

DISCREET ECONOMY: LUXURY HOSPITALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF POSTSOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION OF CZECH SOCIETY

Iveta Hajdáková

Iveta Hajdáková is a PhD candidate in anthropology at Charles University in Prague. Address for correspondence: Institute of Postgraduate Study Programmes, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, U Kříže 8, 158 00, Prague 5–Jinonice, Czech Republic. iveta.hajdakova@gmail.com.

This publication was supported by the Grant Agency of Charles University (grant no. 351911).

In the Czech Republic, popular discourse on service workers is characterized by complaints about poor level of Czech hospitality resulting from the country's socialist history. On the other hand, there are luxury restaurants that are considered a mark of individual success of their owners as well as of economic transformation and prosperity. This article looks at a case study of one luxury restaurant in Prague and shows how hospitality, luxury, and inequalities between workers and customers were negotiated and contested by workers. The concept of discreet economy is introduced to analyze exchanges between agents, inequalities between them, and workers' strategies of resistance. Readers are invited to see luxury hospitality as an arena where postsocialist transformation of the society is negotiated.

Keywords: Postsocialism; Czech Republic; Hospitality; Luxury; Service Work; Restaurant; Economy; Morality

In a supplement to the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* devoted to hospitality, its editors, Matei Candea and Giovanni da Col, invite readers to see hospitality as a separate anthropological concept yet closely related to the fundamental concept of gift exchange. "Like gift-giving," Candea and da Col explain, hospitality "involves reciprocity, a tension between spontaneity and calculation, generosity and parasitism, friendship and enmity, improvisation and rule" (Candea and da Col 2012:S1). Hospitality represents a sphere of social life heavily loaded with morality, and it also constitutes a separate industry. The Czech language has separate words for the two notions: *pohostinnost*, which stands for hospitality as a traditional value, and *pohostinství*, which refers to the hospitality industry. The tension between these two notions of hospitality can be observed as early as in Plato's *Laws*, where the

philosopher criticizes innkeepers for having corrupted the natural law of hospitality by demanding payments for service (Plato 1999). In today's Czech Republic, influenced by neoliberalism, hardly anyone is shocked by the fact that hospitality constitutes a separate industry, and in their complaints about current Czech hospitality, the media, elites, experts on gastronomy, as well as ordinary people, often invoke the "natural laws" of the market economy and blame the socialist past for their "corruption."¹

Hospitality provides "a means of understanding society" (Lynch et al. 2001:14). It poses fundamental questions about difference and acceptance of the other (see Derrida [1997] 2000), social and economic exchange, morality, power, and control. Within the social sciences, there has been a growing interest in various topics related to hospitality, such as migration, tourism, service work, domestic work, and so on, and with the recent publication of the JRAI's supplement, hospitality has been reintroduced as an important disciplinary topic. There have also been efforts to bring interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary hospitality-related research together under the common subject (see the journal *Hospitality & Society* and Lashley and Morrison's [2000] 2001 compendium *In Search of Hospitality*), promising an interesting dialogue between two traditionally very distinct areas—social science and hospitality management.

According to Lashley, hospitality "represents an interesting paradox, as originally intended, it was obfuscating and designed to mask the commercial purpose of the sector, yet at the same time it has opened up a rich radical route of enquiry that can be used as a critique of commercial organizational practice" (2007:219). Indeed, the hospitality industry has become a widely researched and critiqued area, especially since Arlie Hochschild's (1983) seminal work on emotional labor. Since then, much research has focused on the issues of management, authenticity, alienation, and resistance in settings where hospitality, service, and leisure are produced, commodified, and commercialized (Fineman 2000; Hochschild 1983; Korczynski and Macdonald 2009; Macdonald and Sirianni 1996; Ritzer 1996). Rachel Sherman's (2007) work on luxury hotels has directed attention to luxury settings where class inequalities are performed, produced, reproduced, and naturalized in interactions between workers and customers.

The consumption of luxury goods and services is a mark of distinction, class, and inequality. In countries with socialist histories class, inequality, and distinction are reinvented in the context of a socialist past, an emerging market economy, and moralities of transformation (Hanser 2008; Mandel and Humphrey 2002; Otis 2011). According to Humphrey and Mandel, "postsocialist societies still struggle to come to terms with the clash between deeply ingrained moralities and the daily pressures, opportunities and inequalities posed by market penetration" (2002:1). Jennifer Patino (2009) reminds us that these moralities do not constitute moral frameworks or moral codes but rather, what she calls, "moral styles," which are situated, context-

¹ See Brodilová and Křížková (2009:8–9) regarding the influence of socialism on service work. The celebrity chef Zdeněk Pohlreich often criticizes Czech gastronomy and blames the country's socialist history for many of its flaws (e.g., in Čermáková and Burza 2010; *Ano, šéfe!* TV show on Prima, 2009–2012).

driven, and shifting. Patico argues that although there seems to be an opposition between markets and moralities in postsocialist Russia, if we look at people's moral styles, we will find a more complicated dynamic in their morally charged narratives and performances. My concept of a discreet economy not only shows the interconnectedness of morality and the market, but it also demonstrates that morality does not necessarily stand in opposition to the market and the transformation to a market economy but also supports them, while it discreetly hides their discontents.

In this paper I invite readers to see luxury hospitality as a trope of postsocialist transformation in Czech society through which moralities of the past and present are negotiated. More than twenty years after the Velvet Revolution, the Czech Republic is postsocialist in the sense that the socialist past is seen as still having an influence on the present (Hanser 2008:14). In the case of the hospitality industry, there is significant consensus among professionals as well as the general public that this influence is profoundly negative.

The hospitality industry under socialism became an epitome of the ineffectiveness of the planned state economy and the flawed morality of opportunist individuals; and after 1989, it opened up a space for negotiating the economic and moral transformation of society. I argue that this is one reason why the dialectic between *pohostinnost* and *pohostinství*—and the negotiation of inequalities between workers and guests—is so important to agents in the microcosm of the luxury restaurant. The sphere of luxury hospitality is dominated by economic and moral discourses of transformation, but it also dominates and disciplines its agents. Consequently, the affect and emotions that are generated in people are not only products of their immediate relations but also of the workings of discourses of transformation. Inequalities and resistance then have to be viewed from this larger perspective of the transformation of work, economy, and society, and the concept of discreet economy can be used to help decipher the paradox of *hospitality industry* as well as the contradictions within the transformation of society.

POHOSTINSTVÍ IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Before the First Czechoslovak Republic was formed in 1918, hospitality in Austria-Hungary had been established as a trade and waiting had become a vocation, which removed waiters from the category of unskilled labor and allowed them to form professional associations. After the dissolution of Austria-Hungary and the formation of Czechoslovakia, *pohostinství* was influenced by an awareness of the specifics of Czech hospitality and gastronomy, while the tradition of understanding service work as a vocation and skilled labor continued. At present, the period of the First Republic (1918–1938) is often idealistically depicted as the golden age of Czech hospitality, standing in direct contrast to the socialist era (from 1948 until the Velvet Revolution in 1989).

After the fall of socialism, the hospitality industry in the former Czechoslovakia, and later in the Czech Republic, has become an arena for negotiating the postsocialist transformation of society. The media discourse on services has been characterized

by complaints about the poor level of Czech hospitality resulting from complete state ownership of hospitality facilities under socialism. It is sometimes argued that Czech service workers are not used to serving and customers are not used to being served because socialism had created unnatural relationships between service producers and consumers (Brodilová and Křížková 2009:8–9). Instead of the imperative *můj host—můj pán* (my guest—my boss), it had created relationships defined by the imperative *já pán, ty pán* (me boss, you boss).

Another important influence on hospitality services and the discourse on hospitality is the specific neoliberal notion of the free market, which emerged in the country after the Velvet Revolution. Holy (1996) shows that the free market was thought to be a symbol of civilization, modernity, and rational order, and was considered natural, in contrast to the planned economy sanctioned by the state during the socialist era. Furthermore, continues Holy, the free market was a symbol of freedom, but as he correctly points out, it was freedom for producers, who were the active agents of the market, in contrast to passive consumers (1996:149–163). Since the beginning of the transformation, the attention of popular discourse on hospitality has been on “learning how to serve,” meaning learning how to do business in the service sector, which had previously been owned and governed by the state. Today, as the consumer is playing an increasingly important role, the task is also to “learn how to be served,” to learn how to enjoy the act of consumption. It is claimed that the “natural” economic competition made possible by the free market should bring about a “natural evaluation and perception of services,” provided that consumers *learn* to be more self-confident and assertive.² Although the hierarchy between producers of services and consumers casts the latter in the dominant position, it maps onto the notion of an “active” producer and “passive” consumer that grants more freedom to the producer, leaving the consumer as a passive object of the market (Holy 1996:149–163).

The first president of an independent Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, allegedly said: “The inn is a window into our state” (Solar [1940] 1996:107), suggesting that the functioning of the inn reflects the functioning of the state. In the Czech Republic, hospitality has for a long time constituted an arena for negotiating the nation’s values and progress, as well as political and economic transformations. Throughout history, *pohostinství* has been expected to reflect the traditional *pohostinnost* of the nation and the country’s potential to become attractive to

² “Regime that elevated manual labor to a cult destroyed natural evaluation and perception of services. Krčmářová [a psychologist] adds that one who feels humiliated does not need much to be aggressive. She also warns that, in general, standing up in the public is a problem for us. ‘Before 1989, most people tried to control themselves on the outside and behave as inconspicuously as possible, so we’re still learning how to behave confidently and assertively’” (Brodilová and Křížková 2009:8–9, translated by the author). This quote touches upon these points of the public discourse on services. First, it regards competition as natural in contrast to the “unnatural” socialist 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 behavior is something that must be learned. It is a moral quality that needs to be acquired in order to improve the quality of services.

foreigners—to become “a receiving hall of Europe” (Solar [1940] 1996:8)—but its individual representatives have often been accused of failing to meet these expectations. The history of Czech hospitality very much evokes Holy’s (1996) observations of the ambivalent Czech identity, which is formed, on one hand, by notions of the greatness of the Czech nation, its culture and tradition, to which foreign powers have posed a threat; and, on the other hand, by negative self-stereotypes and narratives about the negative personal attributes of individuals. The supposedly great Czech hospitality is therefore very fragile as it can be negatively affected by its individual agents: entrepreneurs, workers, and customers.

I have been studying Czech luxury hospitality since 2008 and have conducted fieldwork in three different luxury and high-end restaurants in Prague, where I worked with hostesses, waiters, and cooks and interviewed selected guests. This article is based primarily on data gathered from participant observation and interviews I conducted with waiters and hostesses in one of these luxury restaurants, where I was working as a hostess for four months in 2008. I will focus on how workers³ viewed luxury hospitality and the resulting inequalities between themselves and their guests and will show that luxury hospitality was defined by exchanges, in which economic interests could exist only as long as they were denied at the same time. Inspired by Simmel, I call this contradictory form of exchange *discreet economy* and, drawing upon Bourdieu and Sherman, I will illustrate how this concept can be used to understand the workings of inequalities and resistance in service work.

SERVE OR BE SERVED: HOSPITALITY AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF POWER

In 2009, the Czech bank Česká spořitelna released a poster advertisement promoting an insurance package offered by their pension fund. On the poster you could see a picture of a smiling older man sitting on a chair, reading a magazine called *Travel* with his legs crossed and his arm resting on a table. Beside the table, the same man was standing dressed in a waiter’s uniform. He was facing the sitting man’s back and was slightly leaning towards him. The poster asked: “*Jakou pro sebe plánujete budoucnost?*” (What kind of future do you plan for yourself?) The poster depicted two possible scenarios of the future: one can either continue working or enjoy one’s savings and spend them, for example, on travel. However, such a reading of the picture misses an important fact: the scene was taking place at a café or a restaurant. It was the service environment that gave the poster the clarity and urgency of a lose-win situation as it suggested that one’s two alternative futures were to serve or be served! The former implies subordination; the latter implies dominance.

This poster would hardly have made the same sense in the past, especially in the late socialist era, not only because there was no market in pension funds and limited choices for consumption and restricted opportunities to travel abroad but, most importantly, because of a different understanding and working of social inequalities.

³ Names of all informants have been changed to preserve their anonymity.

First of all, for the socialist ideology, "*pohostinství* is no longer a means of exploitation and a source of laborless income. For the first time in the history of the world, *pohostinství* serves the working people and shows the right way to hospitality workers from all over the world" (Salač 1979:14, translated by the author). The second reason why the poster would not make the sense it does today is that waiters in late socialism occupied a peculiar position within the social hierarchy of the socialist society: while their cultural capital was relatively low, their economic capital was often significantly higher than that of the average person. Perhaps more than any other occupation, waiters, especially those who worked in higher-quality hotels and restaurants in bigger cities, came into contact with foreign tourists and therefore had access to foreign currency. Moreover, due to the ineffective functioning and control of the state-owned catering facilities, individual enterprises provided opportunities for pilfering of resources and for cheating customers. Although an awareness of stealing became a part of everyday life in socialism, and the often mentioned popular motto "*Kdo nekrade okrádá rodinu*" (One who does not steal, steals from their family) is for many people a negative symbol of public and work relations under socialism, stealing within *pohostinství* was denounced because it took advantage not only of the non-functioning state-controlled hospitality industry but also of individual consumers (cf. Holy 1996:24–25). Due to the nature of their work, waiters in certain restaurants had many social contacts, including contacts with official as well as underground-economy elites, for whom they would occasionally cater at unofficial parties. Because of their access to foreign currency, some waiters were also *veksláci* who illegally provided exchanges of foreign currency and sometimes traded imported goods. After 1989, waiters lost their privileged social positions because of the privatization of restaurants.⁴

The condition of the hospitality industry in late socialism is very well portrayed in the 1980 Czechoslovak film *Vrchní, prchni!* (*Waiter, Scarper!*), which tells a story of a poor bookseller named Vrána who realizes he could make money by pretending to be a headwaiter after he has been mistaken for one several times. At one time, a drunken old man insisted on paying his bill to Vrána and when he refused, the old man said sarcastically: "You're a headwaiter, don't be ashamed of that. It's a beautiful occupation—people do worse things than that." At a high school reunion, Vrána meets a former classmate who is a manager in a hospitality enterprise, has a beautiful girlfriend, and owns the villa where the reunion takes place. He explains to Vrána how he makes money by cheating: mixing juices with water, selling fake alcohol, and so on. Vrána then begins to go to restaurants where he exploits the flaws in service work, especially the lack of attention to guests, waiters' disinterest and laziness, and the paradoxical situation when guests want to pay their bills but there is no one available to take the payments. Vrána becomes a phantom of Czech restaurants but he is also praised for "having improved the level of *pohostinství*." (One of two characters discussing Vrána's activities says: "You only scratch your head and they

⁴ Radan Haluzík, private correspondence, December 17, 2012; "Veksláci," *Retro*, July 25, 2010, Česká televize. Retrieved April 4, 2013 (<http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/10176269182-retro/209411000360032>).

[waiters] are here.”) The film climaxes when Vrána is caught in the act by other waiters, who chase him and call for help from all the waiters in the area, but Vrána himself disappears in the crowd of similarly dressed waiters. He pretends to go chasing the phantom but instead goes to all the abandoned restaurants and hotels and receives payments from impatient customers once again. He is finally turned in by his nosy neighbor and is sentenced to eight years in prison, where he meets his classmate, the manager, who went so far in his cheating as to have cooked dog meat for his customers. At the end we learn that Vrána’s son graduated from a hospitality vocational school. This popular comedy depicts hospitality workers as individuals whose dubious morality and bad work ethic parallel the immorality and ineffectiveness of socialism. Unlike other waiters, Vrána does not steal from customers but mainly from restaurants, in other words, from the state, and by doing so he, paradoxically, improves the quality of service. The comic effect is produced by moral ambivalence and tension within *pohostinství*.

In the area of the hospitality industry, the years following the Velvet Revolution offered many opportunities for entrepreneurs as well as service workers, who could profit from a lack of competition within the sector and from a growing demand for hospitality services. The market in the early 1990s was promising, especially in Prague, which became a popular destination for tourists. The restaurant business was particularly attractive, and during the privatization pubs and restaurants were being bought or rented “like hotcakes.”⁵

It was a time of opportunities and excitement. *Pohostinství* was dominated by two kinds of people: those who had been trained and had worked during socialism and those who were new to hospitality. The former were criticized for sticking to their bad habits (stealing was still a big issue, mainly stealing from owners) and taking advantage of as yet unestablished market (extremely high prices, using two menus—a cheaper one for locals, a more expensive one for foreigners). The latter were criticized for not knowing anything about gastronomy and hospitality management. Some restaurants and hotels were also associated with dirty businesses and money laundering.

With its newly opened market, the Czech Republic, and especially Prague, became attractive locations for foreign entrepreneurs, who had more financial capital. Among them was a Dane, Mads Sukkensen, who bought properties in several attractive locations and has, over time, transformed them into premier luxury restaurants. At the time of my research, he owned four restaurants (brought together under the ABC Restaurant Group) and was portrayed in the media as a successful businessman.⁶ The following study is based on my participant observation in one of his restaurants and interviews with selected waiters, hostesses, and managers.

⁵ “První podnikatelé,” *Retro*, January 1, 2013, Česká televize. Retrieved April 4, 2013 (<http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/10176269182-retro/212411000360036>).

⁶ In November 2008, only a few months after I finished my research, the financial crisis struck in the Czech Republic. In my last interview with waitress Andrea, she told me that Mads was going to sell one of his restaurants and told all his employees to look for other jobs. As of this moment, he owns three restaurants.

RESTAURANT X

“We will make your day” was the motto of Restaurant X, as well as of the other three restaurants in the group owned by Mads Sukkensen. As one manager explained to me, the restaurant’s goal was to offer a 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 or, more precisely, with its explanation since the phrase itself is not translatable into Czech. Although their opinions on the service and food in the restaurant varied, they agreed that the restaurant’s location was exceptional and worth paying for.

During my research in 2008, before the financial crisis struck 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 crowded. Thanks to its location, the restaurant was particularly attractive to foreign tourists who constituted a significant percentage of the restaurant’s clientele. 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” tourists⁷ would stay and have a meal or make a reservation for the evening or another day.

Besides tourists, managers and business people—both Czech and international—were recognized as the restaurant’s most important clientele. Frequently, business lunches and staff dinner parties were held in the restaurant. Several international companies were members of the ABC Restaurant Group’s membership program and their employees would come for lunch or dinner—on business as well as in their free time. Many well-off or famous local people came to the restaurant, some of whom were also regular guests in other restaurants owned by Mads. Sometimes Mads would hold a private party and invite a few celebrities. In fact, Mads himself was something of a celebrity. His restaurants also provided catering services at various high-end events, including events for postsocialist elites and international celebrities.

The staff were, for Mads, a constant source of worry at the beginning of his business ventures when it was difficult to find good and reliable employees who would not have “the bad habits” of Czech restaurant workers. In a newspaper interview he said that, at last, he found good staff and thanked them for their contribution to the success of his restaurants. The vast majority of waiters in Restaurant X (as well as in most high-end and luxury restaurants in the Czech Republic) were professionals who had studied hospitality at vocational schools (institutions of upper secondary vocational education⁸) and had had a considerable experience with service work in other luxury restaurants in Prague as well as abroad. Most waiters were in their thirties and single, although some were older and had

⁷ “Walk-in” was a word for a guest who had not made a reservation and was used within the restaurant’s reservations system as well as among employees.

⁸ For information on the Czech education system, see Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2008/2009).

families. Interestingly, many workers came from families where one or both parents had worked in the hospitality industry under socialism and had encouraged their children to pursue the career because of the profits it promised back then. In 2008, Restaurant X was still a good place to work in comparison with other high-end and luxury restaurants because it was often very busy and waiters could earn quite a lot in tips, but it was not as good as in 2002, when it opened, or in the 1990s, when Mads opened his first restaurant.

I chose Restaurant X to be the site of my research because, as someone with no prior experience and expertise in luxury services and haute cuisine, I felt that there was a consensus that Restaurant X was a luxury restaurant. But despite its reputation, I soon found out that workers in the restaurant were certain the restaurant offered no luxury at all but was, instead, just “a factory for making money.” Everyone in the restaurant kept telling me that neither the service nor the food was as important as they seemed to be. Throughout my stay in the restaurant, the definition of luxury became more and more vague. Luxury was everywhere and nowhere. It was always present as the ideal of hospitality and used by workers as a frame of reference for evaluating service and its consumption, which, in their eyes, rarely approached the ideal.

Rachel Sherman considers the following to be “the defining elements of luxury”: “personalization; anticipation, legitimation, and resolution of guests’ needs; unlimited available physical labor; and a deferential, sincere demeanor on the part of workers” (2007:25). 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 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 expected and they no longer needed to manage anything. The restaurant recognized their customers as professionals for whom “time was money” and their leisure time even more so. The restaurant was supposed to be a place where things and people were managed according to guests’ requirements and, moreover, without them having to ask for anything, since anticipation of guests’ needs was one of the features of luxury services.

Symbolically, the restaurant constituted for guests a world different from the “world of business” with which they had to deal on a daily basis. This was achieved by workers’ adherence to what I call the *ideal of luxury hospitality*, which implies the following: the staff acknowledged their guests’ individuality by executing their individual wishes and demands, without demanding anything in return, while expressing positive emotional demeanor—all that to produce a positive leisure experience for the guests. Furthermore, the staff saw a difference between the restaurant as their work place and work time and as guests’ leisure place and leisure time; thus they recognized the difference between their respective entitlements to the service and other products of the restaurant. In order to create a friendly

atmosphere, the differences between workers and guests were obscured, for example, by the staff using guests' surnames while wearing nametags with their first names, a practice that is not common in Czech restaurants.

Thrift (2010:290) shows how many capitalist commodities have to demonstrate allure in order to produce certain affects in consumers. This intangible value is created through the interplay of aesthetics, which generates "sensory and emotional gratification" (292), and public intimacy, which encourages the display of emotions and passions once regarded as private (294). Luxury gastronomy is such an affective field, where positive experience, "feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion—even a sense of connectedness" (Hardt 1999:96) are created not only through exquisite cuisine but, importantly, through affective labor.

Affective labor represents a new form of labor that produces and is produced by new forms of sociality. As Holy points out, the almost absolute elimination of private ownership in socialist Czechoslovakia, which resulted in the vast majority of people being employed within the public sphere, created a sharp separation between the private and the public, and this had an important influence on many aspects of life, including hospitality (1996:19). The private sphere was defined by intimate relations between family and close friends, while relations within the public sphere were limited to the necessary minimum and were deprived of expressions of affection, so, for example, waiters and clerks rarely smiled at people (24). Thus, instead of affective labor through which individuals approximate previous forms of belonging (Muehlebach 2011), emotions and efforts displayed and hidden in the discreet economy of Restaurant X were expressions of a desired discontinuity with the previous political regime. Practices of consumption, which are focused on the consumer's individuality, enjoyment of luxuries, display of private passions and emotions, unequal entitlements, friendliness as well as status and privilege, thus represent actual but also imagined social and political transformation.

DISCREET ECONOMY

[A] Waiter's politeness makes guests feel that
they received something more and for free
Vojtěch Král, Psychology for Waiters

"ECONOMY OF SYMBOLIC GOODS" AND THE ILLUSION OF HOSPITALITY

Although by simulating *pohostinnost* the restaurant aimed at creating a space and time that would be different from the sphere of business, it was itself a business, and a successful one. My concept of discreet economy is a variant of Bourdieu's concept of "the economy of symbolic goods," which he uses to make visible the contradictory nature of what is sometimes called the precapitalist economy (Bourdieu [1994] 1998:92–123). Unlike a capitalist economy supposedly driven by self-interest, a precapitalist economy is governed by morality and social ties. According to Bourdieu, however, it is characteristic of the economy of symbolic goods that, although the economic is denied, it still is present and coexists with the moral, which leads to the

illusion that is shared collectively thanks to the interplay of the *habitus*es of relevant agents, creating relations of domination and symbolic violence. The economy of symbolic goods explains contradictions present in the sphere of moral exchange, such as the exchange of gifts and hospitality-*pohostinnost*. Using the example of the Catholic Church, Bourdieu illustrates how economic relations are obscured by means of the economy of symbolic goods and how the preaching of modesty and the Church's denial of economic motivations, paradoxically, make possible its wealth and power ([1994] 1998:124–126). I would like to show that this also works the other way round: Restaurant X adhered to the value of hospitality-*pohostinnost* and did so within the realm of business relations (*pohostinství*); as a result, the moral and the economic were constantly in dialogue, and waiters assumed different “moral styles,” to use Patricó's term, as they assigned various meanings to the exchange of money in the restaurant. I will also show how workers negotiated the inequalities that existed between them and their guests and what strategies they used to cope with the inequalities.

DISCRETION

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
Bohumil Hrabal, I Served the King of England

Discretion (*diskrétnost*) is one of the most important characteristics of luxury hospitality in the Czech Republic. According to Simmel (1950:322), it is a feeling or intuition that enables one to determine the right kind and level of entitlement to another person's intellectual or material property. Unequal entitlements to resources are the key to Sherman's (2007) deciphering of class inequalities in luxury settings. As Sherman writes, analyses of class in service work cannot draw upon the traditional paradigm influenced by factory work analyses, which consider the point of production to be the site of exploitation that generates alienation and resistance. In the service sector, “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 labor effort but also workers' and clients' unequal entitlement to material resources” (2007:259). With the concept of discreet economy I wish to show how the production of entitlement and inequalities is embedded in social relations and transformations.

For waiters, discretion is usually translated as the requirement to be everywhere, to see and hear everything without being entitled to show signs of having seen or heard anything, and to be unseen and unheard altogether. As Dítě in Hrabal's novel says:

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. (Hrabal [1971] 1990:1)

Discretion suggests restrained entitlement not only to a "person's intellectual or material property" but also to one's own intellectual and bodily presentation. A textbook on psychology for waiters specifies what it means to be discreet: "Let's also be *discreet*. In ZVS⁹ we sometimes see the world and people without masks. While the essence of tact lies in the HOW and WHAT we say, the essence of discretion is in that, according to the situation, we say NOTHING" (Král [1973] 1980:106, emphasis in the original). Another guidebook says that not watching and not showing any signs of seeing a guest's flaws, while still seeing everything, is the best way for a waiter to win a guest's favor and also to subtly dominate them (Solar [1940] 1996:35). This limited entitlement to waiters' own visibility on the floor is a symbol of their subordination to guests, but at the same time it allows for hidden strategies of authority and domination over them.

DISCREET WORK AND DISCREET INEQUALITIES

The most important imperative of service work is to "do everything for guests," or, expressed negatively, to "never say no to a guest!" Compared to non-luxury services, service work in Restaurant X was also characterized by a certain excess of attention and effort, which took the form of voluntary extra work, anticipation of guests' needs, attempts to surprise them with unexpected attention, and expressions of personal interest. Managers were quite inconsistent in what they saw as priorities in service, and workers usually decided on an individual basis whether to do something extra for a guest or not, making them aware of the voluntary nature of their work as well as of its "limits." Waitress Andrea, a college student of hospitality management, said:

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.

Mads wanted his restaurant to offer a friendly atmosphere. Friendliness, rather than servility, appealed to workers as well, as it made it easier to exert voluntary effort. Guests who appreciated these efforts and took part in what waiter Jakub called a "friendly connection" were workers' favorite guests, although establishing and maintaining a "friendly connection" sometimes required considerable amounts of emotional labor (Hochschild 1983). Importantly, "friendly connection" discreetly

⁹ *Závody veřejného stravování* (facilities of public catering).

obscured social differences between waiters and customers and created an illusion of authentic social ties and equality.

For Mauss ([1950] 1969), the exchange of gifts is an exchange of inalienable objects and services between related or mutually obliged participants, which requires giving, receiving, and reciprocating. Waiters in Restaurant X paid particular attention to how their work was received and reciprocated. In their eyes, “ideal customers” were those who participated in the performance of gift exchange by receiving service as *pohostinnost* and by limited reciprocity.¹⁰ When asked to define the perfect customer, manager 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.” Workers saw their work as interactive. Guests were expected to accept the service offered to them, to appreciate waiters’ skills, and to reciprocate, either in tips, a smile, or by returning to the restaurant another time. 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.”

Waiters and hostesses saw guests as more or less entitled to and worthy of their service and the extra effort based on how the guests participated in the performance of *pohostinnost*. Guests who refused to accept service as sincere hospitality and pragmatically insisted on their entitlement to get anything they wanted were considered “exploitative,” or “freeloaders.” If their work was deprived of the element of voluntariness, waiters coded the work as servitude (they would play with the words *obsluha*, which means service, and *sluha*, which means servant). Paradoxically, these guests did not receive truly voluntary extra effort. Andrea suggested this when she said: “You know which guest you want to do it [everything] for and which one you don’t—because he’s just exploiting you because he thinks he can.” Waiters and hostesses also complained about guests who did not appreciate their work and considered it a matter of course, as well as about those who exploited their status as guests, ignored workers’ voluntary effort, or even refused it. The epitome of a horrible guest was the “New Russian.” 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’ violation of *pohostinnost* did not only irritate waiters because it was impolite, but it also caused practical problems. For example, in order to provide excellent service, guests had to be seated in particular sections of the restaurant that were assigned to specific waiters. Insisting on a certain table that was in the section of an already busy waiter could result in slow service and a lack of attention to other guests. In general, a guest who demanded too much attention kept workers from attending to the needs and wishes of other guests, but also if a guest was loud, messy, underdressed, or violated smoking restrictions, they disturbed other guests. Thus, problems with bad guests were twofold: not only did they violate the performance

¹⁰ There could be other forms of reciprocity, such as a thank-you email to the restaurant, a positive review of the restaurant, or posting a comment on the restaurant’s website. Quite often the names of particular waiters were mentioned. From the waiters’ point of view, there were also more subtle forms of reciprocity, such as saying thank you, goodbye, expressing interest in the individual waiter, remembering them, and so on.

of *pohostinnost*, but they also interfered with work and the organization of *pohostinství*. If the performance of *pohostinnost* was to be offered, the excessive labor, attention, and inequality had to be discreetly concealed, obscured, and denied by all agents. As Goffman put it:

If a performance is to be effective it will be likely that the extent and character of the co-operation that makes this possible will be concealed and kept secret. A team, then, has something of the character of a secret society. (1959:104)

I argue that luxury lies precisely in this discreet concealment of excessive embodied work and workers' restricted entitlement to guests' intellectual and material property, as Simmel and Sherman would put it. The luxury restaurant offered to its guests an asylum from work and business relations, but it also allowed the disembodied, invisible workers to discreetly pursue their own interests.

DIŠKRECE—TIPS AS GIFTS AND PAYMENTS

The socially sanctioned way to reciprocate service workers in a restaurant is to tip them. However, there is no specific rule for tipping in the Czech Republic,¹¹ and the practice of tipping is confusing for people from other countries as well.¹² Unlike food, service work does not have any objective value corresponding to a definite price, and the amount of a tip and the tip itself were absolutely voluntary (under no circumstances could waiters claim any "right" to this kind of compensation). Yet, for waiters tips were the most important source of income and the reason for them to stay in their jobs. Restaurant X was rather an exception in that waiters kept their own tips and did not pool them. Besides tips, waiters also earned a fixed salary, which was a little above the minimum wage.¹³ The third form of payment that waiters received were bonuses, which were derived from the restaurant's monthly revenue. A waiter 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 these bonuses.¹⁴ Hostesses, mostly college students, were not employed in the restaurant on a permanent and full-time basis and received an hourly wage similar to what comparable student jobs in Prague would

¹¹ During socialism, the common practice was to round up the amount to the nearest five or ten crowns, supposedly to make it easier for waiters to return change. For example, if the amount to pay was 173 Kčs (Czechoslovak crowns), one might have left 175 or 180 Kč.

¹² Research done by Synovate (2007) showed that "tipping is a source of unwarranted pressure, uncertainty and discomfort for consumers all around the world.... 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."

¹³ Waiters and managers were very reluctant to talk about money. They were never specific when I asked them how much they earned in tips, bonuses, or salaries. This might have been due to a general hesitancy of Czech people to talk about their income.

¹⁴ Waiters often complained about these fines. They thought they were the product of arbitrary decisions on the part of managers.

have paid them. They were usually not given any tips or entitled to bonuses or benefits.

The economy of symbolic goods is an economy of haziness and indefiniteness (Bourdieu [1994] 1998:120). The way money was handled in Restaurant X was very discreet, resulting in the virtual invisibility of money. Bills, money, and payment cards were always discreetly hidden in folders; cash registers were placed away from the floor; the values of bills were never pronounced. A tip, *dýško* (also *spropitné*, *diškrece*, *tuzér*, or *tringelt*), which is derived from the word *diškrece*, referring precisely to discretion, was given to a waiter discreetly and he or she would collect it after the guests had left.

How could waiters acknowledge their economic interests in the context of *pohostinnost* and discreet economy? Discreet economy is economy that hides its economic nature, self-interest, and calculation and grants the agents involved in exchanges limited rights to decide on the terms of exchange. 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 tips as counter-gifts. But they denied it at the same time by making explicit that their labor was motivated by economic interests. Waiter Mario said:

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, who had worked as a waiter before but was now a manager, explained:

For waiters, one possible [sign of] 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 their guest is happy when they leave no tips.

However, they also tended to obscure the economic aspects of their jobs and stressed that guests' politeness and niceness were more important than a large tip. Anna said:

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.

Correspondingly, a bad tip (perhaps less than seven percent of the value of the bill) was rarely understood as an explicit reflection of the amount of effort that waiters had put into their work. A bad tip was usually coded as an expression of guests' ignorance, arrogance, or impoliteness.

To mediate between the two discourses—economic discourse and symbolic discourse—waiters referred to a 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. Andrea considered the ten percent “the fundament of politeness.” For Mario, ten percent was optimum:

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

If guests were rude, tips also provided some sort of compensation for the mistreatment. However, sometimes tips from rude customers were not received easily (cf. Zelizer 1996). Mario said he would diplomatically 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 too undignified to be accepted as a payment.

WHO'S THE BOSS? NEGOTIATING INEQUALITIES

Since service work is interactive (Sherman 2007:5–6) and only makes sense when it is received, failure to acknowledge waiters' *pohostinnost*, in their eyes, destroyed luxury. If guests did not behave in accordance with the rules of luxury hospitality, the restaurant began to appear as a “factory to make money” where waiters were “only porters of meals.” For waiters, luxury was also threatened when they felt that guests looked down on them and thought they were poor, or as soon as waiters thought that money was playing a role. Often, guests' failure to meet the expectations of the staff resulted in moral judgments related to the guests' wealth.

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.

Anna suggested that she might be wealthier than some guests but it “didn't matter” because in the restaurant she was not entitled to display her wealth. For Anna, as well as for Jakub, the distribution of entitlements in the restaurant did not correspond to the distribution of economic capital outside the restaurant, and this dissonance was regarded as morally problematic and “incomprehensible.”

Jakub:

It's about 60 to 40, perhaps 70 percent 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 found it tiring to have to deal with guests who had enough money to dine in Restaurant X but were not wealthy enough to know how to behave:

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.

For hostesses Aneta and Pavla, displayed wealth did not correspond to actual wealth. Aneta described it as a "paradox."

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 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 and how could waiters *know* how much money guests really had? Precisely by violating the rules of *pohostinnost* and adhering to calculation and self-interest and by failure to be discreet guests might have appeared as freeloaders or exploiters or as those who needed to show off that they had just got rich. If workers felt that guests considered service work a matter of course, as something to which they were entitled simply because they were paying for it, the voluntary status of service work was violated and, in the eyes of the workers, the work became 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 and unequal. As Milan, a manager, said, such a disclosure of one's financial opportunities was the guest's fault. People who were rich enough (provided they did not come into money rapidly, as Jakub suggested) were considered to be used to receiving human labor and to luxury environments in which the differences

between guests and the staff are obscured in the performance of hospitality. Guests who did not recognize the performative nature of gift giving were thought not to be accustomed to luxury standards and thus not “really rich.” Andrea refused to accept the differences between herself and her guests and pointed out the fact that many waiters were able to afford the same services as their (“more wealthy”) 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.

Sherman (2007) pointed out that in luxury settings class is produced and reproduced through the unequal distribution of entitlements between workers and customers. The role of affective labor in the production and reproduction of class needs to be reiterated. Luxury hospitality and gastronomy aim at the creation of intangible values, such as the memorable experience of “having one's day made” in the case of Restaurant X. Through waiters' discreet physical and immaterial labor guests were encouraged to experience their entitlement affectively, as enjoyment. On the other hand, failure to deliver or accept the experience was also experienced affectively as frustration, irritation, anger, or exhaustion. A guest who did not seem to be able to consume and enjoy luxury services was regarded as not wealthy and “classy” enough, whereas serving a good guest was a “pleasure” for waiters. Affect thus plays an important role in the production and reproduction of class, which has wider implications in the case of the postsocialist transformation.

Perhaps in Plato's time, it was one's moral duty and a matter of honor to be hospitable, to offer shelter and food to strangers and travelers. This tradition still survives in Czech culture but is strictly distinguished from business relationships. The rule of the hospitality business is that whoever is paying shall be offered adequate service. Such a pragmatic approach was reflected in the more frequent use of the word *zákazník* (“customer”) by service workers compared to the word *host* (“guest”). By stressing the economic nature of the relationship between customers and service workers, workers could have coded their subordinate role in the restaurant as something ordinary, necessary, and something justified by the profit that it promised.

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 labor is not derived only from customers' capacity to pay but also from discreet markers of class. Waiters paid attention to guests' behavior as well as to their “classiness,” physical appearance, and clothes. 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, and thus they assumed some amount of power and control over their work, over guests, and over their income. For example, some guests were not considered worth the trouble of rearranging tables for or serving drinks and they were discreetly denied service.

Waiters I encountered thought that knowledge, education, experience, natural talent, and interest in their work gave them special skills that enabled them to work in a luxury restaurant. Because of these skills they could see themselves as better than other waiters and thus entitled to serve better—that is, wealthier—guests. The idea of service work as skilled work was very important to waiters. When I asked them to describe perfect luxury service, I was often given a very exact answer: waiters should know everything about the food and wine in the restaurant, they should be able to recommend a certain meal and wine that would suit the food, and be able to set tables and serve meals and drinks properly. Although they agreed that almost anyone could do the job, they felt it impossible to learn “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. On the other hand, they often felt unappreciated and invisible.

Tippling reflected waiters’ subordinate role in the restaurant. According to Zelizer, monetary payments correspond to a specific set of social relations and system of meaning, and “money as a gift implies subordination and arbitrariness” (1996:481–482). Waiters again coded themselves as skilled at controlling their income.¹⁵ Mostly they did this by serving as many people as was possible but also by giving recommendations for expensive wines (this would increase the size of the bill, which, they hoped, would make the guest leave more money, provided that he or she calculated the tip as a percentage of the bill). Mario used a high-flown metaphor comparing this skill simultaneously to theft and art: “Everyone knows how to rob a guest, but robbing him so that he leaves satisfied and thanks you, that’s art!”

Real stealing was also 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 “waiters’ secret.” Jakub believed that the public thought that waiters cheated and stole. Anna confirmed this 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 that was not quite the truth. For example, on one of my brunch shifts I was supposed to give all the children chocolate treats. However they would always disappear from the box where I kept them and I thought some children had taken them until I saw Boris taking them. When I said they were for the children, he replied: “I have children too. These are for my children.” This example shows that waiters felt, in a way, entitled to some of the restaurant’s resources, although the managers disapproved of such interpretations.

Stealing, to whatever extent it might have been present in Restaurant X, was thought to be a skill and perhaps, as Mario suggested, an inevitable risk that customers took when they engaged in *pohostinství*. Stealing was not only a strategy for challenging the distribution of entitlements to the resources of the restaurant, it was also a form of resistance to the transformation of society in which waiters remained without symbolic capital and were losing economic capital as well. Mario

¹⁵ Sherman (2007) talks about “games” played by hotel workers, which fostered “the sense of skill, control, and autonomy” (151) and also helped them to increase their income (110–153).

questioned the recent development of services that had made it more difficult for waiters to cheat and steal:

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 or less bad.

However, 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 done discreetly, without the latter's knowledge, and the skills were still used within the performance of *pohostinnost*. If they had not been, waiters would have been fired or their bonuses would have been cut.

Working in a luxury restaurant had taught workers about luxury services and learning from some of their guests enabled them to acquire a certain authority over those guests who were apparently less experienced in the consumption of luxury services. Most waiters were educated in hospitality and their knowledge of luxury service, food, and wines gave them a strong feeling of authority, which they were most likely to express through 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, for wines also gave waiters the power to influence guests' spending. Correspondingly, guests had to be able to afford such recommendations and thus prove worthy of luxury services. Playing this game of discretion, waiters said they felt equal to guests, not subordinate to them, as if they were partners in a game.

Using the strategy of maintaining distance, service workers were able to retrieve some authority for themselves. They cast themselves as dominant because they *knew* that the *pohostinnost* and luxury were only illusory. With such an approach, they could code their being in the restaurant as a pragmatic means to increase profit, whereas they could see guests as dupes who went to the restaurant to prove their status, as Milan suggested when he told me that luxury restaurants were useless and only people who wanted to show off needed them. Such a 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 interests, at the expense of guests who spent a lot of money on an illusion of luxury. Mario explained:

It is more or 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 just can't stand there with those people. You must run and work—the more the better for you, right?

...

I tried something [a meal] 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 or less a factory. It's not a restaurant. Money factory. The more the better.

The consumption of luxury services and goods confirms “the taste and distinction of their owner” (Bourdieu [1972] 1977:197), adding to their symbolic capital. 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” (2007:259).

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

DISCREET TRANSFORMATION

From workers’ perspectives, the knowledge, experience, and skills that were necessary on workers’ as well as guests’ part in order to create luxury were acquired through work experience, study, travel, and through experience with consuming human labor. They served as dividing lines between good and bad service and good and bad guests. Good guests were those guests who had learnt how to consume, tip, perform their class, and “to be rich.” Workers in Restaurant X not only saw themselves as good service workers (who even knew how to steal with style) who directly participated in luxury hospitality inaccessible to most people, but they had also learnt to be good consumers who would perform discreet economy outside their workplace and thus discreetly act as agents of the transformation of hospitality.

Waiters and hostesses stressed that, because they knew “the hidden side” of hospitality, the work behind it, they could be empathetic with other service workers when they themselves were guests in restaurants, provided that the workers were polite. They would be patient, they would not demand too much attention, and they were even tolerant when it came to minor faults in service and meals. Aneta pointed out that she learned from her work experience and from guests and that it was thanks to the job that she also learned how to tip. When Mario said: “When a guest is nice to you, then, if you go somewhere, it is reflected,” he made it explicit that discreet exchanges in Restaurant X could affect hospitality outside the restaurant. For waiters and hostesses, encounters with customers were meaningful beyond their work in that they contributed to their knowledge and experience with hospitality and gastronomy. When they themselves assumed the role of customers, they were

able to use that knowledge to appreciate and evaluate or even to demand better service and to become better customers. On the other hand, as workers, they remained invisible.

In his novel *I Served the King of England*, Hrabal chooses a waiter to be the protagonist and antihero in a story of the country's many transformations. Dítě is an opportunist who tries to move up the social ladder and earn respect from the upper classes, but often fails. He begins his career as a poor waiter-apprentice but after a series of successes and failures moves up to work in good restaurants and hotels serving the elites, who change as a result of political changes. After the Second World War, during which he sided with the Germans and even married a German supporter of the Nazis, he buys a luxury hotel, but that is not enough to allow him to become a member of the cultural elite. The hotel is taken from him after the coup d'état of 1948 and he goes to prison where he is incarcerated with other proprietors who, however, refuse to accept him in their circles yet again. In the end, he goes to live a humble life and finally finds inner peace.

Dítě's struggle for respect is intensified by the fact that the story builds on the ambivalent morality and class position of waiters in terms of the combination of symbolic and economic capital. Being paid minimum wage and at the same time earning quite a considerable amount of money in tips casts some workers in a peculiar position in terms of class even today. This is further supported by the fact that service work in today's service economy is often considered unskilled, whereas many waiters in luxury restaurants are qualified professionals. While waiters' invisible work created symbolic capital for their guests, it remained hidden, unrecognized, and unappreciated outside their workplace, except on those occasions when they were themselves customers in restaurants. Although in their work they wanted to be recognized and rewarded for their skills, their entitlement to recognition and financial compensation depended on discreet interactions with guests, which allowed for limited (and discreet) strategies of power and authority. Last but not least, because of political and economic changes, waiters could no longer accumulate capital at the expense of customers, which, as Mario pointed out, was positive for the hospitality industry but not for individual workers. Their long-lasting ambivalent social position has made it difficult for waiters to adopt a firm and respected position within the labor force and society in general. As a result, their work remains invisible and precarious, and they must often rely on personal connections when seeking employment.

Since the market is embedded in culture and social relations, it is problematic to regard it as being opposed to morality. The hospitality industry and luxury hospitality in the Czech Republic are shaped by social relations, cultural norms of hospitality-*pohostinnost*, as well as by political and economic transformations. A discreet economy is not entirely a moral economy, as it is quite explicitly oriented to profit, but neither is it a cynical exploitation of *pohostinnost* in order to produce *pohostinství*. In Restaurant X it was performed through exchanges in which economic interests, calculation, and excessive labor were discreetly hidden behind limited *pohostinnost* and gift exchange. Discreet economy opened up a

space for the interplay of economy, morality, and affect, and for the negotiation of tradition and transformation of society. Most interestingly, discreet economy was reproduced beyond the restaurant by waiters who had experience and knowledge of service work and thus “did unto other service workers as they would have had their guests do unto them.” In the case of the discreet economy then, morality is not merely the opposite of the market, or its context, but is also a vehicle for the market and postsocialist transformation.

REFERENCES

- Bourdieu, Pierre. [1972] 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. [1994] 1998. *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Translated by Randal Johnson. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Brodilová, Zuzana and Martina Křížková. 2009. “Český pán a sluha.” *Nový prostor*, March 3, pp. 8–9.
- Candea, Matei and Giovanni da Col. 2012. “The Return to Hospitality.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18(Supplement):S1–S19.
- Čermáková, Martina and Marek Burza. 2010. “Zdeněk Pohlreich: Kdo neumí dobře jíst, nemůže být úplně šťastnej.” *Hobby.cz*, June 17. Retrieved April 4, 2013 (http://hobby.idnes.cz/zdenek-pohlreich-kdo-neumi-dobre-jist-nemuze-bejt-uplne-stastnej-phj-/hobby-domov.asp?c=A100615_110940_hobby-domov_mce).
- Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. 2008/2009. “Organisation of the Education System in the Czech Republic.” Retrieved April 4, 2013 (http://www.msmt.cz/uploads/adult_education/CZ_EN.pdf).
- Derrida, Jacques. [1997] 2000. *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*. Translated by Rachel Bowlby. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Fineman, Stephen, ed. 2000. *Emotion in Organizations*. London: Sage.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Hanser, Amy. 2008. *Service Encounters: Class, Gender, and the Market for Social Distinction in Urban China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Hardt, Michael. 1999. “Affective Labor.” *boundary 2* 26(2):89–100.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russel. 1983. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Holy, Ladislav. 1996. *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation: National Identity and Post-Communist Social Transformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hrabal, Bohumil. [1971] 1990. *I Served the King of England*. Translated by Paul Wilson. London: Picador.
- Humphrey, Caroline and Ruth Mandel. 2002. “The Market in Everyday Life: Ethnographies of Post-socialism.” Pp. 1–16 in *Markets and Moralities: Ethnographies of Postsocialism*, edited by Ruth Mandel and Caroline Humphrey. New York: Berg.
- Korczynski, Marek and Cameron Lynne Macdonald, eds. 2009. *Service Work: Critical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Král, Vojtěch. [1973] 1980. *Psychologie pro číšníky*. Prague: Merkur.
- Lashley, Conrad. 2007. “Discovering Hospitality: Observations from Recent Research.” *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research* 1(3):214–226.
- Lashley, Conrad and Alison Morrison, eds. [2000] 2001. *In Search of Hospitality: Theoretical Perspectives and Debates*. New ed. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Lynch, Paul, Jennie Germann Molz, Alison Mcintosh, Peter Lugosi, and Conrad Lashley. 2001. “Theorizing Hospitality.” *Hospitality & Society* 1(1):3–24.
- Macdonald, Cameron Lynne and Carmen Sirianni, eds. 1996. *Working in the Service Society*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

- Mandel, Ruth and Caroline Humphrey, eds. 2002. *Markets and Moralities: Ethnographies of Postsocialism*. New York: Berg.
- Mauss, Marcel. [1950] 1969. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. London: Routledge.
- Muehlebach, Andrea. 2011. "On Affective Labor in Post-Fordist Italy." *Cultural Anthropology* 26(1):59–82.
- Otis, Eileen. 2011. *Markets and Bodies: Women, Service Work, and the Making of Inequality in China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Patico, Jennifer. 2009. "Spinning the Market: The Moral Alchemy of Everyday Talk in Postsocialist Russia." *Critique of Anthropology* 29(2):205–224.
- Plato. 1999. *Laws*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Project Gutenberg. Retrieved April 4, 2013 (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1750/1750.txt>).
- Ritzer, George. 1996. *The McDonaldization of Society: An Investigation into the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Salač, Gustav. 1979. *Stolničení pro studijní obor provoz hotelů a společného stravování a pro učební obor číšník a kuchař-číšník*. Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství.
- Sherman, Rachel. 2007. *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Simmel, Georg. 1950. "Types of Social Relationships by Degrees of Reciprocal Knowledge of Their Participants." Pp. 317–329 in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Translated and edited by Kurt H. Wolff. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Solar, J. [1940] 1996. *Host a my: kompas na cesty úspěchu v pohostinství*. Prague: Talpress
- Synovate. 2007. "Synovate Survey Shows Grappling with Gratuities Is Tipping Consumers over the Edge." *Market Research World*, July 11. Retrieved April 4, 2013 (http://www.marketresearch-world.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1448&Itemid=76).
- Thrift, Nigel. 2010. "Understanding the Material Practices of Glamour." Pp. 289–308 in *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Zelizer, Viviana A. 1996. "Payments and Social Ties." *Sociological Forum* 11(3):481–495.

ТАКТИЧНАЯ ЭКОНОМИКА: ГОСТЕПРИИМСТВО КЛАССА «ЛЮКС» В КОНТЕКСТЕ ПОСТСОЦИАЛИСТИЧЕСКОЙ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИИ ЧЕШСКОГО ОБЩЕСТВА

Ивета Хайдакова

Ивета Хайдакова – студентка докторской программы по антропологии Карлова университета в Праге. Адрес для переписки: Institute of Postgraduate Study Programmes, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, U Kříže 8, 158 00, Prague 5–Jinonice, Czech Republic. iveta.hajdakova@gmail.com.

Публикация подготовлена при поддержке Грантового агентства Карлова университета в Праге (грант № 351911).

Сегодня в Чешской Республике очень характерными являются жалобы на низкий уровень обслуживания в ресторанно-гостиничном секторе, которые часто объясняются социалистическим прошлым страны. В то же время в современной Чехии существуют рестораны класса «люкс», которые могут считаться признаком индивидуального успеха их владельцев, а также экономических преобразований и процветания. В этой статье проанализирован кейс-стади одного престижного пражского ресторана, и показано, как вопросы гостеприимства, обслуживания класса «люкс» и статусного неравенства по отношению к клиентам обсуждаются и критически рассматриваются самими сотрудниками ресторана. Концепция тактичной экономики вводится для анализа обменов, возникающих между клиентами и персоналом ресторана, неравенства между ними, а также стратегий сопротивления, используемых сотрудниками ресторана. Автор предлагает взгляд на ресторан «люксового» уровня как на место, где со всей очевидностью проявляются многие специфические черты постсоциалистической трансформации общества.

Ключевые слова: постсоциализм; Чешская Республика; гостеприимство; роскошь; обслуживание, ресторан; экономика; мораль