that the unequal class entitlements are interactively *normalized*: Workers construct nonsubordinate, autonomous, and powerful selves not as a mechanism for coping with the labour process but

[32] Sherman, *Class Acts*, 259.
[33] *Ibid*.
[34] *Ibid*.

as part of their consenting participation in work. Attending to guests needs seems natural to workers just as it seems natural to guests.[35]

> By shaping the entitlements and dispositions of workers and guests and constituting inequality as normal, the hotel is serving a function long associated with social institutions outside work: the function of social reproduction, or maintenance of status quo. Institutions of social reproduction, such as families, schools, religious institutions, trade unions, and civic associations, shape people's dispositions, capacities, and common sense. Experiences in the social sites influence subjects' understanding of their own place in the world and reinforce the appearance of naturalness or inevitability of that world.[36]

In my research, I do not focus on the performance of class because, as I suggested in the Introduction, class position of service workers in Restaurant X was rather complicated. Similarly, many guests in the restaurant were tourists or average middle-class Czechs whose dinner was paid for by a company, or perhaps they were people who came to the restaurant only once in a long time. Although there were vast class differences between service workers and some guests in Restaurant X, the product offered by the restaurant was available to more people than the product offered by the luxury hotels described by Sherman. The difference between luxury hotels studied by Sherman and Restaurant X studied by me shows that luxury is a relative concept.

In my analysis, I draw upon Sherman's concept of entitlement but rather than taking into account guests and workers access to material resources that exist *outside* the restaurant, I shall focus on their unequal entitlements to resources that exist *within* the restaurant, including material resources, as well as emotional labour. These unequal entitlements are derived from the "relations of production-consumption," to use Sherman's term, in which guests are entitled to *consume* service, which is *produced* by workers; but workers are not entitled to consume the service, nor to demand compensation for their work. This happens not by virtue of different class entitlements but solely by virtue of worker-customer relationships. This relationship is the fundamental difference between the restaurant and the factory precisely because it is interactive and it does not involve a product!

[35] *Ibid*., 259-260.
[36] *Ibid*., 262.

3.3 Service theatre and the performance of hospitality

Rachel Sherman suggests the metaphor of "service theatre" in contrast to the "shop floor" of manufacturing work. For Sherman, major similarities between service work and theatre lie in the "importance of meaningful performance."[37] Sherman explains that "actors take on roles, which they may or may not be comfortable executing … In the service theatre of the luxury hotel, we see both performances of subordination and performances of class. But *performance* need not connote 'inauthenticity.'"[38]

What Sherman does not reflect is that whereas actors assume entirely different roles in their theatre performance, waiters keep their identities and their names, which are reduced to their first names. Another important difference lies in different levels of interactivity. Both the theatre and the restaurant are sites of production-consumption, as Sherman points out, but while theater performance would be complete even without being received, reception is an integral part of service work.

Therefore, in my use of the metaphor of "service theatre", I would like to refer to the performance of hospitality, which is engineered in accordance with the requirements of luxury services that constitute the ideal of luxury. To a certain extent, the ideal of luxury was shared by all agents in the restaurant – service workers, managers, and guests and to that extent, the performance of hospitality was authentic. Often, however, the social agents subverted the luxury status of the restaurant and pointed out the *illusion* of luxury.

To analyze relations of production-consumption, I will draw upon Bourdieu's concept of the economy of symbolic goods and together with Sherman's concept of entitlement, I shall use it to analyze inequalities that exist between service workers and their customers during the performance of hospitality.

[37] *Ibid*., 20.
[38] *Ibid*.

4 Chapter Three: Interpreting Service Economy as the "Economy of Symbolic Goods"

When I was coding my field notes and interviews, three topics kept occurring in various contexts: service work, money, and managerial practices. In this thesis, I shall focus on the former two.

As I have already explained in the previous chapter, service work is an interactive work, meaning that it can only be complete if received by a customer; it is being consumed at the same time as it is being produced. The work is personalized in that it must satisfy various demands of its recipient, especially in a luxury restaurant.

Service work in Restaurant X was compensated for with tips. Each waiter kept any tips that they had received from their guests. Restaurant's policy strictly prohibited that waiters would ask for tips or even point to the fact that service was not included in the bill. As waiters told me, and my own experience with waiting confirms that, tipping practices of guests vary according to their nationality, the value of their bills, current mood, satisfaction with the food or the service, and other factors. There were people who tipped generously as well as those who tipped hardly at all. There is no specific rule for tipping in the Czech Republic and the practice is confusing for other nationalities as well.[39] So it was very well possible that waiter's work in the restaurant would not be appreciated at all. As one waiter, Andrea, told me:

> There are people who don't tip. There are people who will give you ten crowns. And there are those who are used to leaving tips because they've been to other countries and will give you ten percent. But the Czechs give smaller tips. They don't give ten percent. They round up the amount.

[39] A research done by Synovate, a market research company, showed that "tipping is a source of unwarranted pressure, uncertainty and discomfort for consumers all around the world." (*Synovate survey shows grappling with gratuities is tipping consumers over the edge*, 2007, http://www.marketresearchworld.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1448&Itemid=76).
"Knowing how much to tip also causes confusion, with almost one third of all consumers surveyed (29%) having difficulty determining the amount of tip to leave, and an additional 30% believing that it is better for restaurants to automatically add a service charge to a bill." (*Ibid*.)

From this follows that waiting does not have any objective value that would correspond to a certain price. Correspondingly, the amount of a tip and the tip itself are absolutely voluntary; under no circumstances can waiters claim any kind of compensation.[40]

"Service economy," that is, service work and its respective monetary compensation, is both characterized by (1) voluntariness, and (2) personalization, as the following table shows:

Service	**Money (tips)**
Workers are not entitled to demand compensation for their services. Symbolically, their work is voluntary.[41]	Guests decide on the amount of their tip or whether to give any tip at all. Tipping is strictly voluntary for them.
Service is personalized to satisfy individual needs of every customer.	Tips are given to individual waiters, supposedly based on their performance.

The above mentioned features of luxury service imply general unpredictability and incalculability of the result of waiters' work – be it profit or guests' satisfaction. This is contrary to the "economic economy," to use Bourdieu's expression,[42] which is characterized precisely by the contrary, that is, by calculability and impersonality. In the restaurant, this contrast could be observed on the difference between meals and service. Meals had to be paid for; their prices were written in the menu so that the exchange between buyers and sellers was guaranteed.[43] One menu was displayed in front of the restaurant in order for customers to

[40] That a specific notion of work corresponds to a specific monetary compensation may seem obvious but it is not. Tipping practices vary across countries, nationalities and individuals. Tipping has its history and many local histories. Tipping will be dealt with in Chapter Five.

[41] This is supported by rules whereby waiters are encouraged to create friendly, familiar atmosphere, e.g. by smiling and using guests' names. They should act as if they were genuinely happy to serve people even with no vision of future profit. These features of service work will be closely studied in Chapter Four.

[42] P. Bourdieu, *Teorie jednání*, tr. by Věra Dvořáková, Praha: Karolinum, 1998 (fr. orig. *Sur la théorie de l'action*, Editions du Seuil: Paris 1994), 128.

[43] Recently, *Little Bay Restaurant* opened a new restaurant in London and allowed their guests to pay as much (or as little) as they thought the food was worth. (This did not apply to drinks which had to be paid for.) This was supposed to attract new customers and let them determine prices of the meals on the menu. Reportedly, people paid five percent more for the meals than what the price would have been if decided by the owner. A similar experiment was done by a restaurant in Prague. However, it failed, perhaps due to media coverage that led people into assuming that everything was free. *Terra Bit Lounge*, a café in Seattle, has successfully been using a voluntary payment system. Many business making use of gift-exchange-like practices to raise their profits. In Restaurant X, however, the subject of gift exchange, is the service itself, unlike the food, which has to be paid for. (O. Leinert, P. Pospěchová, "Restaurace nechala hosty platit podle jejich libosti. Vydržela s tím týden,"

decide whether they did or did not want to take part in the exchange. On the other hand, service did not have a definite price.

This has led me to the idea, that what is happening in the restaurant is a performance of gift exchange which is taking place within the business oriented enterprise. In my analysis, I will borrow Bourdieu's concept of the "economy of symbolic goods" to explain the ideal of luxury. Further in the study, this will help me to reveal workings of unequal distribution of entitlements; production and reproduction of social inequalities between service workers and service consumers; and waiters' techniques of coping with the inequalities.

4.1 "Economy of symbolic goods" and the illusion of hospitality

In my attempts to make sense of my ethnographic data, I often struggled with the question: Why are some features of luxury service so archaic? For example, waiters' bodily behavior when serving customers, language they use when talking to customers ("Madam," "Sir"), tipping practices, almost feudal-like performance of social inequalities? Is it because of the ritual importance of food, or because of the magic power of money and people endowed with it? Although I have not managed to solve the question, it has led me to the idea that the "service theatre" creates an illusion of the pre-modern institution of gift exchange and hospitality, in contrast to the modern institution of the market.

For Bourdieu, gift exchange falls under a broader category of pre-capitalist economy, or in other words, "the economy of symbolic goods." It has three important characteristics: (1) denial of the economic expressed in negation of the price; (2) suppressed coexistence of two mutually exclusive truths (e.g. "commodities without price"), which leads to an illusion that is shared collectively thanks to the interplay of *habituses* of relevant agents; and (3) relations of domination and symbolic violence.

4.1.1 Denial of the economic

The economy of symbolic goods is an economy of haziness and indefiniteness.[44] We may even speak of a "taboo of money," which underlies luxury environment. Symbolically, this was performed, for example, when guests paid for their food: Waiters did not say how much needed to be paid; they just took the bill – discretely hidden in a folder – to their guests.

2009, Ihned.cz, http://domaci.ihned.cz/c1-34593000-restaurace-nechala-hosty-platit-podle-jejich-libosti-vydrzela-s-tim-tyden.)

[44] Bourdieu, *Teorie jednání*, 148.

A tip was given in a similar manner and waiters would take it after the guests left. Unlike in shops, money or credit cards were rarely seen *na place* (at the set)[45]. The reason for this was mainly to ensure discreetness for guests who paid for their business partners, colleagues, partners, etc., which is why some restaurants offer unpriced menus. Luxury services are particularly attentive to discreetness.[46]

As I have already mentioned, as there exist no explicit rules for calculating tips, guests decided on the amount of tips. Not only was there no price for service determined, but it was also inappropriate for waiters to point to the fact that it was expected. Waiters accepted this peculiar feature of their business although, as they often said in interviews, they thought that compulsory service charge would have been a better solution.

The voluntariness of tips casts them as gifts. Corresponding to that is the symbolically voluntary service work. I will show in chapters to come that waiters distinguished between procedures they had to perform for every guest and those that they decided to perform if they liked a guest or if they thought the guest might leave a large tip. So, although waiters were aware of the fact that their work was not strictly voluntary, they accepted and observed the ideal of luxury in that they decided to exert what they coded as extra voluntary effort, for certain guests. Symbolically, service in luxury restaurant should resemble voluntarily performed hospitality.

4.1.2 Coexistence of mutually exclusive truths

The denial of the economic implies three mutually exclusive truths of the restaurant: (1) The restaurant offers hospitality, although the owner is recognized as a successful businessman and his customers even "pay for the view." The words "customer" and "guest," which are opposite from a traditional point of view, are often interchanged. (2) Although it is known that waiters' work is not a gratuity, it is still symbolically coded as such. And (3) although the restaurant is recognized as a "theatre" and the service as performance, the performance is nevertheless expected to be authentic.

Mutually exclusive truths can coexist because they are shared collectively as some kind of bad faith. Even individual self-deception is a result of collective misrecognition as it is supported by social institutions, and, importantly, by *habituses*, that is dispositions, which are constituted by "schemes of perception, appreciation and action … which, below the level of

[45] *Plac* (the set), referred to the area where guests were seated in a restaurant. I prefer to use it because it adds to the character of service as theater explained above.
[46] *Diškrece*, a Czech word for tip, suggests the discrete nature of tips.

the decisions of consciousness and the controls of the will, set up a cognitive relationship that is profoundly obscure to itself."[47] The illusion shared by the agents in the restaurant is that service work is a gift, and also a commodity; it belongs to the sphere of the economy of symbolic exchange as well as to the market economy. The symbolic dimension and the economic dimension, says Bourdieu, should not be separated because the discourse is simply a part of economy.[48] It is precisely this *illusion* in the sense of bad faith and self-deception that I refer to in the title of the thesis. But it is also the illusion in the sense of Bourdieu's *illusio*, a game that is worth playing to those who find it meaningful because they share a certain social space, and is regarded as illusion by those, who do not participate in it.

4.1.3 Symbolic violence

Symbolic domination, which manifests itself in the form of symbolic violence, is made possible through shared *habituses*. It is instituted through shared cognitive instruments that correspond to objective structures of the market of symbolic goods.[49] In the case of the restaurant these objective structures consist of the relations between workers and customers, which are defined as unequal (*Můj zákazník – můj pán*). The dominated cannot but accept the dominant because he or she does not have cognitive instruments other than those of the dominant, which makes the relation of domination appear as natural.[50] Workers in the restaurant consented to the ideal of luxury and although they often used strategies of power to cope with their subordinated role, they never challenged the unequal distribution of entitlements between themselves and customers.[51]

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[47] P. Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, tr. by Richard Nice, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001 (Fr. orig. *La Domination Masculine*, Paris: Editions du Seuil), 37.
[48] Bourdieu, *Teorie jednání*, 146.
[49] *Ibid*., 149.
[50] Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 37-38. "Symbolic violence is instituted through the adherence that the dominated cannot fail to grant to the dominant (and therefore to the domination) when, to shape her thought of him, and herself, or, rather, her thought of her relation with him, she has only cognitive instruments that she shares with him and which, being no more that the embodied form of the relation of domination, cause that relation to appear as natural; or, in other words, when the schemes she applies in order to perceive and appreciate herself, or to perceive and appreciate the dominant (high/low, male/female, white/black, etc.), are the product of the embodiment of the – thereby naturalized – classifications of which her social being is the product." (*Ibid*., 35.)
[51] The following quote from, perhaps quite outdated, *Psychologie pro číšníky* (Psychology for waiters) well illustrates the relationship of symbolic dominance:

> Ve vztazích mezi hostem a číšníkem nalézá se číšník jen ve zdánlivě horší pozici než host. Má přece hosty „obsluhovat". Zdá se proto být v podřazené pozici. A skutečně ještě někteří hosté se cítí již z toho prostého důvodu, že se dávají obsluhovat za své peníze, v pozici moci a očekávání plnění svých požadavků. V práci číšníka se občas také vyskytuje řada situací citově vzrušivých i stressových (úkorných), které by postupně mohly u něho vést k vytváření pocitu méněcennosti, zakřiknutí, ke ztrátě dobré nálady a odvahy k další práci. K takovým psychicky zraňujícím stavům však nemůže dospět číšník, který koná svou práci, svou roli číšníka profesionálně připraven,

In the following chapters, I will present ethnographic data to illustrate how the illusion of hospitality is performed in the restaurant but also reinterpreted by service workers to allow them to negotiate their position within the unequally distributed entitlements. In order to follow the above described theoretical framework, I will first draw upon the concept of gift to show the gift-like nature of luxury service work and its monetary compensation, which denies the economic and leads to the coexistence of mutually exclusive economies – the symbolic economy and the market economy. This will allow me to decode the relations of inequality and symbolic violence present in the restaurant. Throughout the analysis, my ethnographic material will show constant efforts of service workers to assume control over their work, to cope with inequalities, and to make sense of their work.

> uvědoměle. Který je vedle znalostí o zboží vyzbrojen zejména poznatky a aplikované psychologie obsluhy hostů, kterého nemohou žádné, tedy i nejsložitější situace jednání s hosty „přivést z míry". Který vždy umí nalézt správný individuální přístup ke každému z hostů a právě svou odbornou prací získá nutné sebevědomí k odbornému výkonu své práce. (V. Král, *Psychologie pro číšníky*, Praha: Merkur, 1980.)

Basically, it is suggested that in order to cope with their subordinated position (the subordination is denied quite unsuccessfully), waiters should get better in what they do and thus acquire self-confidence. In other words, in order to cope with what they do, they should do it better.

5 Chapter Four: Service Work as a Gift

Western society strongly distinguishes between gift exchange and economic exchange. Our ideology constructs the gift as an antithesis to economic exchange, which is thought to be impersonal, calculating, and even immoral. Also a Maussian view of the gift, as summed up by Carrier, contrasts the market relations in that it characterizes the exchange of gifts as an (1) obligatory exchange (2) of inalienable objects and services (3) between related or mutually obliged participants.[52] The exchange requires giving, receiving, and paying back.

Marxian tradition tends to view gift exchange as non-exploitative in contrast to commodity exchange but some anthropologists argue that gift economy in non-monetary cultures creates an arena of exploitation comparable to that created by commodity exchange in our society.[53] In addition to that, the differences between gift and market exchange in non-western societies are often not as distinct as scholars have assumed.[54]

Some economists have noticed that even the market is in many instances influenced by norms of gift-giving. George Akerlof analyzes labour contracts and observes that in their efforts, workers often exceed minimum requirements for their work. Reciprocally, their wages are higher than those they could receive if they left their jobs. The extra labour on the workers' side and the extra wage on the company's side are considered gifts; the labour contract is considered a "partial gift exchange."[55]

The western concept of an innocent voluntary and free gift is often cynically exploited by the market. Producers advertise their products by handing them out for free; they encourage sales by giving presents in addition to purchased products; or offer complimentary gifts to award their customers. Some consumers have become immune to these strategies and are aware of their utilitarian function. Nevertheless, they are still vastly used.[56]

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[52] J. Carrier, "Gifts, Commodities, and Social Relations: A Maussian View of Exchange," *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1991): 122.

[53] M. Bloch, J. Parry, "Introduction: Money and the Morality of Exchange," in *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, ed. J. P. Parry and M. Bloch, 1-32. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 8-10.

[54] *Ibid*.

[55] G. Akerlof, "Labour Contracts as Partial Gift Exchange," in *The Economic Nature of the Firm: A Reader*, ed. L. G. Putterman and R. Kroszner, 276-287, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 276.

[56] The ABC Group also offered membership. Guests collected points for each visit and received gifts-prices based on their spending.

Guests' comments, published on the website of the ABC Group, show that guests' appreciation of waiters' extra effort lacked this cynicism. They expressed gratitude for getting more than what they had expected. This shows that some guests felt obliged to reciprocate the service not only immediately upon receiving it but also after a certain time. As if they did not think that monetary compensation was sufficient, the guests took extra effort to thank the restaurant and, sometimes, individual waiters for their service; they expressed their willingness to continue their relations with the restaurant (even if they lived abroad and such relationship would be unlikely); and promised to recommend it to others. Bourdieu suggests that this time interval between gift and counter-gift is crucial in defining gift exchange because it is precisely this interval that obscures the reciprocity of the exchange and makes both the gift and the counter-gift appear as independent and therefore gratuitous.[57]

The guests' intention to recommend the restaurant was based on their recognizing of the restaurant as a business that needed customers. But at the same time, the recommendation – as a gift that reciprocated the restaurant's services – was given in addition to the necessary payment required in the form of a bill. Where is the cynicism that accompanies uses of gifts in marketing strategies? I believe that it is successfully subverted by the pervasive ideal of luxury hospitality. As I showed in the previous chapter, the ideal of luxury implies a certain form of gift exchange although it denies it at the same time due to the fact, that the restaurant is a business. This is what Bourdieu refers to as the double truth. In this chapter, I will analyze the role of service workers in maintaining the double truth and will focus my attention on the elements of gift exchange that define luxury service.

5.1 Service workers

In his analysis, Thorstein Veblen finds absence of productive labour to be the defining element of the leisure class. At a certain stage of its development, the leisure class began to demonstrate its superiority by consuming the labour of the *derivative leisure class* – servants and wives, who were free from productive labour although their leisure "belonged" to their masters rather than to themselves. Not only did the derivative leisure class have to show *conspicuous subservience* but they also had to acquire certain skills. Their training

[57] Bourdieu, *Teorie jednání*, 123.

demonstrated that the servants had not taken part in productive labour but rather in derivative leisure.[58]

> … trained service has utility, not only as gratifying the master's instinctive liking for good and skilful workmanship and his propensity for conspicuous dominance over those whose lives are subservient to his own, but it has utility also as putting in evidence a much larger consumption of human service than would be shown by the mere present conspicuous leisure performed by an untrained person.[59]

Veblen's theory sheds some light on the nature of luxury service work and its importance for its consumers. It is important to stress that most waiters who worked in Restaurant X were educated and trained in providing hospitality. Most of them went to vocational schools for their secondary education; one female waiter was a student of hospitality at college. Education in hospitality was not required from potential employees, but prior experience with service work was necessary. Moreover, proficiency in English was compulsory and knowledge of other languages was an advantage. Interestingly, several waiters also came from families where one or both parents worked in a restaurant. I interviewed four waiters, Andrea, Mario, Jakub, and Boris, the former three being also my most important informants.

Andrea was in her mid-twenties and studied hospitality at college. She started working in Restaurant X during her studies at a vocational school where she studied hospitality, too. In the winter when the business was rather slow for waiters, Andrea would also work as a hostess.

Mario was in his early thirties. He was a professional waiter who had worked in a Michelin-star restaurant in London as a waiter, and before that, in ABC Group's Restaurant Z as a manager. He said he "grew up in a restaurant" since both his parents were waiters. Mario studied at a vocational school for waiters. This was his first year in Restaurant X.

Jakub, whom I had known because of my job with the PR agency, was also in his early thirties. He had been working as a waiter since he finished vocational school and it was his sixth year in Restaurant X. Jakub's parents worked in hospitality as well.

[58] T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Digireads.com Publishing, 2005.
[59] *Ibid*, 27.

Boris was in his late thirties. His father, who worked in hospitality industry, wanted Boris to study at a vocational school for waiters. Boris studied and also worked as a waiter during the last years of communism. It was his third year in Restaurant X.

Hostesses were required to speak English. Although they did not have to have any special education or training, nearly all of them were university or college students at the time I was working in the restaurant. The only hostess who was not a student was Jana, a former restaurant manager. At the time, she was on maternity leave but wanted to keep a flexible job. Hostesses were important informants for me. I interviewed two of them: Pavla and Aneta. They were both in their early twenties and both studied economics at college. Pavla had worked in Restaurant X for four months and Aneta for almost one year. Pavla's boyfriend worked as a cook in the restaurant.

All managers were former waiters but not all of them were educated in hospitality and none of them were educated in management. I interviewed Milan and Anna. Milan was about thirty-five years old. He was an electrician but decided to work as a waiter since he felt he was poorly paid as an electrician. He had been working in hospitality for fifteen years and this was his fourth year in Restaurant X. Anna, was a professional waiter. She had been working in Restaurant X for five years – she had worked as a waiter for three years and for two years as a manager.

NEVER SAY NO TO A GUEST!

> Waiter's politeness makes guests feel that they received something more and for free. [60]

The most important imperative of service work is to "do everything for guests;" or, expressed negatively: to "never say no to a guest!"

Unlike in hotels described by Sherman, where guests asked for anything related to their daily needs, in restaurants, their needs were more "modest" as they were only related to their relatively short stay. Most special requests were made regarding changes to meals but many other extra favours were asked for too. Hostesses were supposed to order taxis and let customers know when drivers were waiting for them. Often they were asked to communicate

[60] Král, *Psychologie pro číšníky*, 105.

guests' needs to managers because guests did not want to wait until managers came to the front desk. They helped with luggage, coats, held the door, brought guests' belongings from the cloakroom to their tables and back if the guests needed or forgot something. They often had to remember to do something for guests later, for example to bring their friends to the table if the latter were expected to arrive later; or to call guests who were considering making a reservation and inform them about the wine that was served.

Often however, guests' requests were not executable. For example, a guest wanted to have a brunch for her children on a Thursday afternoon although she knew that the restaurant held brunches only on Sundays. In such situations, hostesses and waiters were asked to be polite and try not to refuse the request explicitly.

There was a thin line between what could have been done for guests and what could not. Spending too much time trying to help one guest might have denied service to other potential guests. Managers were very inconsistent in what they saw as priorities in service. Workers usually had to decide individually on whether to do something extra for a guest or not. This made them aware of the voluntary, gift-like nature of their work.

5.2 Voluntariness

Hostesses and waiters put different amounts of effort into their work based on whom they found more or less entitled to their services. This confirmed the voluntary nature of those efforts but it also created in the workers a feeling of power over their work. Andrea said in an interview:

> There are luxury restaurants where they should do absolutely everything for you. But there are limits. The guests can't exploit that. I think there should be limits. But you get a lot more in such restaurants – whatever you ask for, whatever you require, want and wish. We are expected to do everything for our guests, too. We are one of those restaurants that offer that kind of service. But, we have limits. And you know which guest you want to do it for and which one you don't because he's just exploiting you because he thinks he can. Normal intelligent people know the limits.

Waiters and hostesses saw guests as more or less entitled to their service and the extra effort based on how the guests participated in the performance of hospitality. Guests who

refused to accept service as a voluntary gift exchange and insisted on their entitlement to get anything they wanted were considered "exploitative." Paradoxically, these guests did not get the truly voluntary extra effort. Andrea suggested this when she said "you know which guest you want to do it for and which one you don't because he's just exploiting you because he thinks he can." If their work was deprived of the element of voluntariness, waiters coded the work as servitude.

Jakub:

> Some people come and they're like: I have the money so, waiter, you're my servant so do your best.

Anna:

> I think that people consider waiters their servants who should make their day but I feel that after I've become a manager, they've started respecting me a bit more. Maybe as a woman, I feel the difference even more.

Waiters often complained that guests did not appreciate their work and considered it "a matter of course." In such cases, they regarded their work and effort as obligatory, not voluntary. Of course, they were obliged to serve all guests simply because the guests were "paying for it," but they expected guests to receive service as if it was a gift. Waiters did not code the nature of the exchange between themselves and their guests as solely monetary (obligatory, impersonal), but also as human (voluntary, friendly, polite, reciprocal) and they expected guests to acknowledge that. These expectations were supported by the ideal of luxury which insists on the image of authentic gift exchange. In other words, waiters did not agree that the fact that someone was paying for their services entitled them to ignore the voluntary nature of service work and to treat workers as servants. Nevertheless, I never saw anyone refusing to serve such customers.

Besides guests who behaved as if service work and effort were something they were entitled to and thus demanded it, there were guests who refused or ignored it. This applied at large to some tourists, especially the Russians, who were the least favourite nationality among service workers. My colleague, Pavla, said:

> I don't like the Russians. They are arrogant, mean; they never stop here and just go inside. They pick a table and don't care.

Guests who did not let hostesses do their job and escort them to their tables were considered rude, impolite and not worth any extra effort. This refusal of luxury service on the part of guests also caused problems between waiters and hostesses. In order to provide excellent service, guests had to be seated in various sections of the restaurant, which were assigned to particular waiters. This was because waiters could not have served more than one newly arrived table properly. Thus, problems with guests who refused luxury service were twofold: they did not allow hostesses to "give" them their labour; and they made performance of luxury difficult for waiters and cooks, too.

Guests who refused to participate in the performance of gift exchange – by demanding it or by ignoring it – were refused extra attention and emotional labour, and workers would put less effort into anticipating these guests' needs. Hostesses would not talk to these guests more than was necessary, they would pretend not to see them when leaving (by pretending to be busy, for example), they would greet them without thanking them for their visit, and so on.

Waiters refused to perform this extra service too. Since they were symbolically, though not formally, superior to hostesses, they often handed down their own work to them, thus maintaining certain level of service while refusing to perform it themselves. Sometimes, waiters would refuse to serve at all, especially if they suspected that it would not be reciprocated with tips. Guests who wanted to "have a drink and a dessert," were usually not served in the main restaurant but sometimes, they were refused from the café, too. On one of my Sunday brunch shifts, waiters were not willing to build a table for a group of twelve people so they told me not to let the group come in. Marek, a manager who was working that day, overheard our conversation. He got angry and built the table by himself. Waiters did not like working on brunch shifts or in the café because they did not earn much on tips.

Anna complained about guests whose demands were not executable, for example when guests who brought little children to the restaurant and expected the staff to take care of them:

> I'm not a kindergarten. I'm here to offer gastronomy and some kind of experience but I won't babysit any children. I can give them toys but nurture is up to their parents. They don't understand that I'm here not only for them but for other one hundred people and those children spoil their experience. But the parents think this is what we should respect.

She pointed out the fact that often, doing something extra for one customer might spoil the experience for other customers.

On the other hand, if workers liked their guests, they were willing to do much more to "make their day." Sometimes, waiters would accompany these guests to the exit, they would talk to them more, try to recommend meals and drinks. Often, they remembered guests' names and a few personal details about them. Hostesses would express more enthusiasm and effort to take care of the guests by asking them if they needed anything.

Who were these "good guests?" They were the people who knew how to consume luxury service, meaning that they participated in the illusion of gift exchange by receiving service as a gift and reciprocating it. When asked to define the perfect customer, Anna answered with an almost perfect definition of the gift:

> A perfect customer is someone who asks for a recommendation and accepts it, looks you in the eyes and smiles at you.

Mario:

> A perfect customer is any customer provided that they are a nice person who will receive good service, good recommendations, and who will spend some money. They don't have to leave a large tip … If they leave ten percent, they're perfect.

Boris:

> It's someone who's satisfied. Who's happy when he comes in and also when he leaves; and comes back another time.

Andrea described a perfect customer as one who

> … comes in, smiles, thanks you and doesn't spoil your day.

These opinions suggest that workers saw their work as interactive. Their ideas of a perfect customer were not that much about the customer's personality; they were more about how customers should accept the service offered to them. Guests were expected to appreciate waiters' skills and participate in the performance of luxury hospitality, including the performance of gift exchange. In other words, it was not enough if customers let waiters do their work, they also had to complete that work by being satisfied – by "having their days made."

Hostesses did not articulate their preferences as clearly as waiters. At my orientation meeting, the director of operations explained that hostess' job was primarily to "make a good impression" on guests when they arrived and "confirm it" when they left. They were symbolically in a subordinate position to waiters because their labour was unskilled and therefore, less prestigious. Moreover, their role in the restaurant was gendered. Unlike waiters, mostly males, who provided the most important part of service – handling of meals and drinks – hostesses were supposed "to make a good impression" although their tasks were more complex than that.[61] Corresponding to this role was the fact that hostesses were not legally employed by the restaurant and therefore, they were not paid officially. Since almost all of them were students, they did not take their jobs as seriously as waiters did. Whenever waiters or managers were mean to them, they would say something like this among themselves: "Unlike them, I'm not going to be doing this all my life," thus retrieving their authority. Because of these specific features of their work, hostesses' expectations of reciprocity on behalf of guests were reduced to "niceness" and "politeness."

Voluntary effort was believed to be a necessary attribute of luxury performance. Some waiters criticized others for doing their jobs mechanically and not adding that extra effort. Mario said on behalf of some waiters:

> If they come to a table, offer bad service and come with the bill just like that, put it on the table and leave – that's a tragedy. It's about personality. They have to be interested in their work and mainly in the guest.

On a different occasion, he complained that it was impossible to offer proper service (including the necessary extra effort) in Restaurant X because it was too big. "We are just porters," he said. This was a frequent complaint of waiters as well as managers.

When I asked waiters what they thought was perfect luxury service, I was often given a very exact answer: Waiters should know everything about the food in the restaurant and their

[61] Symbolic hierarchy among workers seemed to have been derived from their contacts with meals and drinks. Cooks were the most dominant because they were the ones who produced meals. Waiters served the meals and wine but hostesses did not come into contact with meals whatsoever. Within this hierarchy, managers occupied lower position than waiters. Many waiters considered them unskilled and, moreover, incompetent. Waiters looked down on managers and did not respect them, although they had to obey their rules. They preferred managers who interfered with waiters' work as little as possible. Cooks were subordinate to the chef, not to the managers.
This sheds an interesting light on commodity fetishism in the restaurant described in the previous chapter. Workers' position within the hierarchy was not derived from their contacts with consumers (unlike in hotels described by Sherman) but from their contacts with the food.

wines. They should be able to recommend a certain meal and wine that would suit the food. Also, they thought waiters should be able to set tables and serve meals and drinks properly. In general, their shared idea of excellent service referred to skills, not efforts. They viewed their work as a craft, which was a view they had probably developed during their studies of hospitality. Mario complained that this was not what was appreciated or even required in Restaurant X:

> You go to a table, take the order, have a little chat, give them the bill. But that has nothing to do with good service.

The restaurant's goal was to offer a complex experience, not (only) excellent service. "They don't even notice you," said Mario on behalf of guests who enjoyed the view more than the service.

Unlike hostesses, waiters had a clear idea about the value of their work. For them, it was not only service but a craft that required certain knowledge and skills. But from a larger perspective, this craft was only one part of service. Guests did not pay waiters for their recommendations or for information about wines. The recommendations were given to them as part of service performance, which enacted gift exchange. In this respect, service workers enacted "conspicuous subservience" rather than skillful work *per se*.

5.3 Politeness, friendliness, and classiness

Caught in the double truth of the economy of symbolic exchange which suppresses its economic nature, service workers expected their guests to play by its rules: If customers did not thank for service when they were leaving, both waiters and hostesses were extremely irritated. The reason for this was that service work should be reciprocated with a "thank you" because (1) it is a gift; but also because (2) luxury performance is not complete unless positively received by a customer. Service workers thought that niceness and politeness were required in the luxury environment. Both waiters and hostesses often complained about guests not greeting them. Jakub, said:

> If they come in without saying hello – that irritates me. Seriously. If I go anywhere, I learn to say hello or good day or something. What can the waiter tell me in a restaurant? What do you think? You go to a restaurant in *Wherever* and someone

> tells you something at the door. What can it be that they tell you? But the people just look at you and [pause] I'm really sorry for that. I'm rather really angry.

Replying to a greeting may be considered a basic principal of polite communication. This is certainly how waiters and hostesses saw it. They did not automatically like customers who greeted them, which, from my experience, most of them did. However, they despised those who did not, considering them rude.

Anna:

> There's often a paradox in that we're in fact surprised if guests are polite. Many guests are in hurry and you come to them and say, "good afternoon," and they will reply with: "an espresso and a Mattoni." I didn't ask you what you'd like to have! I greeted you. – But you can say that in the kitchen when you're about to kick a crate of Mattonis, but you can't say it to the guest.

Failure to be polite to waiters and hostesses was sometimes met with great fury but workers could only express it among themselves as they usually did. Once, Anna went to a lot of trouble to meet requirements of a group of business people who wanted to have a very quick lunch at the terrace during busy hours. But after they were rude to their waiter and complained about the food, she came to the front desk to get on the phone with another manager who had been communicating with the business people only to tell her how much trouble they were. Although there were a few guests around, she did not hesitate to scream: "Assholes, assholes!"

Mads, the owner of the restaurant, wanted the restaurants to offer relaxed atmosphere, which would make guests feel comfortable "even if their knives fell off the table." That is why he did not expect waiters to perform technically flawless service. Rather, he expected the staff to engage in friendly informal communication with guests. Hostesses were encouraged to chat with guests while escorting them to their tables. Waiters and hostesses agreed with the idea that there should be friendly atmosphere in the restaurant. Mario told me:

> You have to tell them: "Hi, how are you? May I recommend anything? How was your day? You shouldn't have this, it's not very good." And you should talk to them like this. You have to talk to them as if they were your friends. I think most people appreciate this. They like sincerity and a friendly approach. But many people can't do it.

As I said earlier, waiters and hostesses were irritated when guests did not show minimum respect for them and did not greet or thank them. However, mere politeness was not a sufficient reason for waiters to appreciate guests. Workers requested that their friendly attitude be reciprocated: waiters liked being recognized by guests (although by their first names only), they appreciated being asked about how they were, and liked when guests shared their ideas or experience with them, etc. It might have been a conversation about a dress or a football match that made waiters or hostesses like certain guests. I myself liked guests who asked me how I had learnt English, what I studied, and so on.

Jakub:

> I don't care what they think. But I really care how they behave. If they come in and say: "hi, how are you," whatever, … "I'll have this or that;" and I'm like, ok, enjoy. And they thank me and are polite. But people are rarely like this. And often you say to yourself: "I'm really happy that you're here." Really, they thank me and I'm like, this is impossible, dude. But here, most people are like, yes, ok, thanks, bye.
>
> There should be some kind of connection between waiters and guests. Not that the waiter is their waiter but rather their friend who can help them decide and they can ask him, Is this good or is it bad? And the waiter tells them, This will be better … So that there's a friendly connection … There should be a connection between the waiter and the guest so that it's nice and comfortable. For the guest and for me, too.

Friendliness made it easier for waiters and hostesses to perform their voluntary work. They could easily fulfill luxury standard and put extra effort into their work if they considered guests their friends. Guests who appreciated these efforts and took part in what Jakub called "friendly connection" were workers' favourite guests.

Perhaps more importantly, friendliness effectively obscured social differences between waiters and customers.[62] In interviews, most workers said they did not regard customers as privileged but they were also certain that customers felt that way. Workers often complained

[62] Inequalities among employees were sometimes obscured, too. Usually, this happened through what Spradley and Mann, following Radcliffe-Brown, call *the joking relationship*. (J. P. Spradley, B. J. Mann, *The Cocktail Waitress: Woman's Work in a Man's World*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1975.) Managers and male waiters often flirted with hostesses by joking with them. During my interview with Mads, he told me – jokingly – that he expected hostesses to wear bikini and flirt with him. He added that he never had sex with hostesses, thus maintaining his authority even more. Before he introduced me to waiters as a researcher and a future hostess, he told the general manager that I was his "future ex-wife." It needs to be said that he was slightly drunk. (Flirting, even harassment, can be degrading. However, flirting that is not an expression of fondness but rather an expression of domination is all the more degrading.)

that guests thought they were poor. Treating the staff as subordinate violated "friendship" or "partnership" between customers and the staff, and made explicit the differences. This was always considered inappropriate. Milan, the manager, said:

> People think they can be arrogant if they have money – that happens. But that's the guest's fault that he behaves like that and that he shows how much money he has.

Often, guests' failure to meet the expectations of the staff resulted in a moral judgment based on how much money the guests had:

Anna:

> A businessman pays with a company bank card and it doesn't matter that I have the same bank card. But he really sells it – that he's the one who wants to be waited on. When I was a waiter, people often treated me as a subordinate. But paradoxically, they are not people who are at the top but those who are only climbing to the top. We would always make fun of these office workers who made so much fuss – they weren't as important. But when a man comes and he owns a huge company of thousands of employees and he pays with a black American Express – he's really sweet, there's no arguments and it's a pleasure to talk to him and serve him.

Jakub:

> It's about 60 to 40, perhaps 70 per cent of people who think they're something more. I don't care how they came into the money but sometimes it seems that the ones who have a lot of money and got the money in a reasonable way, or whatever, they are ok, easy. But those who got rich quickly, who come here, they make you feel it. He might have been cleaning toilets some time ago and was going to normal restaurants and suddenly, he's invited by someone or just came into the money somehow and suddenly, "I'm the boss here." That gets me. It's incomprehensible sometimes.

Andrea:

> I don't like how they treat us, how they look down on us … Many times, the less wealthy guests are just troubled and they compensate for that. They think they are god-knows-who when they come to such restaurant once in their life. I really don't like that and I'm tired of it. Really tired.

Aneta and Pavla, two hostesses who were both university students said:

Pavla: There are those who show they've got lots of money and that we should do our best in looking after them because they deserve the service. But it depends. Some are ok, some don't care. Some show that they've got lots of money.

Aneta: But they are the ones who don't have that much. The ones who have a lot, they are really nice. It's a paradox.

Pavla: Yes, they're really nice.

Aneta: Also with clothes. Some spend a monthly salary only to have certain clothes. But then, someone classy comes and they don't show it.

The idea that the richer the people were, the more politely, appropriately, and nicely they behaved[63] was shared by many workers. From the interview extracts above we may conclude that waiters preferred guests who did not show how much money they had. But how exactly were guests capable of *showing* this? As I have already mentioned, guests who were not polite or friendly with the staff violated the symbolic gift exchange. If workers felt that guests considered service work a matter of course, as something which they were entitled to simply because they were paying for it, the voluntary status of service work was violated and, in the eyes of the workers, the work turned into compulsory servitude. After service work had been stripped of its gift-like nature, it became obvious that guests' entitlement to it was based merely on them paying for it. This disclosure made waiters and hostesses feel mistreated. As Milan said, such disclosure of one's financial opportunities was the guest's fault. Consumption of luxury services should not result in mistreatment of those who serve. People who were rich enough (provided they did not come into money rapidly, as Jakub suggested) were used to receiving human labour and to luxury environment, in which the differences between guests and the staff are obscured. People who did not recognize the performative nature of gift-giving were thought not to be accustomed to luxury standard and thus not "really rich."

Andrea refused to accept the differences between herself and her guests:

Some people who come here are very rich, some are normal. We don't really care because most of us play golf so we meet the more wealthy guests when playing golf and we know that they're our guests and they know that we wait on them, so we don't care … For example, often, the less well off people think we're poor and then they treat us that way.

[63] For this reason, waiters did not like tourists who came to the restaurant only because of the view and did not spend enough money.

She pointed out the fact that many waiters were able to afford the same services as their ("more wealthy") guests. Nevertheless, the nature of their work made it possible for them to be mistreated.

Besides being polite and friendly, guests were also expected to use the material resources of the restaurant appropriately, to follow certain "rules" when consuming service work, and also to look well. Failure to meet these expectations made the guests seem less entitled to luxury services. It happened on daily basis that guests either damaged restaurant property or requested to use things in an inappropriate way. For example, a guest cut out a hole in the restaurant's blanket and turned it into a poncho. Another guest requested that her dog be served regular meal on the same china as human guests. Such anecdotes were a source of amusement for the staff and a reason to see certain guests as less entitled to luxury.

Similarly, guests' entitlement was questioned when they did not seem to know how to consume service work. Sometimes, their ignorance was coded as funny as for example, when a guest did not know how to pronounce "steak" properly. Sometimes, it was considered arrogant:

Mario:

> I respect that my customer is my boss, that's for sure. But what I hate – and Czech guests do this a lot – is when you come to a table and they order a beer and I ask them: "Would anyone like anything else?" – "No!" And you return to the table with the beer and they say: "Ok, I'll have one too." And so I ask the rest of them: "Would you like anything else? A coffee for madam. What about you, sir?" –"No!" And you return with the coffee: "Jesus, that looks good, I'll have that, too." And eight people keep you busy one after another. They can't order at the same time. Waiters lose ten minutes of their lives and lots of nerves because of this stupidity.

Milan:

> … sometimes the Czechs are really weird, I think they're crazy. They demand too much and bother you all the time. They come up with strange things. Sometimes they're impolite with the staff – the Czechs – even vulgar. That hasn't happened with foreigners, I think.

Czech guests were often seen as not classy enough. Other nationalities were criticized too: the Japanese for being messy when eating, the Italians and the Spanish for being too loud, the

Russians for being arrogant and not speaking any foreign language, the French for being bad tippers, and so on.

Last, but not least, guests were judged by their appearance. Once, a hostess unkindly commented on guests who came to the restaurant that day: "Those people that are coming in today!" She was referring to one guest's teeth, another guest's clothes and another one's hair colour. Male guests who were top-less were not allowed in the restaurant but otherwise, there was no dress code.

Waiters agreed with the ideal of luxury service but, following the "rules" of the economy of symbolic goods, they expected reciprocity. They did not agree with the fact that sole economic and financial prosperity were sufficient reasons for one's entitlement to luxury. Guests were expected to behave and also to look appropriately. Unless guests met these requirements, the restaurant's staff might have felt abused, their efforts having been reduced to fulfillment of their duties. In such situations, the staff did not refuse to serve but their patience with guests and with service work in general diminished:

Andrea:

> In the beginning [sigh], I really liked talking to guests. But now [pause] I don't like it at all [laughter].

5.4 Emotional labour

The goal of the restaurant was to "make one's day;" to, perhaps, improve one's mood by offering a pleasant gastronomic experience. This emotional change was to be achieved, besides other efforts, by investment of emotions on the workers' part. Hochschild coined the term *emotional labour* to define labour which "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others ... This kind of labour calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honour as deep and integral to our individuality."[64] As Hochschild has shown, service work requires a great deal of emotional work and management of emotions.

When I came to work in Restaurant X, it was almost April. Mads had decided that April was going to be a "smiling month." Everyone was encouraged to smile at guests and at co-workers, as well. From what I could observe, his effort was not successful despite the fact that workers could have been fined for not smiling. In a newspaper interview, Mads said he was

[64] A. R. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, Berkley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983, 7.

very happy with his staff but wished they would smile more.[65] One reason for this failure may be the fact that the "keep smiling" motto is relatively new in the Czech Republic.[66] In a text book for students of hospitality published in 1949, we read that smiling may be considered impolite or it might derogate that, which is being offered:

> V knihách o úspěšném podnikání je často citováno čínské přísloví: „Člověk bez usměvavého obličeje nemá otevírati krám" anebo americké heslo: „Vždy s úsměvem!" Obě poučky bych pro naše povolání změnil na heslo: „Vždy se tvař vlídně. Úsměv jen při uvítání a rozloučení."
>
> Nesmíme se usmívat za každou cenu a stále. Když začne host něco vytýkat, pak se mu nesmíme smát do očí. Neusmíváme se ani, když se nás host s vážnou tváří něco dotazuje. Nebudeme se smát, když hostu něco nabízíme, to by zlehčovalo nabízené."[67]

Most waiters in Restaurant X refused to smile when they thought it would be unauthentic.[68] Mario said:

> I'm never pissed off or cheesed. But I only smile when there's a reason. I won't smile like an idiot, even if I must. I don't care. I do my job. Sometimes I work four days in a row and fifteen hours a day and they want me to smile and look natural?

Sometimes, they thought it was impossible for them to smile, for example when guests were mean:

Andrea:

> Smiling is a basic thing and every waiter should say hello, and smile and not frown. But when a guest is mean from the beginning, it's often impossible.

Hostesses were required to smile even when speaking to customers on the phone because it supposedly changed the tone of their voice and made it sound more pleasant. Waiters, especially older men, smiled the least. There were some waiters that I never saw smiling. Surprisingly, some managers did not smile either, not even at their subordinates or at each other. Hostesses, on the other hand, smiled quite often. Similarly to flight attendants

[65] To protect the anonymity of the owner and the restaurant, I do not reference the source.
[66] On conflict between corporate requirements and customary forms of emotional behavior see S. Fineman, (ed.), *Emotion in Organizations*, London: Sage, 2000.
[67] F. Dašek, *Pohostinství*, Praha: Tisk. a vyd. družstvo, 1949, 9.
[68] Emotional disonance seems to affect service workers more than emotional labour itself. (B. E. Ashforth, M. A. Tomiuk, "Emotional Labour and Authenticity: Views from Service Agents," in Fineman, *Emotions in Organizations*, 184-203.)

described by Hochschild, hostesses were middle-class college-educated women whose job was to "*enact* two leading roles of Womanhood: the loving wife and mother (… tending the needs of others) and the glamorous "career woman" (dressed to be seen, in contact with strange men, professional and controlled in manner …).[69] Although I too smiled more than most of the staff, I found it hard to smile when I was too busy or angry.

Smiling was only a part of emotional labour performed by service workers. Being visible, it was easily observed. But behind smiles or even behind serious faces, was certainly a great amount of emotional labour consisting of efforts to manage feelings of anger, frustration, sadness, and so on. However, it was not my goal to study if and how these feelings were managed. What is important for my analysis is that workers were required to look as if they were happy to do their jobs, and serve their customers as if they were serving voluntarily. This display of positive emotions also contributed to the illusion of gift-giving.

Sometimes, workers spoke in the first person when they were referring to the restaurant: "Yes, I do have a table for you at that time," said a hostess. Using this figure of speech it looked as if she was offering something that belonged to her, which also enabled her to perform gift-exchange more authentically. Hochschild notices that in order to manage their feelings, flight attendants were encouraged to imagine that passengers were "guests in their living room."[70]

Waiters expected customers' emotions to be altered during the performance of hospitality, as well. Customers were expected to positively receive workers' physical and emotional labour, to be satisfied, relaxed, and to *enjoy* it. The restaurant's motto referred to this goal, too.

Anna:

> I didn't mind if I didn't get a tip. But I didn't like when people were ill-behaved or they couldn't enjoy it.

When Mario was describing the Michelin star restaurant he had worked in, he was speaking about rich people being *capable of enjoying* the service as if ordinary people did not have such capacity. Indeed, "ordinary people" who were not used to luxury services might not have recognized the significance of particular features of service work and react to them properly. The staff offered services which could not be appreciated unless they had been needed or

[69] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 175.
[70] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 105.

expected before. Guests had to learn what they should need and get used to accepting what was offered to them. That was also why very rich people were considered better customers – they knew how to take part in the performance of hospitality.

Waiters in Restaurant X had to perform emotional labour through management of their feelings in order to create friendly atmosphere in the restaurant. In return, they expected guests to *enjoy* their stay. Enjoyment was coded as an emotional state, resulting from one's consumption of luxury service, providing (and proving) that the person had a capacity to consume such service. This shows that feelings could also be exchanged in the form of gift exchange. Hochschild suggests this when she says:

> … display and emotion work are not matters of chance. They come into play, back and forth. They come to mean payment or nonpayment of latent dues. "Inappropriate emotion" may be constructed as a nonpayment or mispayment of what is due, an indication that we are not seeing things in the right light.[71]

5.5 The mind and the body

Besides being emotionally demanding, waiting is a hard labour that requires certain physical, as well as intellectual abilities. Both bodies and minds of workers are fully engaged in the work. Bodies have to be strong because the work requires daylong walking and standing, carrying tables; and they have to be agile, too, since moving among tables, guests, other waiters, while carrying heavy designer plates, requires certain fineness.

Waiters had to be busy at all times while paying attention to their guests' needs. Most waiters said that the most important requirement for waiters were organizational skills. Indeed, waiters had to organize – in their minds – the priorities in service, guests' orders, their special requirements, their names, etc. Their bodily behaviour was organized as well so that waiters moved and worked as effectively as possible. Finally, minds and bodies had to be organized and coordinated: On their way to greet newly arrived guests, waiters would notice that other guests wanted to pay and yet other guests just finished their meals and their plates would need to be collected. On their way back, they would collect the plates while remembering the new guests' order – and all the special changes made to the original meals – and still keeping in mind that some guests wanted to pay. But they also had to be flexible

[71] *Ibid*., 83.

because just in the middle of everything, the new hostess who was conducting some kind of research had seated some annoying guests in their section. And on the top of everything, they might have just spotted Mads in the restaurant, which meant that a smile would have to be generated.

Because the work was physically very demanding, waiters often suffered from various health problems: Their legs and arms hurt and some of them suffered from back-ache. They could not have a regular daily routine and did not always have the time to get a proper night's rest. Milan thought the work was extremely hard for women, which was why, he thought, there were mostly men working in the restaurant as waiters.

The work of hostesses was not as difficult as that of waiters but it was difficult enough to make it impossible for me to write field notes while at work. Just the simple fact, that there were often two telephones that needed to be answered represented a major problem for me. Keeping track of free tables and the system of reservations was another problem. I also often failed at remembering to notify waiters about guests who were members of the restaurant's membership program. I felt that my mind was consumed with work and my body was exhausted. This changed slightly as I got used to the work.

5.6 Reciprocating the gift

I have already suggested that waiters and hostesses expected their gift of service work to be reciprocated although they realized that their entitlement to such reciprocity was limited and such were guests' objective opportunities of payback. I nevertheless observed efforts to maintain a balance between gift-giving and gift-receiving when waiters and hostesses described themselves being guests in other restaurants. All service workers I talked to confirmed that whenever they went to a restaurant, they tried to behave as they would have liked their own guests to behave:

Boris:

> I'm not demanding. Not demanding at all.

They often stressed that they knew the other side of service, which enabled them to be empathetic.

Andrea:

> I'm polite. I try to make it easier for waiters. I'm not like, I don't want this, I don't want that, and bring this and put this away, and fast, and move! No. I try not to

make them have to come to my table too much. Let them save their legs. I know what it's like and how people behave so I don't want to bother them.

Milan:

I know how hard it is so as far as service is concerned, I'm not demanding [pause] And also the way I am, I'm like, I will eat a cold salty soup with a fork.

Aneta pointed out a transformative power of experience with service work. (The reason that I am writing this paper shows that I too have been transformed by my experience with it.)

Aneta: The work changes you. [pause] When I see the restaurant's full and there are three waiters, I can imagine myself in their shoes.

Pavla: We know the other side, you know.

Some waiters stressed that there were boundaries to their patience and that they could become assertive, even impolite, if they thought it was necessary.[72]

Jakub:

I think I'm a really nice customer. Well, there are boundaries. Like, if I'm waiting for too long, I ask what's going on. I go to normal restaurants. Once in a while, I take my girlfriend to a nice place but I've never left angry. On the contrary, we sit, eat, drink. When there's something to eat and drink, it's ok. And even if they spilled a sauce on me, I wouldn't say anything. So, they spilled it. It's probably because I see it like – sometimes it's ok, sometimes it just doesn't go right.

Mario:

When a guest is nice to you, then, if you go somewhere, it is reflected. I'm always polite when I'm in a pub, I always say 'please can I have that?' I respect many things provided that the staff are decent. But if they're being stupid, impolite, then, fuck off. I take a beer and throw it at their faces and walk away. Anyone would do

[72] Jakub limited his assertiveness to asking whereas Mario stressed he could go as far as splashing beer into waiter's face. Both attitudes seemed to be exaggerated to me as I knew both waiters for some time. I knew that Mario was a nice, polite man who tended to exaggerate a lot. On the contrary, Jakub was not liked among other waiters and mainly among hostesses. He was said to be nervous, angry, even crazy. He was once very rude to me too, when I seated guests at his table. It turned out that the guests did not want to have a meal which I had not known before.
I interviewed both waiters in pubs and observed their behavior. I took Jakub to a pub where the service was very slow and he seemed patient and did not demand anything extra. Mario took me to a simple Czech pub. He was very polite with the waiter although he would always tell me about the things the waiter was doing incorrectly, e.g. when he opened a bottle of wine.

> that. But if the service is nice, normal, I'm always a modest, nice customer who always leaves at least a ten-per-cent tip.

Service workers expressed tolerance when accepting the labour of others. But it seems, that while their expectations concerning physical labour were modest (they did not care about the food, they did not want waiters to have to walk too much), they were less tolerant when it came to emotional labour. Mario requested basic politeness from waiters and Andrea confirmed that service workers had the capacity to make or ruin one's day:

Andrea:

> If the staff are mean, they can ruin their customer's dinner. When I go to a restaurant and I see that the staff aren't nice, I leave because when I want to have a dinner with my husband and they should ruin it for me, it's not worth it. But if the people are nice, you're happier about the dinner and you're more relaxed.

Anna seemed to be an exception in that she described herself as very assertive.

Anna:

> I understand when I see that waiters are busy and I don't boss around. But if I'm not getting what I think I should be, I don't leave a tip [pause] I don't complain. It's embarrassing, but on the other hand, as a manager, I like when guests comment on something. It may be useful. It may be something you don't notice and they do and you realize they're right. [pause] My boyfriend doesn't like going to restaurants with me. If I want to change something to my meal, he's really angry. In his eyes, I'm bossing around but in my eyes, I want something and I know it won't be a problem for the cook to change it [pause] So I'm not afraid to ask for anything but on the other hand, I know how much work it takes to make a guest happy …

For Anna, being experienced in service work justified her demands. She knew what could be done and felt entitled to request it. She also acknowledged that her behavior could be interpreted differently by other people (by her boyfriend). Anna's different attitude might have been influenced by the fact that she was a manager or, simply, by her dominant character and "leadership tendencies" that she said she had.

When he said: "When a guest is nice to you, then, if you go somewhere, it is reflected," Mario made it explicit that he was influenced by his guests; that he, as it were, learned from them. He suggested that what he was given should be given further. Mainly however, the

balance between gift-giving and gift-taking was maintained when workers, who produced gifts, also received them. But what is most important here is that in their role of consumers, service workers voluntarily enacted the ideal of luxury by performing the role of gift-receiving guests. Their efforts to consume service of other workers as they would like guests to receive service that they produce themselves were moral. The result of their moral act was reproduction of the ideal of luxury hospitality, which involves the performance of gift exchange. In this respect, hospitality as a form of gift exchange was accepted and authentically reproduced. The gift exchange performed in the restaurant became authentic when service workers assumed the role of consumers of the gift of service work. In other words, by accepting and receiving service work as voluntary and by reciprocating it, service workers in the role of consumers reproduced the morality of the exchange taking place between workers and customers within a restaurant business.

6 Chapter Five: Tip as a gift

> When my legs would hurt at the end of the day, I would empty my wallet into my bed and count all the money. And I'd say to myself: "Yes, the money's worth it."
>
> Anna

The socially sanctioned way to reciprocate one's gift of service work in a restaurant is to tip them. This practice originated in the eighteenth century England and spread to other European countries.[73] In many countries, tips have recently been replaced with service charges. Despite various efforts of waiters or the public to do away with tipping,[74] the practice is still vastly used in the Czech Republic although norms of tipping may vary with demographics.

The most common explanations of tipping practices are derived from the assumption that tipping is a rational choice that ensures future service or improves its quality by ensuring competition. Both explanations have been disputed. Instead, it has been suggested that tipping is a social norm[75] whereby people buy social approval and equitable relations with servers.[76]

Although money seems to stand in contrast to the Western idea of a gift,[77] scholars have shown that some monetary payments fall into the category of gifts,[78] including tipping.[79] In my forthcoming analysis, I will show how tips were handled as gifts in the restaurant. This appropriateness of tipping to gift giving shall correspond to the one made earlier between service work and gift giving. Indeed, tipping is the most common and most obvious practice whereby guests pay back for service work they receive.

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[73] O. H. Azar, "The Implications of Tipping for Economics and Management," *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 30, No. 10 (2003): 1084–1094.
[74] *Otakar*, *Čišnické listy*, *Hostimil*.
[75] Azar, "Implications of Tipping for Economics and Management," 1084-1094.
M. Lynn, M. McCall, "Gratitude and Gratuity: A Meta-analysis of Research on the Service-tipping Relationship," *Journal of Socio-Economics*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (2000): 203-214.
J. Elster, *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
[76] M. Lynn, A. Grassman, "Restaurant Tipping: An Examination of Three 'Rational' explanations," *Journal of Economic Psychology*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1990): 169-181.
[77] Bloch, Parry, "Introduction: Money and the Morality of Exchange," 8.
[78] V. A. Zelizer, "Payments and Social Ties," *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1996): 481-495.
[79] B. J. Ruffle, "Gift Giving with Emotions," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (1999): 399-420.

Before I begin with my ethnographic description of tipping, it is important that I offer a brief account of payment types received by workers in Restaurant X:

Unlike hostesses, waiters were properly employed by the restaurant. The amount of payment that they received as their fixed salary was a little above the minimum wage.[80] This was the only official money that they were paid.[81] The second form of payment that waiters received were bonuses, which were derived from the restaurant's monthly revenue. Boris told me that any fines for late arrivals and other instances of misconduct (smoking during certain hours, chewing gum, using the internet for job-unrelated purposes) or errors made when serving, were subtracted from the bonuses.[82] The third and the most significant type of waiters' income were, of course, tips. Unlike the former two types of payment, waiters did not receive tips from their employer but from customers. They did not share them; instead, everyone kept their own tips. Mario told me that waiters gave some money to dish washers for polishing silverware;[83] and to bartenders for ignoring occasional mistakes in ordering drinks, and for a few drinks; to a busboy for help; and to cooks for cooking meals for employees.

Hostesses were not legally employed in the restaurant. They received an hourly wage which was similar to what other comparable student jobs in Prague would have paid them. They were usually not given any tips.

According to Milan, managers' salary reached the value of the average wage in the Czech Republic at the time, but they also received bonuses of approximately the same amount. Mario said that bartenders were paid in a similar way.

6.1 The arbitrary nature of tips

One of the most interesting oddities of waiters' work in comparison to other occupations is that the most significant portion of waiters' income does not come from their employer, but from their guests with whom they have no contract. The wage paid to waiters in Restaurant X ensured legal employment relationship between workers and their boss, but it

[80] Waiters and managers were very reluctant to talk about money. They were never exact when I asked them how much they earned on tips, bonuses, or salaries. This might have been due to general hesitation of Czech people to talk about their income.
[81] Many waiters in the Czech Republic receive very low wages. In a long term, they are one of the worst paid categories of employees. (ČSÚ, "Analýza vývoje průměrných mezd zaměstnanců," Český statistický úřad, http http://www.czso.cz/csu/csu.nsf/ainformace/75710042BC82.)
[82] Waiters often complained about these fines. They thought they were results of managers' arbitrary decisions.
[83] Polishing silverware was waiters' job.

was not the payment resulting from this relationship that kept workers in their jobs. On the other hand, they were aware of the disadvantages of such relationship[84] and some of them, for example Jakub, were seriously considering leaving the job because of these reasons.

Tips provided a satisfactory source of income despite the fact that this income was not legally recognized and despite its arbitrary nature. From waiters' perspective, exact amounts of tips from individual customers could not be predicted although they could be estimated based on customers' nationalities, the purpose of their visit (business lunch with clients or a dinner party for employees, tourists just dropping by, etc.), their skills and sophistication in consuming service work, and workers' prior experience with them. The following ideas express the partial predictability of tips.

Boris:

> There are people who leave a tip when they want to and those who don't leave when they don't want to. It's not based on nationality. Of course, the Americans usually tip, the French don't. That's the way it is. But even a French person may tip you.

Andrea:

> There are people who don't tip. There are people who will give you ten crowns. And there are those who are used to leaving tips because they've been to other countries and will give you ten percent. But the Czechs give smaller tips. They don't give ten percent. They round up the amount… The people are not aware of the fact that the waiters don't have a fixed salary and that they live off tips.

Often however, tips seemed to be arbitrary to waiters. Sometimes, they thought the value of tips was based on guests' immediate decision:

[84] Resulting from the low income were mainly insufficient social benefits, and problems with obtaining loans and mortgages. Milan said:

> If you're sick, you won't get anything. If you're on vacation, you won't get anything. Your vacation is paid but with the minimum wage and that's not interesting for anyone. That's why when I was a waiter, I didn't even go on holiday because I knew how much money I would lose in those fourteen days.

Boris:

> I don't know what the people think and if they tip because it's expected or because they appreciate what you're doing for them. It depends. Like I said, either they want to tip or they don't.

Among the workers I interviewed, Anna was the only person who thought that tipping was a just system although she too acknowledged that it was often arbitrary:

> Anna: It's a just system. If you're not satisfied – provided you're not an asshole, of course, when you know you should leave a tip but don't leave it because you don't want to; that you don't leave it not because you are not satisfied but because of something else – then I think it's just. If you're happy with the girl, she smiled at you, recommended good wine that you really liked and in the end you were happy that you listened to her when she said you should have the fish made this way not the way you're used to. Because she was right based on her experience and her interest, then why wouldn't I leave her a tip?
>
> Me: And does it usually work like this?
>
> Anna: Well, not always. Of course, then you're surprised when you take care of a table and the bill is ten thousand and they leave you ten crowns.

In general, however, waiters seemed satisfied with how much they earned on tips. Although tips from individual guests were, to a large extent, unpredictable; amounts of tips received per shift were satisfactory:

Mario:

> If you serve ten or twelve tables in one evening and two or three pay you very little then what the rest of them pay is enough. You shouldn't worry about the table that didn't pay, there's no point.

However, when I asked waiters if they agreed that tipping was an appropriate form of compensation of service work, most of them said they would prefer that the restaurant used a fixed service charge, either in the form of *couvert* or as a percentage of the value of the bill.

Andrea:

> If tips were added to the bill – that would be perfect. Then waiters would try harder because they would know that the more they sell the larger the tips.

6.2 Tip as a salary

Waiters acknowledged the arbitrary nature of tips and guests' authority to determine their value or to decide whether to tip at all. In this respect, they accepted the gift-like nature of tips. But they denied it at the same time by making explicit that their labour was motivated by economic interests:

Mario:

> Everyone works because of money, and so does the waiter. Everyone wants to serve good, sophisticated people. Everyone likes the Americans, the Scandinavians, because they leave large tips. You give them good service and you expect them to appreciate it, right? The French, the Italians, and such nationalities don't leave tips, unfortunately. You serve them for free.

Milan:

> For waiters, one possible success in what they do is how much they make in a day, so it's clear that money is the most important motivation. Not many people are happy because they're guest is happy when they leave no tips.

During my training with Andrea, I told her that I was not going to get paid for my work. "I wouldn't be able to stand working here if I didn't get paid," she said. Andrea thought that such agreement between Mads and me was outrageous and advised me not to accept it. Two hours after I left, I got a phone call from her telling me that she spoke to the general manager and that he decided that I was going to get paid. Nevertheless, I stuck to my agreement with Mads and refused it, which other workers thought was "stupid." They said they would never have agreed to anything like that had they been in my shoes.

On one occasion, when there was a special party in the restaurant, everything was genuinely gratuitous for guests. This irritated waiters because they did not receive any tips and felt as if they really worked for free. Gradually, their smiles turned to frowns and their frustration became visible. They still served drinks and snacks but they did not put much effort into the performance of hospitality which was really taking place. Moreover, they also

complained about guests who stayed in the restaurant for too long. They thought that these guests were "cheap" and stayed there only because they were served for free.[85] Two things may be observed here: First, waiters did not agree with their work being truly gratuitous, and second, it seemed to them that genuine hospitality in the restaurant was just exploited and not reciprocated, which was incompatible with the luxury status of the service performance. Perhaps for the owner of the restaurant, the party was, in a way, a counter-gift for good customers who spent a lot of money in the restaurant; or maybe it was a gift to guests who would hopefully reciprocate it by returning to the restaurant. But workers did not own the restaurant and therefore could not use its resources to offer them as gifts. But when their work was offered to customers for free, it reduced the work to being just another of the restaurant's resources. Workers disagreed with this by insisting on the economic motivation of their work.

6.3 Tip as a counter-gift

As Milan said, money was the most important form of compensation for waiters' labour. But besides that, tips were also coded as expressions of guests' politeness.

Andrea:

> The fundament of politeness is to leave ten per cent minimum. In the U.S., people leave ten per cent when they're not satisfied. When they're happy, they leave twenty per cent. But they come to the Czech Republic and they leave ten per cent and not more.

Mario:

> Everywhere in the world, it is polite to leave ten percent.

Mario:

> A perfect customer is any customer provided that they are a nice person who will receive good service, good recommendations, and who will spend some money. They don't have to leave a large tip. … If they leave ten percent, they're perfect. A good customer is a man who comes, spends fifty thousand and leaves eight thousand as a tip. That's an excellent Mister customer. And that happens.

[85] The restaurant did not have a fixed closing time and if there were still some guests in the restaurant, some of the staff had to stay and wait for the guests to leave.

By stressing politeness, waiters once again obscured the monetary nature of the exchange that was taking place in the restaurant. Waiters were not allowed to ask for tips and they did not demand better compensation for their work from their employer. Instead, they depended on a symbolic order of luxury whereby it is polite to reciprocate gifts with counter-gifts. In this case, it was polite to reciprocate service work with tips. It is important to note here, that in case they received a bad tip (perhaps less than seven percent of the value of the bill), waiters never drew an explicit connection between the amount of efforts that they put in their work and the value of tips received. A bad tip was always coded as an expression of guests' ignorance or arrogance, i.e. impoliteness.

Almost all workers I talked to confirmed that they always tipped waiters in other restaurants leaving them at least ten per cent of the value of the bill. Hostesses Aneta and Pavla suggested that this was because of their transformative experience with service work:

> Aneta: I've always tipped but it's different now.
> Pavla: My boyfriend has taught me that this is not a small city, that I'm in Prague now, and I have to tip. Although I'm not used to that.
> Aneta: I always leave ten per cent.

We have seen similar efforts of waiters, described in the previous chapter, to treat other waiters as they themselves would like to be treated by their guests. By giving tips that they thought were appropriate, service workers reproduced the worker-customer relationship that existed in Restaurant X further beyond the restaurant. The relationship was defined by the economic discourse as well as by the discourse of gift exchange, and was expressed in the form of tip, which was a payment, as well as a counter-gift.

6.4 The "double truth" of tips

The tension between the two meanings of tip – tip as a monetary compensation for one's labour and tip as a voluntary counter-gift for service work – corresponds to the taboo of price that is present in the exchange of symbolic goods. In the previous chapter, I explained how restaurant workers disliked guests who "showed how much money they had." This did not only disturb the relationship of friendliness and voluntariness, but it also disturbed the illusion of symbolic exchange in the restaurant. Symbolic display of one's fortune was as inappropriate as literal exposure of money. You hardly ever see physical money in a luxury

restaurant because it is usually discretely placed into a folder, and so is the bill.[86] Change was not calculated at the guest's table but at the cashier, which was hidden in a place reserved for the staff.

Waiters' hesitation to talk about money and their tendencies to obscure economic aspects of their jobs confirmed this taboo of money. Almost all waiters said that guests' politeness and niceness were more important than a large tip.

Anna:

> I don't know. You can't really say which guests waiters don't like. Of course, there are tips. Waiters wage is such that it is expected that they receive tips. But I don't think it has to do with tips. I didn't mind if I didn't get a tip. But I didn't like when people were ill-behaved or they couldn't enjoy it.

On the other hand, as I showed above, economic motivation was the most important reason for waiters to stay in their jobs. To mediate between the two incompatible discourses – economic discourse and symbolic discourse – waiters referred to the minimum, usually ten-percent tip. This minimum tip was at once an expression of politeness and reciprocity, which cast it in the realm of the economy of symbolic goods; and at the same time, it was a calculable financial compensation for service, which cast it in the realm of economic exchange.

If guests were rude, tips also provided some sort of compensation for the mistreatment. However, sometimes, tips from rude customers were not received easily. Mario said he would refuse tips that were too low. By doing this, he gave his work for free, as a gift, because the value of the tip was undignified to be accepted as a payment.[87] I once received a small tip from a mean guest but instead of taking it, I left it at the front desk. It was unacceptable for me to receive the tip neither as a form of compensation for my work, nor as a gift, because I felt that my accepting the tip would mean that I approve of the way the guest treated me. Neverthless, I received it because I thought that explicit refusal would be inappropriate. This also evokes Mauss' idea of gift that retains "a piece" of the person who gave it. Referring to

[86] Hostesses sometimes placed a few coins on a plate if they wanted to remind guests that tips were welcome. They did this when they their station served as a cloakroom, when it was cold outside. Despite this, they did not receive many tips.

[87] In the past, waiters likened tips to alms: "Jest nedůstojno dělníka, by za svou práci dostával blahovolnou almužnu. V republice tento zlozvyk musí být odstraněn. Každý poslední řemeslník neb živnostník musí své pomocnictvo honorovati, jen páni hostinští neplatí pomocnictvo, nechávajíce jej živořiti z milodarů." ("O hostinství," *Otakar*, Vol. 21, No. 8 (1920): 57.)

prostitutes who refuse payment from bad customers, Zelizer confirms that "payments can work to create and maintain distinctions that matter morally, sentimentally, and personally."[88]

[88] Zelizer, "Payments and Social Ties," 491.

7 Chapter Six: Luxury Hospitality and Social Inequalities

> As I watched them, I suddenly realized that being a waiter wasn't so simple, that there were waiters and waiters, but I was a waiter who had served the president with discretion, and I had to appreciate that, like Zdeněk's famous waiter who lived the rest of his life on the strength of having served the Archduke Ferdinand d'Este in a casino for aristocrats.[89]

Structural oppositions between guests and service workers, voluntary gift and obligatory work, gift exchange and economic exchange; constitute lines along which inequalities are generated, maintained, and reproduced. These inequalities manifest themselves through unequal distribution of entitlements; symbolic expressions of dominance and subordination; and performance of gift exchange. Service workers negotiate their authority and using various strategies they manage to acquire certain control over their work and over guests.[90]

In this chapter, I will analyze inequalities and concomitant strategies of power on three levels: (1) On the symbolic level, I will show that the luxury ideal implies inequalities between guests and service workers and justifies their manifestations on the other two levels. From this ideal are derived entitlements to the restaurant's resources, which are further negotiated by agents in the restaurant. (2) On the material level, relationships of domination and subordination are expressed through bodies and space; and finally, (3) on the level of performance inequalities are performed through the means of gift exchange.

7.1 Symbolic level

Symbolic order, expressed as the ideal of luxury services, implies relationships of domination and subordination. It casts service workers as subordinate to guests and guests as dominant to workers. Such order of things seems to be natural and therefore inevitable by virtue of "laws of economics" – yet another symbolic order – whereby "a guest's wish shall

[89] B. Hrabal, *I Served the King of England*, tr. by Paul Wilson, London: Picador, 1990 (Czech orig. *Obsluhoval jsem anglického král*e), 76.

[90] Relationships with co-workers and management constitute a significant arena for negotiating power and authority. The scope of this thesis does not allow for analysis of these relationships; it focuses primarily on the relationships between service workers and guests.

be waiter's command."[91] "Laws of economics" code customers as those who have the power to improve the quality of services by ensuring competition. The appeal to customers to demand quality service in order to improve service market in general has been a part of public discourse on services since the fall of communism.

"*Češi neumí sloužit*" is a frequent complaint of many Czech people. They believe that the lack of economic competition during the years of communism is to be blamed for the incapability of the Czechs to serve. It is also believed that unless one's wage is proportionate to their efforts and the quality of their work, service workers will not be decent.[92] Popular discourse blames communism for destroying "natural evaluation and perception of services" and draws a connection between such deficiency and common lack of assertive and self-confident behavior, for which communism is to be blamed, too.[93] As a result, the

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[91] *Náš host, náš pán*, the imperative of all service workers, is invoked in the anthem of the *Asociace číšníků České Republiky* (The Association of waiters of the Czech Republic).

> Černý smoking na bílé košili
> Bílý ubrus, úsměv zdvořilý
> Pod krkem motýlek, v zadní kapse fleka
> Přes ruku servítek, tvůj host čeká.
>
> Bílá halenka a v ní ladné křivky
> Pozor ať nenamočíš palec do polívky
> Milá obsluha, vlídné ceny,
> Tak servírujem dnešní menu.
>
> Náš host, náš pán
> Vždycky bude uctíván
> Může jíst a pít a veselit se
> Tak ať má vždycky plný džbán.
>
> Náš host, náš pán
> Personálem milován
> Může řádit třeba jako čerti rohatí
> Jen když to nakonec zaplatí.
>
> Náš host, náš pán
> Personálem milován
> S ním vchází štěstí do dveří
> A lístek jídelní mu dám.
>
> Náš host, náš pán
> Všemi je obletován
> Tady vítá vás ve svém podniku
> Asociace číšníků.

("Znělka asociace," Asociace číšníků České republiky, http://www.asciscr.cz/audio/hymna.mp3).

[92] Brodilová, Křížková, "Český pán a sluha," 8-9.

[93] "Režim, který povýšil práci lidských rukou na kult, zničil přirozené oceňování a vnímání služeb. Krčmářová (a psychologist – author's comment) k tomu dodává, že ten, kdo se cítí ponížen, nemá daleko k agresi. Upozorňuje I na to, že nám všeobecně dělá problém vystupování na veřejnosti. *"Před rokem 1989 se většina lidí snažila kontrolovat navenek a chovat se co nejméně nápadně, takže se vlastně teprve učíme, jak jednat sebevědomě a asertivně,"*… (*Ibid*.) The extract touches upon several points of the public discourse on services. First, it regards

improvement of services seems to be conditioned by self-improvement of consumers and has a quality of moral duty, which adds to the symbolic domination of service consumers. On the other side, this imperative casts service providers, including service workers, as objects that may be modified by consumers' demand; and as means of progress of the service market.

Perhaps, in ancient times, it was one's moral duty and a matter of honour to be hospitable and offer shelter and food to strangers and travelers. The tradition still survives in the Czech culture but is strictly distinguished from business relationships. The rule of hospitality business is that whoever is paying shall be offered adequate service. Such pragmatic approach was reflected in the frequent use of the word "customer" by service workers, compared to the word "guest." Stressing the economic nature of the relationship between customers and service workers, workers could have coded their subordinate role as something ordinary, necessary, and something that could be justified by the profit that it was promising.

The symbolic domination of guests is derived from the fact that they are paying for the services provided by the restaurant. However, in a luxury restaurant, the entitlement to consume other people's labour is not derived only from customers' capacity to pay. We have seen that waiters paid attention to guests' behavior, physical appearance, and clothes. They also thought that very rich people were better guests than the less wealthy ones. Because their work was voluntary to a certain extent, service workers were able to treat particular guests as more or less entitled to their services thus assuming some amount of power and control over their work and over guests.

Working in the luxury restaurant had taught workers about luxury services. For some new hostesses, their own job of escorting guests to their tables had seemed unnecessary but with time, they got used to it and even complained about guests who did not appreciate it, perhaps because they had no prior experience with such service as it is not common in ordinary Czech restaurants. Learning from some of their guests enabled them to acquire certain authority over those guests who were apparently less experienced with consumption of luxury services.

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competition as natural in contrast to the "unnatural" communist economy that made competition impossible by making all restaurants, hotels and other enterprises state-owned. Second, it draws a direct connection between the not yet fully developed competition and citizens' compromised self-confidence. And third, it suggests that assertive and self-confident behaviour is something to be learned. It is a moral quality that we all need to acquire in order to improve the quality of our services.

This applied even more to waiters. Most of them were educated in hospitality and their knowledge of luxury service, luxury food and wines, gave them a strong feeling of authority, which they were most likely to express through giving recommendations to guests. They thought that giving recommendations was an important part of luxury service and therefore, guests who did not appreciate it were seen as less entitled to luxury services. Recommendations for meals and, more importantly wines, also gave waiters the power to influence guests' spending. Correspondingly, guests had to have been able to afford such recommendations and thus prove worthy of luxury services. Playing this game, waiters felt equal to guests, not subordinate to them; as if they were partners in the game.

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence describes conditions under which the dominated cannot but accept their subordination because categories of their thought, judgment, and perception are those of the dominant. Although workers' knowledge of luxury services and luxury standard allowed them to negotiate guests' entitlement to their service, they could not refuse to offer the service even if they found guests less entitled. Their acceptance and consent with this state of affairs corresponds to the ideal of luxury service, which ensures that guests receive proper service provided that they are able to pay for it. Thus, the status of a luxury restaurant guarantees that service workers shall always consider guests entitled to their service and treat them as such.

7.2 Material level

The symbolic order whereby guests are dominant and workers are subordinate is manifested on the material level mainly in that those who produce services are not entitled to consume them.[94] In the restaurant, this unequal distribution of entitlement could have been observed on the division of space and on the bodies of service workers.

The restaurant was divided into *plac* (the set) and the space reserved for the staff that we may call "the backstage." Unlike the luxury interior on *plac*, the backstage was an ordinary utility space often dominated by chaos. Backstage were located managers' offices, waiters' cloakrooms bathrooms, storage rooms, and also the kitchen. When workers wanted to smoke, eat, make phone calls or do something else that was not related to their jobs, they had to retrieve backstage. Hostesses had a small cloakroom where they also kept their personal belongings. They could sit and drink there. Some managers allowed them to eat there, too.

[94] Sherman, *Class Acts.*

Hostesses used bathrooms for guests which I sometimes found uncomfortable precisely because I did not feel entitled to use space for guests. I felt as if my presence, as a presence of someone in a uniform, disturbed guests' luxury experience. I used the bathroom anyway, although some girls preferred to walk all the way to the back of the restaurant to use toilets for the staff.

The most eloquent of the unequal distribution of entitlements was the prohibition of eating on *plac* even when the restaurant was closed. Sometimes, the restaurant resembled a shrine were only the chosen ones were allowed to reside because presence of ordinary people could pollute its sacredness. On one of my first Sunday shifts, I was told to go upstairs to the lounge where brunch had just finished and waiters, hostesses and managers were eating the remains. The restaurant was closed and everyone was enjoying their break. A few days later, eating in the lounge was prohibited. Later, I was working again on a brunch shift and during the break waiters and cooks started eating the remains again. I joined them although I knew that it was not allowed. One of the managers, Marek, saw us and became furious. He shouted: "What if someone saw you, what if someone came in,"[95] as if it was absolutely inappropriate for waiters to eat restaurant's meals in the space reserved for guests, although the restaurant was closed at the time.

Normally, waiters would eat sitting on dirty stairs in hallways. There were no tables, and just a few chairs that they could sit on. Soon after the note saying it was forbidden to eat in the lounge had appeared on a wall, someone wrote underneath: "Where should we eat?" Another person replied: "Here," and drew an arrow pointing to a fuse box.

Another difference between guests' and workers' entitlements was that workers were not entitled to meals and drinks served to guests, except the remains from brunch. Cooks prepared different meals for the staff but they often complained about them. Many hostesses would bring their own food. Andrea was so disappointed with the quality of food cooked for the staff that she decided to write her thesis on employee catering in catering facilities. I only complained about the food once or twice when there was none left for me. In fact, I enjoyed some of the meals.

On *plac*, waiters would stand at a spot, which offered a good view of their section of tables and granted that guests would easily see them while not being bothered by their

[95] Marek yelled at me particularly, shouting: "Why are you even here? What kind of research is it that you're doing?" When I told other hostesses about the incident, they were too scared to go to the lounge and take something to eat. Since that incident, I refused to talk to Marek unless it was absolutely necessary, which created a strange atmosphere and led Anna to advice me to leave and work in another restaurant of the ABC Group. I think that Marek's exaggerated reaction was a result of some tension that my presence of a researcher had created among some managers of the restaurant. Marek was also the least popular manager.

presence. In other words, waiters were supposed to be always at hand when needed but invisible at other times. As Dítě in Hrabal's novel put it:

> When I started to work at the Golden Prague Hotel, the boss took hold of my left ear, pulled me up, and said, You're a busboy here, so remember, you don't see anything and you don't hear anything. Repeat what I just said. So I said I wouldn't see anything and I wouldn't hear anything. Then the boss pulled me up by my right ear and said, But remember too that you've got to see everything and hear everything. Repeat it after me. I was taken aback, but I promised I would see everything and hear everything. That's how I began.[96]

Unlike guests who were comfortably seated in (not very comfortable) chairs, waiters and hostesses had to stand when guests were present in the restaurant (or near the front desk in the case of hostesses). I found it very fascinating how waiters moved among the tables carrying six plates at one time. I appreciated this all the more taking into account that I myself was never able to learn it. Again, Hrabal has more poetic words for this:

> There was something dreamlike about the way he did it, with a kind of swirling movement, so that if anyone had got in his way there would have been a terrible collision, but he always moved gracefully and elegantly, and he would never sit down in odd moments, he'd just stand there, and he always knew what someone wanted and brought it even before the guest asked for it.[97]

On several occasions, I saw waiters from the ABC Group serving at high-end events for the rich and famous. Their movements were choreographed and synchronized to produce a "mass ornament" from their bodies.[98] Later, waiters told me, that one of the clients that they were catering for, a famous fashion company that I was working for, too, had very strict criteria for waiters: they had to be only males of a certain body type, without glasses. Another fashion company organized castings for waiters.

On such occasions as well as on a regular day in the restaurant, waiters were wearing uniforms consisting of black shirts and trousers and black long aprons. Women and men had

[96] Hrabal, *I Served the King of England*, 1.
[97] Hrabal, *I Served the King of England*, 71.
[98] S. Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," tr. by Barbara Correll and Jack Zipes, *New German Critique*, No. 5 (1975): 67-76.

the same uniforms. Hostesses wore black trousers and pink shirts. It was not allowed for either waiters or hostesses to wear jewelry although some hostesses did not obey this rule.

Symbolically, the bodies of waiters and hostesses expressed their subordination. Uniforms veiled their individualities in contrast to guests, whose often expensive clothes emphasized their privileged status in the restaurant as well as outside the restaurant. Female waiters dressed in male uniforms suggested that luxury waiting was gendered; this was further stressed by the exclusion of female waiters from high-end events.[99]

Hostesses' work was supposed to fulfill the traditional feminine role of hosting and caring for guests. Unlike female waiters, they wore female pink shirts. Although they were supposed to look pretty, their outfits were rather staid and they very often complained about that. Many girls wanted to stand out of the crowd – they would wear jewelry, toupees, nice shoes, and heavy makeup. On my last shift in the restaurant, there was a football theme party for Mads' best customers, friends and some celebrities. Hostesses had to wear football dresses of the Czech national team. This was extremely humiliating for me because unlike the other girls, I am quite tall and the shirts and shorts were all size S and they were for male junior players. So, instead of wearing knee length shorts, I ended up wearing really short pants. Moreover, there were no turf shoes for us to wear, so we had to put our own flip flops on although we were also wearing football socks. Many guests would notice these mismatched outfits and comment on them. After a few hours that I had to spend standing on *plac* and watching over prices that their winners left at a table, I was quite fed up with the hostess job.

Changing into their uniforms was the last thing waiters and hostesses did before their shifts started. In the morning, when tables were being set, floors were being swept, menus were being cleaned, no one was wearing their uniforms.

The symbolic subordination of waiters and hostesses to their guests was further stressed by the rule that everyone had to be wearing a nametag with their first name. This was in order to create friendly atmosphere in the restaurant where guests would know their waiters' names and vice versa. Of course, guests were not wearing their name tags on their shirts – waiters

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[99] Gender inequality within waiting has a long tradition. In early twentieth century, waiters fought against female waiters. This was because they represented unskilled and therefore cheap labour, which took jobs from professional male waiters. Moreover, waiters accused women of prostitution.

> Velkým upírem veškerého číšnictví, jak snad každý uzná, jsou bezohledně řečeno ženy … Dnes i lepší restaurace povolávají k obsluze hostí ženy, a nechávají nepovšimnuty číšníky vyučené, kteří musili se po dobu 3 let učiti, aby mohli vstoupiti v řady číšnické. U ženy se žádný zaměstnavatel neptá, byla-li vyučena, ženy žádný zaměstnavatel se neptá, jakou má svou minulost a proto, za číšnici vrhne se obyčejně ta žena, které již se znechutilo veškeré jiné zaměstnání, která má za sebou často „různou" minulost, ktorá mnohdy nedělá číšnici proto, aby se jen uživila.

("Zaměstnání ženského personálu v živnosti hostinské," *Otakar*, Vol. 13, No. 7 (1910), 87.)

had to exert an extra effort to remember them. Moreover, workers would only use guests' last names preceded with a Mr., Ms., *Pane*, *Paní*, or *Slečno*. The symbolic difference between the use of the first name and the use of the last name was well described by Adorno:

> In comparison, the bourgeois family name which, instead of being a trade-mark, once individualized its bearer by relating him to his own past history seems antiquated. It arouses a strange embarrassment in Americans. In order to hide the awkward distance between individuals, they call one another "Bob" and "Harry," as interchangeable team members. This practice reduces relations between human beings to the good fellowship of the sporting community and is a defense against the true kind of relationship.[100]

I was once invited to Group's Restaurant Y by my boss. As we were sitting there enjoying our meals, my boss commented on how polite she thought our waiter was. When I uttered that waiting was a tough job, my boss pointed to the fact that there were not many guests in the restaurant and that the waiter could not have had much to do. I predicted that in such case, the waiter would have to find something to do. She started polishing silverware.

In Restaurant X, as well as in many other restaurants, there was the "always busy" rule for waiters. Although there may be nothing to do for a while, waiters cannot rest. Symbolically, this requirement for waiters to keep working at all times stands in contrast to the leisure that they help to create for customers.[101] While customers were encouraged to enjoy their stay in the restaurant, waiters were not entitled to any kind of leisure. Waiters enjoying a minute of free time would have meant that they did not do everything they could for their customers.

> I was polishing the regulars' beer mugs, holding them up to the light, and we were still serving breakfast, just soups and goulashes to a handful of customers, and of course all the waiters were supposed to keep busy even if there was nothing to do, which is why I was polishing the glasses so carefully and the maître d' was standing by the sideboard straightening the forks and the waiter was rearranging the cutlery all over again.[102]

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[100] Adorno, Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception."
[101] The rule did not apply to hostesses mainly because they were not on *plac* and as a result, they were not always visible to guests. Hostesses would often sit down and read something or study. However, as soon as a customer approached the door, they had to be ready, standing and smiling.
[102] Hrabal, *I Served the King of England*, 5.

Moreover, waiters were supposed to enjoy their work and express their enjoyment through their faces by smiling, which was one rule that most of them did not follow.

Fineness of waiters' movements, especially when unified in a choreographed "dance;" their uniforms and name tags that reduced them into "interchangeable team members" formed their presence in the restaurant which was supposed to be useful but unobtrusive to guests. Workers were not entitled to use the restaurants space reserved for guests except when they were serving. Similarly, they were entitled to use their time in the restaurant to work not to rest, leisure was an exclusive entitlement of guests. Waiters were displayed for guests to see that they were paying attention to their needs and were always at hand. Service workers were not entitled to consume the experience they were creating for guests. Their being in the restaurant was above all a "being-for-others," to use Sartre's term, so that those "others" could enjoy their "being-for-themselves." Outside the restaurant, however, waiters could enjoy the same privileges as their customers and in that way, they could reconstitute themselves as equal to them or even as better than other guests. For many waiters, golf was an important leisure activity that made it possible.

Andrea:

> Some people who come here are very rich, some are normal. We don't really care because most of us play golf so we meet the more wealthy guests when playing golf and we know that they're our guests and they know that we wait on them, so we don't care. … For example, often, the less well off people think we're poor and then they treat us that way.

When service workers themselves became customers in a restaurant, they performed their role in accordance with the rules of hospitality and thus proved their entitlement to use the labour of other people. Treating their fellow workers as partners in an exchange, they attempted to establish equality between workers and consumers, although as I have shown, such equality is a contradiction in terms in case of luxury settings.

7.3 Performance

Corresponding to the symbolic order and structural asymmetry derived thereof is the actual interactive performance of the relations of domination and subordination. This

performance takes the form of the economy of symbolic goods – gift exchange – which I described in previous chapters. Inequalities are present on two sublevels: First, on the level of gift exchange, relationships between service workers and guests cannot be reciprocal because while workers give guests their labour, guests do not have to offer anything in return. And second, on the level of "theatre performance," workers' and guests' respective roles are not equally binding. Customers may decide whether they want to take part in the performance of hospitality or whether they want to approach service solely on economic, that is, on pragmatic and rational terms. In the latter case, customers could demand perfect service without exerting any efforts to reciprocate it. Contrary to that, service workers are not granted the freedom to act on pragmatic terms. Even when they know that a particular guest will not leave them any tip, nor will he or she reciprocate their emotional labour, they still have to offer the person luxury service. In other words, service workers must perform the "gift exchange performance," while guests may assume the economic approach and refuse to perform gift exchange.[103]

I have shown in previous chapters that the gift exchange between service producers and service consumers is not reciprocal. Not being reciprocal, the exchange produces relationships of domination and subordination. However, workers used several strategies to obtain a certain level of control over their work and over customers. Due to the voluntary status of many job tasks, workers were able to regulate their input into the gift exchange with guests. They might have refused to anticipate one guest's needs or refuse to use another guest's name. At other times, they could exert extra effort and escort a guest to the exit or simply smile and talk to them more.

Service workers thought that knowledge, experience, natural talent, and interest in their work, gave them special skills, which enabled them to work in the luxury restaurant. Because of these skills they could see themselves as better than other waiters and thus entitled to serve better, i.e. wealthier guests. Such feeling of entitlement also resulted in waiters differentiating

[103] I do not suggest that guests do not perform any role. Sherman showed that many guests do not feel comfortable in their privileged role that entitles them to use labour of other people, and therefore, they actively try to obscure the differences between themselves and service workers. (Sherman, *Class Acts*, 223-256.) Also, I do not suggest that guests' acting on economic terms in a luxury restaurant is more "authentic" than the performance of gift exchange. The former may be a deliberately exploitative performance of status and domination just as the latter may be a result of honest appreciation of human connection. Needless to say, economic exchange and gift exchange are ideal types and they cannot be observed in their ideal form. Elements of both types of exchange were present in Restaurant X. But service workers suppressed their economic interests and performed hospitality, i.e. gift exchange, in order to maintain luxury standard in the restaurant. In that respect, they were in a subordinate position to guests who, on the other hand, did not have to perform consumption of hospitality. To put it more simply, while production of services needs to resemble gift-exchange in order to maintain its status of luxury, the luxury standard is not threatened if services are not consumed as a gift.

between various guests and granting the guests different entitlements to their labour. Sometimes, waiters thought they were more entitled to be present in a luxury environment than certain guests. Some guests were not considered worth the trouble of rearranging tables or serving drinks and they were refused service. It was also because of their skills that waiters could negotiate guests' entitlements to luxury service and consequently control the level of their contribution to the gift exchange with guests.

Reflective of waiters' subordinate role in the restaurant was tipping as a form of compensation for their work because, as I explained in the previous chapter, tips were counter-gifts for service work. According to Zelizer, monetary payments correspond to a specific set of social relations and system of meaning[104] and "money as a gift implies subordination and arbitrariness."[105] Waiters again coded themselves as skilled in controlling their income.[106] Mostly they did this by serving as many people as was possible, but also by giving recommendations for expensive wines. (That would consequently increase the size of the bill, which, they hoped, would make the guest leave more money, provided that he or she derived the tip from the size of the bill.) Mario used a high-flown metaphor comparing this skill at once to "robbery" and "art:"

Mario:

> Everyone knows how to rob a guest but robbing him so that he leaves satisfied and thanks you, that's art!

Also real stealing was a subject that many waiters touched upon in my interviews with them. When I asked Mario how waiters stole, he said the tricks were a "secret of waiters." Jakub believed that the public thought that waiters cheated and stole. Anna confirmed that when she said that every waiter "has to go through a period when they steal." All the waiters I talked to denied that anyone was stealing or cheating in the restaurant, saying it was impossible. But I have a reason to believe that that was not the truth. On one of my brunch shifts, I was supposed to give all children chocolate treats. However they would always disappear from the box where I kept them. I thought some children took them when suddenly, I saw one of the older waiters taking them. When I said they were for the children, he replied:

[104] Zelizer, "Payments and Social Ties," 481.
[105] *Ibid*., 482.
[106] Sherman talks about "games" played by hotel workers, which fostered "the sense of skill, control, and autonomy" (Sherman, *Class Acts*, 151) and helped increase their income, as well. (*Ibid*., 110-153)

"I have children too. These are for my children."[107] This example shows that waiters felt, in a way, entitled to some of the restaurant's resources. (This also happened in the hotel and another restaurant where I had worked.) Workers acted as if they believed that when things were offered to guests for free (because they were included in the price of some food or in the price of a hotel room), they could also take them. Of course, managers disapproved of such interpretations.

Cheating, in whatever extent it might have been present in Restaurant X, was thought to be a skill and perhaps, from waiters' point of view, an inevitable risk that customers took whenever they engaged in a gift exchange within a business oriented institution. Mario questioned the recent development of services that had made it more difficult for waiters to cheat and steal:

Mario:

> Czech services are terrible. They're improving but very slowly. The Czech Republic has made a huge progress but it's a question if it's good or bad. We, waiters, were making one hundred, or a hundred and fifty thousand a month easily from 1995 to 1998 when the market was open. Today, you make thirty thousand. Because you can't steal. So, for us, it's more-less bad.

Although by acquiring some control over the exchange that took place between service workers and customers and by coding themselves as skilled and thus powerful, service workers were still participating in the performance of hospitality. Even when they used their skills against customers, this was without the latter's knowledge and the skills were still used within the performance of hospitality. If they had not been, waiters would have been fired or their bonuses would have been cut.

Service workers demanded guests' participation in production and consumption of luxury services, that is, in the service theatre that denied economic exchange by performing gift exchange. But while guests could withdraw from this performance, service workers could not; their performance ensured symbolic hospitality. By engaging in their work, they enacted the asymmetry between consumers and producers of the luxury service and consented to the inequalities arising thereof. To refer to the famous Sartre's example of bad faith quoted at the beginning of my thesis, service workers *realized* their subordinate condition. They actively participated in the unequal distribution of entitlements, in the relationships of symbolic

[107] I assumed that if chocolate treats were a reason for stealing, then other, more expensive things had to be even more so. As the example shows, waiters might have felt entitled to such resources and therefore did not consider their behavior as stealing.

domination and subordination and thus helped to maintain and reproduce the symbolic order of the consumer – producer relationship in services.

In the hospitality theatre, the subordinate role of service workers was established materially through their bodies and the restaurant space; and performatively through constrained participation in the unreciprocal gift exchange. This structure of relationships corresponded to the symbolic order expressed in the luxury ideal, which seemed to be self-evident and eternal because it referred to other symbolic systems, such as economics and the traditional gift exchange. Consequently, the luxury ideal and the symbolic order it was derived from, were not questioned although they generated, maintained, and reproduced the relationships of domination that favoured customers. What could have been questioned, however, was the entitlement of the restaurant to present itself as a luxury restaurant.

7.4 Negotiating the status of the restaurant

In their performance, service workers expressed their consent with the relationships of domination. According to Sherman, workers can withdraw their consent in three ways: "by refusing to invest themselves in their work; by quitting; and by organizing some kind of collective action that challenges the organization of work of the distribution of rewards from work."[108] As in the case of hotel workers described by Sherman, service workers in Restaurant X who withdrew their consent did so "individually by quitting." They were not unionized, nor were they interested in unions or in organizing any collective actions. They tended to deal with their situation cognitively by negotiating the very status of the restaurant.

Their education and experience gave them a strong sense of what luxury service was. They often coded Restaurant X as a "money-making factory," instead of a luxury facility offering top service and food. Waiters complained the restaurant was more interested in quantity than quality:

Mario:

> It is more-less a huge factory. The more you sell the more money. For the waiter as well as for the owner.
>
> Spending five extra minutes at a table when it's busy means you're losing one hour of money, you're losing another table, you don't have time for this and that, you

[108] Sherman, *Class Acts*, 16-17.

> just can't stand there with those people. You must run and work – the more, the better for you, right?

Waiters often tended to degrade the restaurant referring to the concept of luxury. They criticized the interior; the food; the management; and guests:

Andrea complained about the interior of the restaurant:

> The interior, I just don't like it. It's too loud and well, nothing special.

Mario did not like the food:

> I tried something in the restaurant and was really disappointed. It has no class. It's just too big. It's too big to have good cuisine. It's more-less a factory. It's not a restaurant. Money factory. The more, the better.

Many service workers thought that managers were incompetent:

Andrea:

> Sometimes I think the managers don't know the basics of gastronomy.

Mario:

> The managers in the restaurant, some of them don't know anything. Some of them are far worse than most waiters.[109]

I have already shown that waiters found some guests better than others. Some were thought to be particularly unentitled to luxury services:

Jakub:

> Some of them are freeloaders … They probably can afford it if they're invited, but sometimes I think they're like: "quickly, let's put it in our pockets."

In general, waiters thought the restaurant was not what it pretended to be. Because of their experience and knowledge of luxury they thought they could reveal its ordinary status.

Anna:

[109] However, Mario liked Mads and thought other people liked him as well:

> Mads is a cool employer … He's got it and he doesn't give a shit. There aren't many people who don't like him.

When I came here five years ago, I was scared. French service … I had respect. But now, after those five years, it seems entirely normal.

Boris:

I don't think it's luxury. I see how it works here.

Andrea:

It's not luxury … It's not possible to offer the best service and food because it's so busy … It's more about, the faster the people leave, the better the money.

Using the strategies of maintaining distance, service workers were able to retrieve some authority for themselves. They cast themselves as dominant because they *knew* that the hospitality and luxury were only illusory. With such cynical approach, they could code their being in the restaurant as a pragmatic means of increasing profit whereas they could see guests as dupes who went to the restaurant to prove their status, as Milan suggested when he tald me that luxury restaurants were useless. Such perspective reversed the roles of agents in the restaurant: service workers saw themselves as the ones whose work in the restaurant was motivated pragmatically by financial profit at the expense of guests who spent a lot of money on an illusion of luxury.

Waiters could also maintain distance from cooks by criticizing their meals and from managers by criticizing their lack of knowledge of gastronomy and thus undermining the importance of their role in the restaurant. Hostesses were able to maintain distance from all other workers by considering their job a temporary stage in their career.

Many waiters hoped that one day they could have their own restaurant or café. They often described it as something small, friendly and something were they could run things as they wished in contrast to the large famous luxury restaurant they were working for. Owning a restaurant seemed to them like a possibility for producing more authentic hospitality but even more, it seemed to be a good business opportunity.

8 Conclusion: The Morality of Luxury Services

> But now that a man goes to desert places and builds houses which can only be reached by long journeys, for the sake of retail trade, and receives strangers who are in need at the welcome resting-place, and gives them peace and calm when they are tossed by the storm, or cool shade in the heat; and then instead of behaving to them as friends, and showing the duties of hospitality to his guests, treats them as enemies and captives who are at his mercy, and will not release them until they have paid the most unjust, abominable, and extortionate ransom—these are the sort of practises, and foul evils they are, which cast a reproach upon the succour of adversity.[110]

In his *Laws*, Plato criticizes innkeepers and their hunger for wealth, which caused the corruption of natural laws of hospitality[111] taught by Heaven. Being a domain of Zeus himself, hospitality, especially towards strangers, was important to Plato who thought it distinguished the Greeks from other nations.[112] Even today, "natural laws" of hospitality are invoked and their "corruption" is often criticized although hardly anyone is shocked by the fact that hospitality constitutes a separate industry. Instead of taking hospitality as everyone's personal responsibility and moral duty, we have delegated the service industry to receive and take care of strangers. Public's great concern over the level of services in the country means that, perhaps, we still think hospitality towards strangers is an important mark of our culture's morality.

As a form of gift exchange, hospitality falls in the sphere of what Bourdieu calls the exchange of symbolic goods. This exchange stands in opposition to the economic exchange, to which belongs the hospitality industry. Carrier explains that the difference between unique gifts and replaceable commodities corresponds to the difference between relations that arise out of gift exchange and commodity exchange:

> In gift relations people are thought of or identified in terms of their fundamental, inalienable attributes and relationships, and hence are unique… On the other hand,

[110] Plato, "Laws," tr. by Benjamin Jowett, The Project Gutenberg, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1750/1750.txt.
[111] A. Walsh, T. Lynch, *The Morality of Money. An Exploration in Analytic Philosophy*, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 24.
[112] Plato, "Laws."

> in commodity relations people are indentified in terms of alienable attributes. The buyer pays the person behind the counter, not because of any alienable attribute or link with the buyer, but because that person occupies a position in an organization. That position is alienable, because the person can quit, be promoted or fired, and still be the same person… In commodity relations it is not only objects that are fungible; people are fungible too.
>
> Thus, in gift relationships people and objects are thought of as being unique and inalienably linked to each other… On the other hand, in commodity relationships the people and objects are fungible and alienable: they are linked to each other in no enduring personal way.[113]

In this thesis, I studied the overlap that exists between the two systems – gift exchange and commodity exchange – within luxury services and how it affects people who work to produce luxury hospitality.

Although the restaurant is a business that offers luxury experience as a commodity in exchange for money; service work that produces the commodity, and monetary compensation for the work have attributes of the gift in that they are voluntary and personalized, that is unique. Corresponding to this gift-like nature of service work are the relationships between people, characterized by politeness, friendliness, emotionality, and most importantly, by limited reciprocity, tips being the most obvious form of counter-gift. The purpose of the gift exchange is to create a unique experience. Paradoxically, the unique experience is at the same time a commodity that the restaurant sells in order to gain profit. The overlap of the opposite discourses forms a complicated framework of relationships between service producers and service consumers. I attempted to analyze workings of unequal distribution of entitlements and workers' strategies of power and authority that they used in order to cope with the symbolic order, which cast them as subordinate to guests. The inequalities were manifested materially through space and bodies, and performatively through the performance of hospitality.

The study shows that service work in a luxury restaurant is determined by the opposite discourses – gift discourse and commodity discourse. This fundamental contradiction allows workers to assign various meanings to their work, to the consumers of their work, as well as to the restaurant itself. For example, they can adopt an approach of distance from the gift discourse by stressing their pragmatic financial reasons for staying in their jobs; or they can

[113] Carrier, "Gifts, Commodities, and Social Relations: A Maussian View of Exchange," 127.

identify with the restaurant's luxury status and take up a role of professional servers who know more about luxury than their guests. Most importantly, they can negotiate the status of the restaurant and dispute that the commodity produced in the restaurant is genuine luxury, thus making clear that luxury is rather "in the mind of the beholder."[114] But because their work is interactive, these strategies may collide with those of guests' who are symbolically dominant. Vulnerability of workers' authority, caused by the clash of opposite discourses, is symbolically expressed in the ambivalent word *služba* that means both *service* and *servitude*. Indeed, waiters would often code their work as servitude if guests did not comply with the rules of gift exchange.

Consumption of luxury services and goods confirms "the taste and distinction of their owner"[115] and adds to their symbolic capital.[116] Service workers produce symbolic capital for their guests. But unlike organizers of *potlatch* who accumulate their symbolic capital through generous hospitality, service workers do not gain symbolic capital from their hospitality because they do not own the means of production – the restaurant. Thus, symbolic capital acquired or produced in the restaurant makes visible class differences between the social agents in the restaurant, and further reproduces them. Sherman points out that "class not only structures these sites [luxury hotels] but is also 'accomplished' interactively within them… Workers and guests perform class in their appearance and demeanor as well as in their interactions."[117]

Paradoxically, luxury services, which are a mark of economic prosperity and therefore represent successful implementation of the rules of market economy and commodity exchange, imply broader inequalities between its producers and consumers. It is even more surprising that working conditions (working hours, rest breaks) are not often in accordance to the law and a significant amount of money in the form of tips is not subjected to tax.[118] In other words, the fact that consumption of luxury services is a result of economic progress is not reflected in the working conditions, which are not only backward, but also illegal.

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[114] Sherman, *Class Acts*, 274.
[115] P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, tr. by Richard Nice, Cambridge, New York: 1977 (Fr. orig. *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*), 197.
[116] According to Bourdieu, symbolic capital, for example honour, is gained by the means of symbolic exchange.
[117] Sherman, *Class Acts*, 259.
[118] This is probably a specific feature of luxury services in the Czech Republic, where workers are not used to make use of democratic mechanisms to improve their working conditions. Union organization is considered a relic of Communism. That is probably why most waiters I talked to expressed lack of interest in union organization.

8.1 Service discipline

> If we can be alienated from goods in a goods-producing society, we can become alienated from service in a service-producing society.[119]

Performance of luxury hospitality requires that workers have particular skills, physical strength, and the ability to manage their feelings. Hochschild describes how flight attendants control their feelings in order to create homely atmosphere for passengers. She observes that emotional life is being transmuted from the private realm to the public realm where it is standardized and commercialized.[120] In this way, emotional labour performed by service workers estranges their personal feelings. Waiters in Restaurant X considered being authentic more important than smiling and therefore, they refused to smile if they did not feel like it.

Service facilities demand of their workers a specific form of discipline in terms of management of emotions but also in terms of performance. The performance of hospitality in the Green Restaurant involved workers' certain bodily behaviour, manner of communication, and of course, particular emotional demeanour, which were suggestive of their subordinated role in the gift exchange. On the other hand, service workers expected guests to adopt certain forms of behaviour, too, especially as regards manners, politeness, sophistication, and even physical appearance that would confirm guests' more entitled, and therefore dominant status.[121] Moreover, guests were expected to know what to expect and to know how luxury service ought to be received. In addition to that, the public discourse on services stresses that consumers need to *learn* to be assertive and demand proper service.

This specific form of discipline that exists in the service industry subjugates service producers as well as service consumers and casts them into relative positions of subordination and domination. During the performance of luxury hospitality which assumes the form of gift exchange, workers and customers adopt their respective disciplines, which are derived from their respective entitlements, and enact their respective roles. The inequalities are neutralized by the laws of economy which make it theoretically possible for anyone to assume the dominant position provided that they are able to pay for service work. Such "democratization" of services naturalizes the inequalities. On the other hand, the subordinated position is

[119] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 7.
[120] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 160.
[121] Sherman, *Class Acts*, 274-256.

justified by its economic motivation and by the fact that service workers enter their work as free individuals.

On the example of the Catholic Church, Bourdieu illustrates how economic relations are obscured by the means of the economy of symbolic goods. He claims that paradoxically, preaching of modesty and the Church's denial of economic motivations, make possible its wealth.[122] I have shown that it also works the other way round: the economic justifies the symbolic order of domination and subordination. The symbolic exchange – the gift exchange – in the restaurant, and the relations arising thereof, become a part of the "neutral, universal, and impersonal" economy, and being justified by the symbolic order, they also appear as natural. This means, that the subordinate role of service workers becomes naturalized by the fact that their subordination is performed as part of their job, which they agreed to do freely.[123]

I have shown that when they become customers, service workers reproduce the workings of luxury hospitality, including the disciplines of the dominant and the dominated. Service discipline, which subjugates bodies and minds of both workers and customers, is enacted within the interactive performance, in which customers and producers adopt their respective roles. I suggest that this discipline, whereby inequalities between workers and customers are maintained and reproduced, as well as forms of alienation that result from it, become subjects of further academic research.

8.2 Other suggestions for the study of service work

This thesis should contribute to the study of service work. Unfortunately, the scope of the thesis did not allow for a more thorough examination of relationships among workers at different positions; between workers and managers; and within its study of worker-customer relationships, it did not focus on guests' perspective. I suggest that these become subjects of further study:

Although service work *per se* does not produce any goods, in the sense of commodities produced in a factory that are tangible and exchangeable, it is a part of a more complex process that produces both tangible commodities, such as food, as well as intangible commodities, such as experience. Therefore, the concept of commodity fetishism is still

[122] Bourdieu, *Teorie jednání*, 141.
[123] "The legal contract is … the sacred fiction of the bourgeois social and political order since it simultaneously reproduces formal freedom and equality with substantive inequality and oppression." (J. O'Neil, "The Disciplinary Society: From Weber to Foucault," *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1986): 55.)

relevant in the broader study of service work, especially restaurant work, where food is the commodity whose production defines specific relations among various producers (including those who serve it); between the producers and consumers; and between the producers and the owner of the restaurant.

In my research, I did not pursue my original plan to study the interaction between managers and service workers as their subordinates. The managerial discourse significantly interferes with the discourse of gift exchange in that practices used to manage workers collide with the gift-like nature of service work, which is supposed to be voluntary. The relationship that exists between waiters and their employer is very specific considering that waiters only receive minimum wage, and therefore the largest part of their income does not come from their employer but from their guests. I thought that managerial practices in Restaurant X offensive to workers and they often reminded me of practices used in the first factories. Waiters and hostesses also have to make sense of the discrepancy between the individual and voluntary nature of their service labour, and the managerial practices that may remind one of the panopticon.

Last but not least, in the thesis, I focused exclusively on service workers and their work. As Sherman points out, service work is interactive and as such, it involves its consumers. Further study should focus on the specific features of luxury consumption in the post-communist Czech Republic, focusing on guests at luxury settings.

With increasing importance of the role of services in our economy, the role of services in economic, social, and cultural transformation, and its impact on the notion of work shall be taken into account.

8.3 Critique of luxury consumption

According to Plato, wealth corrupts men by luxury.[124] In our economy, luxury is rather a positive sign of prosperity, which is why the battle of luxury market with the current financial crisis is tightly watched. There are reports of its "remarkable resilience"[125] as well as proclamations of the "death of 'bling.'"[126] Be it as it may, luxury consumption is relative to

[124] Plato, "Laws."
[125] J. Fellowes, "Financial Crisis: Luxury Brands Boom as Rich Fly to Quality," 2008, Telegraph.co.uk, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/retailandconsumer/3218808/Financial-crisis-Luxury-brands-boom-as-rich-fly-to-quality.html.
[126] C. Walden, "Karl Lagerfeld is Right About the Death of the 'Bling,'" 2009, Telegraph.co.uk, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/fashion/4325162/Karl-Lagerfeld-is-right-about-the-death-of-bling.html.

average consumption and is defined rather as its excess. Thus, Karl Lagerfeld's preaching of "new modesty"[127] is somewhat contradictory taking into account that the head designer of luxury fashion brand Chanel bathes in Evian.[128] Nevertheless, such "modesty" makes possible the identification of a large part of society with the rich and famous fashion designer and by the means of this identification, class differences between them are obscured. As explained by Roland Barthes:

> The bourgeoisie is constantly absorbing into its ideology a whole section of humanity which does not have its basic status and cannot live up to it except in imagination, that is, at the cost of an immobilization and an impoverishment of consciousness. By spreading its representations over a whole catalogue of collective images for petit-bourgeois use, the bourgeoisie countenances the illusory lack of differentiation of the social classes: it is as from the moment when a typist earning twenty pounds a month *recognizes herself* in the big wedding of the bourgeoisie that bourgeois ex-nomination achieves its full effect.[129]

In this way, the representation of luxury as a desired outcome of economic development available to anyone who can afford it supports the illusion of the "lack of differentiation of the social classes." Barthes' typist earning twenty pounds a month is more likely to recognize herself in the guests in a luxury restaurant than in workers who serve those guests. Attention is drawn away from the people who work to produce luxury service and from the work itself; their work becomes invisible and underappreciated. Describing his work as a *plongeur* (dishwasher) in Hôtel X, George Orwell asks:

> For, after all, where is the *real* need of big hotels and smart restaurants? They are supposed to provide luxury, but in reality they provide only a cheap, shoddy imitation of it… No doubt hotels and restaurants must exist, but there is no need that they should enslave hundreds of people. What makes the work in them is not the essentials; it is the shams that are supposed to represent luxury. Smartness, as it is called, means, in effect, merely that the staff work more and the customers pay more; no one benefits except the proprietor… Essentially, a 'smart' hotel is a

[127] *Ibid*.
[128] *Ibid*.
[129] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 140.

> place where a hundred people toil like devils in order that two hundred may pay through the nose for things they do not really want.[130]

Study of service work helps us understand workings of service economy and provides a foundation for its possible critique.

[130] Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, 105-107.

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