Fluid Modernities: Cultures of Drink and Categories of the Modern in Georgia

Introduction

This is a book about Georgian experiences of modernity, or modernities, each framed from the point of view of a kind of drink that mediates them. It consists of four parts (Vodka, Wine, Waters, Beer), each dealing with the changing social milieu and forms of sociality associated with that drink. The first chapter, which takes place in a remote mountain region of NE Georgia that has long fascinated Georgian ethnography, Psha-Kevsureti, deals with the relation of vodka (in opposite to the sacred drink, beer) to both to an abstract local cosmology and to concrete local practices of romance and poetry, seeking to answer the question of why Khevsurs like vodka so much, if it is, as they say, 'the drink of devils'. The second chapter also focuses on what Georgians believe is a central element of their traditional ritual life, the Georgian feast or *supra*, following this 'tradition' as a contested political symbol of authentically Georgian 'everyday life' in relation to the modernizing intentions of the socialist state. The third chapter moves from notions of Georgian 'tradition' to Georgian 'modernity', as figured in both the spheres of consumption and production by the quintessential expression of Georgian modernism and non-ritual sociability in soft drink form, Laghidze's waters, following this product and its producer from Tsarism to post-socialism. The last chapter, which serves as a conclusion, follows the ways that these different themes all figure in the marketing and consumption of beer products in the post-socialist period.

Each chapter addresses a different set of times and places within modern Georgia (from the late Nineteenth century to the present). Some of the times and spaces are quite broad periods (socialism, post-socialism), others are very narrow (a small set of villages

in the mountains of Georgia in the earlier 20th century). Some of them would appear to

be not about 'modern' life in Georgia at all, like the first chapter, which deals with a

culture of drink embedded in a cultural milieu that most Georgians since the nineteenth

century have come to associate with the very *paragon* of pristine pre-modern Georgian

traditions, a timeless traditional counterpoint to the plains of Georgia. Nevertheless the

people of that region participated in the same events that characterize Georgian

modernity (the first world war, socialism), often fatefully. More importantly, in this book

'tradition' itself, like the 'modern', is taken not as a thing 'out there' independent of the

discourse that construes it, but as apperceptions of time and space that are themselves the

consequential product of history. In particular, 'timeless tradition' is constructed as a

relation internal to 'modernity', not an external one, as will become clearer when the

same 'traditions' described in the first chapter are returned to as part of the marketing

strategies, grounded in modern ethnographies of Georgian tradition, that seek to

traditionalize modern Georgian drinks.

Partly because the book takes a constructivist attitude to 'modernity', and since the

content of the experience of 'modernity' changes, I will speak of 'modernities'. The

reflexive sense of change, of progress into the future, or lack thereof, the sense that some

things in the 'now' belong to the past-in-the-present (tradition), and not the future-in-the-

present (modernity), are all shared between these discourses. Still, these 'modernities'

are also plural because many of them represent 'alternate modernities', Tsarism,

Modernism, Socialism, Capitalism, the Rose Revolutionary period of now, all carry with

them this reflexive and normative appropriation of time and space that characterizes

modernity, although they are very different, and often rivalrous, models of 'modernity'.

The tempo and speed of change, of technology, of new social forms (categories like public and private, ritual and sociability) associated with modernity, I want to emphasize, are not unreal because they are framed by imaginations, but the specificities of the social imaginary which grasps a culture of circulation is constitutive of the way that the parts of that culture of circulation can be seen as being related, symptomatic, important, part and parcel of the 'modern' (Lee and LiPuma 2002, Taylor 2002). Because Georgians explicitly frame their historical predicament within one or another narrative of modernity, including tradition and its loss as an 'internal relation' brought into existence by the sense of modernity and change, and because these narratives are sufficiently different, I will speak of modernities. Also, Georgian modernity is framed as a problem that is exocentric, that is, for Georgians, modernity is always something that is problematically present *here*, detectable sometimes more in its absence, and always more fully instantiated somewhere else. In this sense modernity is a temporal 'shifter', a term which varies its reference indexically depending on the contextual features of its enunciation, much like its virtual spatial synonym, 'Europe' (on Europe as a 'shifter' see Gal 1991). The same is true of modernity's twin, tradition. The unchanging Orientalist framework in which Georgia locates its own asymptotic sense of modernity as a train that is always coming, never arriving, makes Europe, or 'The West', the centre of modernity, just as the mountains of Georgia, now virtually uninhabited, are the centre of tradition. For this reason, in part of the introduction I am going to talk about some Western forms of 'fluid modernity', drinks like the martini, events like cocktail parties and dinner parties, places like cafes and pubs, for example, that in one way or another serve both as an external object of analytic comparison and also a form of alterity that is an internal relation within

Georgian modernity, a modernity that sees itself as being imitative, for better or worse, of external models. These comparisons will allow me to present *explicitly* the kinds of models used both by analysts and indigenous actors against which particularity of Georgian modernity can be framed. At the same time, the Western examples of 'fluid modernities' discussed in this introduction allow the presentation some of my more unfamiliar theoretical material on ethnographic material that is, perhaps, more familiar to the readers, since it is drawn from their own culture.

But this book is not primarily concerned with debates over unitary modernization theory or talk of 'multiple modernities'. I find arguments about whether there is a common 'noumenon' (something really real, independent of social apperception or imagination) underlying the phenomenal apperception of modernity to be tedious and uninformative. Moreover, assuming a common core to 'modernity' or its various categories (like 'public', for example) can only lead to a situation where modernity is best exemplified in one place (say, Europe or America at the analyst's favorite period), and any 'alternate modernity' (usually located further East or South from this reference point) will by definition appear to be defective or backwards. However, we must remain aware of this inherently invidious property of the idea of a unitary modernity (that it produces alterities like relatively positively valued 'tradition' and negatively valued 'backwardness'), partially because Georgians do subscribe to this theory of a unitary civilizational or modernization process (since, for many purposes, the nineteenth century discourse of unitary civilization and the twentieth century discourse of unitary modernization have very similar normative content and hegemonic sway). I use the term mostly because it describes a period of time that most would comfortably call modern,

because the term 'modern' that gave rise to artistic movements like 'modernism' in Georgia incorporated that term, and subsequently, too, were used indigenously as well, and because the categories I am interested in -- categories of 'cultures of circulation' like private and public, categories of commensality, of sociality like 'ritual' and 'sociability', of state, society and 'everyday life', of economic production, exchange and consumption -- all tend to be grounded within a broader framework as 'categories of the modern' (remembering again, that the opposition between tradition and modernity are also categories of the modern).

My main arguments will be about these categories, categories like 'public' and 'private' (which are, like modernity, not universal, but culturally and historically inflected (Kaviraj 1997), though there are of course uncanny resemblances and eerie differences between different versions of them (Gal 2002: 80)), categories like ritual and sociability, the state and everyday life, socialist modernity and national tradition, all of which are crucially figured by kinds of drinks that both serve as exemplars of them and also materially and symbolically mediate them in consumption. But the focus on this book, an exercise in what has come to be called 'critical fetishism' (Foster 2007, 2008), and also related to literatures on publics and counterpublics (Warner 2000), cultures of circulation (Lee and LiPuma 2002) and social imaginaries (Taylor 2000, 2002) is to view each social form from the perspective of the material form that mediates it.

Drinking and "embodied materiality": Drinks and drinkers

The four sections of this book are each devoted to a different drink whose material properties mediate sociality to such an extent that an entire ethnography of a certain place

and time in Georgia can be written with that drink as the 'hero' of the story. One might think that I am arguing that drinks are good to think (type mediation—that is as abstract symbols or metaphors), but we need to remember that they are only good to think *because* they are good to drink (token mediation—that is, because they are concrete materially embodied objects). One approach to the social significance of drink would be to treat their material properties in a structuralist fashion-- as being sensible points of 'difference' on which to arbitrarily hang social meanings (Keane 2003, Manning and Meneley 2008). In line with a good deal of recent work in anthropology, however, we wish to show the ways that the sensuous materiality of drink enables and constrains, in short, "affords" possibilities for the kinds of social forms that it can mediate (Pfaffenberger 1992, Hutchby 2001). In line with much recent work in Peircean approaches to semiotic anthropology (Munn 1996, Keane 2003, Meneley 2008), the semiotic doppelganger of a technical 'affordance' is the Peircean 'qualisign', that is, a sensuous quality (quali-) of a material object that 'affords' it the potential to act as a sign (-sign). Both categories, one appearing more in the anthropology of science and technology, the other arising out of semiotic anthropological approaches to material culture, give the beginnings of a vocabulary that gives materiality of objects a 'voice' in social forms.

One important sensuous property of the drinks (considered both as a causal socio-technical 'affordance' and as a socio-semiotic 'qualisign') considered in this book is that some of them are alcoholic, others are not. Even granting that the definition of a drink as 'alcoholic' is itself socially constructed, this physiologically causal property of drinks has led to a rather unproductive division within the literature on drinking across the social

sciences (cf. Douglas 1979). The bulk of the literature seizes on this one property of drink, linking it with excessive consumption, and makes the only question that can be asked about alcoholic beverages the social pathologies they create physiologically. The alternate position is ultimately no more satisfying, which is, in effect, to take a strongly constructivist stance towards the problem, ignoring that alcohol content, focusing only on moderate drinking, so that you might easily forget that vodka has a higher alcohol content than beer, or a fortiori, soft drinks. But this is something that any Khevsur knows, that vodka is potentially flammable, beer is not, and gifts of vodka are assessed by putting them to the flame (Chapter 1). Alcohol content, instead, should represent a kind of "affordance" or "qualisign", leading partially to the dualism inherent in drinking through the following pages, that alcoholic beverages have intended symbolic consequences and unintended socio-physiological ones, among them drunkenness, fighting and so on (a dimension of drinking that figures especially in chapter 1 and 2).

And this leads to a second question about materiality, which is that alcoholic beverages take on their meanings not only in relation to each other, but in relation to human embodiment. Drinks are not only metaphors for human sociality, but metonymic of it. Mary Douglas, for example, in her threefold typology of 'constructive drinking', reminds us that drinks and drinking are not only metaphoric or ritualistic ('ceremonials of drinking construct an ideal world' (Douglas 1979: 8, 11-12), but also metonymic: '[D]rinks are in the world. They are not a commentary on it' (Douglas 1979: 9). In particular, she reminds us that the indexical relations of drinks to the world 'as it is' can be both as economic objects transacted (Douglas 1979: 12-14), but also to index the social properties of subjects, in relation to the economy or the social world more

generally (echoing Irvine's classic treatment of the possible range of relationships of language to political economy [Irvine 1996]).

Drinks are therefore a core example of "embodied material culture" (Dietler 2006): They are good to think because they are good to drink. The sensuous properties of drinks, the sensuous qualities that afford them the potential to be social signs (hence 'quali-signs'), seem to be poised literally on the margin of the objective materiality of "things" and the subjective embodiment of "persons", because their purpose is to be consumed, embodied, and their consumption has real causal effects on those bodies. But the linkage of persons and things in drinking, the "embodiment of materiality" occurs not only in drinking, but also in production too, and circulation. The 'animate' qualities of drink that are socially relevant are not only the alcoholic and gustatory properties of consumption, but also those acquired throughout the whole process of circulation, including production (something which is explored in very different ways in chapter 1 and chapter 3). Hence, among other things, this is a work that could be seen as an exploration within a discourse of 'critical fetishism' (Foster 2008).

Mixed drinks, West and East: the martini and the Z.M.K.

Rather than tell you what I am going to tell you, I'd rather begin by comparing the Georgian case with a series of more familiar, but still under-examined, examples of drinking and sociality from Western cultures, specifically, North American and British ones, drawing a set of cases that deal with the same period span as this book. One reason to do this is to make explicit the implicit models we have before we begin to examine those of others, which I take to be an obligation of anthropologists. The other is that

these Western models are also models for imitation or contrast for Georgians, whose model of modernity is that modernity is not only locatable on a dimension of time, but also in space, and that it is mostly found in the West. As Georgians seek to become modern, that is, Western, by reforming their drinking habits, they use models from the West, for example, the cocktail, and specifically, the martini.

Georgians make horribly bad mixed drinks. In this sense, they seem to have achieved European-style modernity, at least, which is defined (from an admittedly chauvinistic American perspective) by the inability to mix a cocktail.[1] What interests me more is that they make them at all. Georgian alcoholic drinks are in general characterizable by the absence of mixture (chapter 2). Each drink is always consumed in its purity. Even when one mixes drinks, like vodka with beer, one is still drinking shots of vodka and beer chasers. Once, sitting in a café in a park in Tbilisi, a Georgian friend

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[1] Compare Rudin (1997) **: "**Unlike the Brits, most Europeans just didn't get it. "It is a little difficult to understand," wrote Frank Schoonmaker in a 19.34 New Yorker, "why Frenchmen, who drink iced Pernod or Mandarin curaçao (a mixture if there ever was one) with so much gusto before lunch and dinner, should evince such positive terror at the sight of a bit of vermouth and gin…. The average European cocktail-drinker usually drinks not cocktails but alcoholic salads…. [In] a cocktail competition in Madrid last summer, the first prize was given by the Spanish jury to a bartender … who suggested blending the sweetest vermouth that is manufactured with maraschino, orange juice, Cointreau, rye whiskey, and a piece of pineapple. This might not kill a Spaniard, but if it won't, nothing will."

and I noticed they were selling gin and tonics. The gin was a deep dark poisonous yellow and I don't know what they intended to use for tonic, but out of the same curiosity that killed the cat, we decided to drink this beverage, and decided after a sip or two to go back to beer, forever. The point wasn't that the gin and tonic was horrible, one can get horrible gin and tonics almost anywhere in Europe. The point is that they had them at all, and that one could get them just at those places you could get beer or coffee. Perhaps gin and tonics, even bad ones, represent a model of Georgian aspirational modernity, striving to incarnate the transcendent imaginary West here and now, but failing miserably. More to the point, they are mixed drinks, not appropriate for ritual drinking, but possible for sociable drinking (more on the distinction below), the same sort of drinking associated with coffee, or beer. The most surefire index that a drink is 'ritual' (and this is an indigenous category to some extent) is that you need to bless it, you need to say a toast before you drink it, and the most surefire sign that a drink is not a ritual one, but a sociable one, is that you just drink it.

Once, I made some friends of mine an approximation of a dry martini (I used gin and vermouth one can buy in Tbilisi, all of it standard). I noticed that while they drink vodka or similar alcohols in shots drunk to a toast, they neither said a toast to the martini, nor did they drink it in a single draught. They sipped it. Later, my host decided to experiment with the whole cocktail genre, and took some local grappa-like drink called "Chacha" (normally drunk in shots with a toast), mixed it with a fruity compote made of wild plum, and made a mixed drink out of it, which he named joking after our working class neighborhood, *Zemka* (Z.M.K.). Again, we sipped the *zemka* much as we sipped our martinis. It seemed, then, that the defining property of the cocktail, which was

mixture, was easily grasped, and added to this was the additional local understanding that since it was *mixed*, and not *pure*, one could not say a toast to it, and one could sip it as one chose. Pure alcoholic drinks are transacted in a ritual idiom of toasting and draining to the bottom, mixed alcoholic drinks (like non-alcoholic and low alcoholic drinks like beer) in a sociable idiom of unrelated acts of talking and sipping. Precisely this fact, we will see in chapter 2, is what allows cocktails, strangely, to form the material basis for a teetotaler reaction to the alcoholic ritual excess that is the supra.

The flip side of this particular coin was when I brought another friend a bottle of Bombay Sapphire gin and found some actual martini glasses and vermouth and made him a martini. He seemed to enjoy it, but then when I returned a day or two later, he admitted that he and his friends had drunk the whole bottle in one sitting, drinking gin in shots to toasts. I found I was horrified by the prospect, because, for me, gin is defined as a drink that defines the two poles of drinking. Properly mixed in a martini, or any cocktail, it defines civilized, modern styles of drinking. Drinking it straight, however, seems either impossible (quite unlike vodka), but also simply depraved, a surefire sign of some nineteenth century vision of the slippery slope (see Edmunds 1981 for this ambivalent message of gin). Gin's destiny is to be mixed, if ever so slightly. But truth be told, I couldn't exactly explain why it was acceptable to me to plough through a bottle of vodka, but not a bottle of gin, in this way.

The Martini and modernity: drinks and social imaginaries

This book is in part an exploration of Georgian modernity, and public forms of sociability, viewed from a 'critical fetishist' perspective (Foster 2008), where the

perspective adopted is that of the drinks that mediate that modernity. For simplicity's

sake, and also because I believe it to be cogent, I take modernity to be entirely an

indigenous category of normative discourse. The thing that defines modernity is talking

about modernity. Neither I nor anyone else has a looking glass powerful enough to scry

past the welter of incommensurable definitions offered for the noumenal object lurking

behind this discourse, so I will not even pretend to do so.

In Georgia, modernity is taken to be a relational concept, an aspirational category,

having both a temporal dimension and a spatial orientation, a category with its 'haves'

and 'have nots', it is always something asymptotically just out of reach in time *now* and

in space *here*, but always paradigmatically realized in space and time somewhere else,

specifically, in Europe, in the West. To understand my own surprise at the Georgian

reception of mixed drinks, and how mixed drinks, cocktails, specifically martinis, ever

came to be signs of modernity (specifically in the high modernist sense), one has to go to

the period in the West when precisely cocktails were the sign par excellence of

modernity. I can think of no better example of this than the movie, *The Thin Man* (1934),

in which the main characters, the detective couple Nick and Nora Charles, drink their

way through solving a caper in style. When we first meet Nick Charles, it's in a hotel

bar, a scene of couples dancing resolves to a scene of Nick tending bar, explaining to the

bar staff how to make a martini by demonstration (one notes that connoisseurship of the

martini, whether in the figure of Nick Charles or James Bond, is always displayed in

knowledge of production [mixture], entirely unlike connoisseurship of wines or scotches,

where the object of connoisseur knowledge is the material that comes out of the bottle,

not what you do with afterwards). When we find him, he is shaking a martini, making a

series of analogies between dance steps and shaking rhythms, finally pouring himself a martini, placing it on the waiter's platter, taking it back, and drinking it.

> You see, the important thing is the rhythm. Always have rhythm in your shaking. A Manhattan you shake to a fox trot. A Bronx to a two-step time. A dry martini you always shake to waltz time. Now mind you, there's a still more modern trend....

The martini, of course, associated with the gentlest dance (Edmunds 1981: 57), and the making of the martini a connoisseur performance that focuses on a cult of the mixture process (remember that the macho James Bond had his 'shaken not stirred', and Somerset Maugham the opposite, two strategies of mixing epitomized in terms of the gendered masculinity of the two Englishmen (Edmunds 1981: 56-7)). For Nick Charles, each cocktail has its own rhythm, just as each dance has its own rhythm. The motion of cocktails (things/objects) is classified in terms of the motion of people (persons/subjects). Also, just as dances are connected to a 'fashion system', so too, are cocktails.

His last drunken remark, left unfinished, that there is a 'still more modern trend' reminds us that in this time fashions and 'trends' in cocktails as in dance steps are linked to the indigenous concept of modernity, specifically an teleological and normative apperception of time in which newer tends to be better. This concept, seemingly serving double time as an analyst's concept and a native concept, will only be used in this book for the self-conscious approach to novelty and change, and not the analyst's

conceptualization of change. The cocktail, and specifically the martini, is an image of modernity in this period, which was, after all, the period of high modernism:

> Combining energy and austerity, power and subtlety, urbanity and sophistication, all in a sexy, elegantly simple, streamlined package, the martini is the essence of American modernism in drinkable form. It's modern America as cocktail. (Rudin 1997)

Everything about the martini shows an iconic aesthetic affinity for modernism. Lowell Edmunds' structuralist discussion of the drink shows the various 'simple messages' of the martini as a set of binary oppositions like so (1981: 127-8):

The martini is…	is not…
American	European, Asian, African
urban	rural
upper-Class	lower-class
male	female
optimistic	pessimistic
adult	immature
past	present

At the time Edmunds was writing in the 1970s, perhaps, the martini was already a 'classical' form within the culture of modernity, thus associated with the past, but he also shows throughout the various ways that the martini as a drink and the contexts in which it

was drunk make it a central emblem of aesthetic high modernism. Rudin makes this association more directly:

> Above all, the martini is a modern cocktail. You could say it's the modern cocktail. At the dawn of this century, the recipe coalesced: London gin, French dry vermouth, and a dash of orange bitters. It would get drier over time, but it found its essential form at just about the same time as the skyscraper, the airplane, jazz, and the two-piece business suit. Like them, the martini evoked something essential about twentieth-century America. Linked early on with the new century's avant-garde, the martini for nearly seventy years would express both "American" and "modern." (Rudin 1997)

The Martini, on one level Edmunds shows, is simple, but at the same time, Edmunds shows how the martini's more complex material mediations show it to be a drink divided. For one, the Martini is, at one look, as a mixed drink, the pinnacle of civilization, associated with the positive content of modernity as such (thus, mixing it properly becomes important), on the other hand, since it is very nearly pure gin, it is associated with the barbaric depravity of drunkenness; the ritual of drinking it together celebrates communality and egalitarian relationships (in the case of Nick and Nora Charles particularly), but it is also the drink of the loner, like the macho individualist bordering on nihilist, James Bond (Edmunds 1981: 7-59). The martini too, is masculine in two slightly different ways, the stirred gin martini of Somerset Maugham, eexpressing a more classical form of English masculinity, contrasting with the tough, flavorless, no nonsense shaken martini of James Bond, the latter, perhaps, a overcompensatory form of macho

martini by which the English spy can appropriate the drink of American detective Nick

Charles by going him one better, by substituting vodka for gin. The fact that the most

macho, rugged individualist martini (the Bond), by virtue of its flavorlessness (as a dry

vodka martini), spawned a whole range of incontestable 'girl drinks' called 'fauxtinis',

starting with the Cosmopolitan or the Apple Martini, all of which are built on a macho

flavorless Bond martini base with the addition of all manner of colorful sweet, sour or tart

additives and decorations, is simply an amusing historical irony that deserves its own

special treatment. These polarities, the complex, ambivalent material mediations of the

martini, too, afflict Nick and Nora's relationship to martini. After all, Nora, having

discovered that Nick is six martinis ahead of her, insists that she catch up immediately, a

sociable gesture, but also an egalitarian one, expressing the 'communal martini of the

relationship' (Edmunds 1981: 19-44):

Nora: How many drinks have you had?

Nick: This will make six martinis.

Nora (to waiter): Will you bring me five more martinis...

Nora: -...and line them right up here?

Waiter: -Yes, ma'am.

On the other hand, the fact that six martinis are, in fact, six glasses of cold gin, expresses

the destructive isolating dimension of the martini (Edmunds 1981: 9-19), as Nora

discovers in the very next scene when she wakes up the next morning with a raging

hangover:

Nora: What hit me?

Nick: The last martini.

Figure: Nick Tends Bar

Figure: 'Line them up!' The communal, egalitarian martini

The 'simple messages' of the martini discussed by Edmunds are those that do not take the complex materiality of the martini into account, they are the 'structuralist' martini, in which materiality is merely a sensuous peg to hang social difference on, but the complex messages of the martini are those that take the martini in all its ambivalent, contradictory material complexity. In a way, Edmunds breaks with the structuralism of his list of 'simple messages' to give a material basis for the ambiguous, contradictory messages of the martini, and this break is what takes his structural analysis into history and materiality.

One key aspect of the martini as a cocktail is that it is defined by a complex rejection and acceptance of the category of *mixture* that defines the cocktail. The prototypical martini is the *dry* martini, a martini with very little in it other than gin. Thus,

it resembles nothing so much, materially, as a straight shot of cold liquor. The dry

martini is an *asymptote* of a straight shot of liquor, it must approach a pure shot of gin,

but never reach it. For to reach a state of purity, it would no longer be a cocktail, it

would lapse from being civilized, to uncivilized. The category of 'dryness', of course,

denotes an asymptotic state between mixture and purity, mixture ever approaching, but

never reaching, purity. As such, dryness is also applied to both the ingredients, dry gin

and dry vermouth, neither of which are to be drunk straight. Thus, they must be mixed.

Because a martini verges on a glass of cold gin, it is barbaric, but because it involves a

complex mediation, it is civilized. The differences with the Georgian uptake of the

concept are interesting, in a sense, a complete reversal of the poles: for Georgians, purity

marks the (positively valued) ritual drink, mixture marks the (unmarked, non-valorized)

sociable one.

But there is more, the iconic relation with modernism, the association with urban

metropolitan life, all can be explained by a further investigation of the dryness of these

components. Take, for example, gin, other than the fact that in itself its consumption in

the 19th century was virtually synonymous with the drinking problems of the industrial

poor, and was the main target of temperance movements, the fact of the matter is that gin

is also relatively easy to make. Rehearsing a version of Levi-Strauss's famous 'raw and

the cooked' argument, Edmunds shows us how the production process of all alcohols,

being cumulative, involves the progressive removal of what could be called 'natural'

qualisigns (conferred by the intrinsic character of the 'raw materials' and which form the

basis of connoisseurship with respect to them, see for example Silverstein 2006) and their

replacement with 'cultural' ones (conferred by the production process). Each step of the

production process that defines a new drink category whose production includes all the previous steps. Thus, fermented beverages (wines and beers) are 'cooked' compared to their raw materials, but 'raw' compared to distilled beverages (which are all made from fermented ones). Within distilled beverages, another distinction of the same order arises, those made from fermented mash (which retain the gustatory properties of their material) and high 'rectified' alcohols (which are made from purified alcohol and lack these gustatory properties). This produces the distinction between, say, brandies, cognac, bourbon, whiskies versus 'white spirits', of which the most purified are gin and vodka. But then, while James Bond preferred the purity of vodka to the complex mixtures of organic poisons of brandy or bourbon (the classic text is *Goldfinger*), he also gave us the historical conditions of possibility for the fauxtini, the girl drink served in a martini glass. Even within the white liquors, there is a further distinction between those, like tequila or rum, which 'contain at least a hint of the raw material from which they were born' (Edmunds 1981: 62), and gin or vodka, which do not. The whole hierarchy, then, is both one of relative degree of production in which the process of production removes qualisigns of the 'raw material' (nature) and replaces them with those of production (culture). One notes that the categories of the connoisseur are all those based on the raw material or the earlier stages of production, the egalitarian rejection of the connoisseur's categories is what makes the vodka or gin fetish a fetish not of nature, but of culture, of mass production, of modernity. Thus, the wine drinker, and lover of scotch, will always be positioned as being relatively traditional, old fashioned, compared to the egalitarian drinker of the martini, from the perspective of a modernist aesthetic. Also, the martini, a refined drink made from cheap ingredients, by divorcing itself from a discourse of

distinction based in natural properties (and expensive ingredients) and marrying itself to discourse in which all the desirable properties are added by the production process itself, becomes emblematic of modernity, of a new order, egalitarianism and so forth.

Raw					Cooked
(Nature)		Production process			(Culture)
(craft discourse of connoisseurship)			(industrial discourse of production)		
(More natural qualisigns)			(fewer natural qualisigns)		
Raw	**Fermented**	**Distilled**	**Rectified**	**Pure**	**Flavored**
Fruit	Wine	Brandy , Cognac	Grappa	Vodka	Gin
Grain	Beer	Scotch, bourbon….	Rum		
			Tequila		

Gin, compared to vodka, would appear to take 'a step backwards', moving from the flavorless modernist perfection of vodka back towards the natural flavor of juniper. But, since these flavors are added last, this is actually even one step further from the world of nature, one more step in the process of production, making gin even more mediated, less natural, than vodka (Edmunds says the opposite, claiming vodka as the most modernist drink). Further, not only is gin mixed in its essence, but can only be drink mixed, mixture representing one more cultural mediation, one more stage of production. And dryness is a category of mixture, but also a refusal of mixture, so here, too, gins are called 'dry' when they contain very little of this flavor. Vodka cannot be called 'dry', it simply lacks flavor, whereas dry gin seeks the limiting case:

> In either case, gin has to take a step backward, as it were, in the direction of the
> more flavorful white spirits, the brandies, and the whiskies. If gin did not take
> this step, it would remain completely neutral in taste, utterly abstract…All
> [manufacturers], however, aim at something called 'dryness.' When

manufacturers boast of the dryness of their product, they are not saying it is not sweet…but that it is flavorless as possible while still retaining the characteristic taste of gin…. In pursuing this goal of dryness, gin manufacturers inevitably lost the race to vodka, which is what gin would be if it had no flavor…. Paradoxically, it was the taste for dry gin that made the triumph of vodka inevitable. Vodka is the furthest removed from the grain (formerly potatoes) of its origin, and gin is next in neutrality. They are the most abstract, and therefore, most in need of definition….Again vodka can, by tradition, be drunk chilled and neat, as with caviar, but gin cannot. Only in virtue of its mixed state does gin attain an identity (Edmunds 1981: 63)

It is precisely the mediation of the martini, and all its ingredients, in the production process that make them signs for the modernist symbol par excellence, the cocktail. The martini (as the prototypical mixed drink) is the opposite of a straight shot of any distilled drink, but it is also asymptotically identical to it. 'Dryness', as a qualisign, is not an absence of qualitative properties, but a stripping down of properties, it is the difference between minimalism and absence. Both dry vermouth and dry gin are modernist celebrations of the production process, industrial modernity, aesthetic minimalism, but they are not the same as the absence of properties. Hence, the martini is capable of both simple messages, but its complex materiality allows it to mediate complex, ambiguous ones, as well. These complex ambiguous messages of the martini are those grounded in its complex materiality, which include not only the sensuous properties of the final product, including both organoleptic qualities as well as physiological effects, but the

whole production process which figures latently as an internal relation, an immanent

moment informing the consumption of the final product (Heath and Meneley 2007: 593-

4). The way that production is latently present as a figure within consumption (not

merely because the existence of the product indexes a producer, but because imagining

production is an aspect of consumption) is a central theme developed in these chapters.

The notion of 'purity' (and the related notion of 'dryness') celebrated in the modernist

taxonomy of alcohol derives these categories of consumption from the process of

production, seen as a process that mediates between the cosmological antonyms of nature

(raw material) and culture (product), but in a very different way from the way the Pshav-

Khevsurs derive their notions of 'purity' from production (chapter 1), it being located in a

very different cosmology derived from the purity spaces and persons in production and

ritual interventions in production. The symbolism of the production process latent in the

modernist celebration of industrial production in the martini is worth comparing to the

kinds of qualisigns of production that end up determining the Khevsur evaluations of beer

or vodka in chapter 1, or the modernity of Georgian soft drinks in chapter 3, and the

celebration of both folk traditions and European industry is discussed in chapter 4. In all

of them, however, drinks from the Bond martini to Khevsur beer are charged with

meaning because of the cosmological premises they embody, the secular modernist

dualist cosmology of production (in both western capitalism and socialism) as a process

mediating between nature and culture is no less a 'cosmology' than the Khevsur dualisms

in which vodka and beer are situated and mediate between gods and demons.

The contexts for martinis: cocktail party and dinner party

Unlike in Georgia, the martini in the 1930s could be consumed embedded in two very different kinds of occasions, one more 'sociable', the other more 'ritual', the cocktail party and the dinner party. And in the movie, *the Thin Man*, we find the martini playing a central role in the two major parts of the movie in which Nick and Nora Charles do their sleuthing. In the first major scene, a cocktail party in Nick and Nora's hotel room, the convivial scene of the cocktail party is also the scene in which Nick and Nora begin their investigation of the crime. In the final scene, a dinner party, Nick and Nora reveal the fruits of their investigation. The movie is divided between these two central scenes, the two central and paradigmatic forms of sociability at both of which, among other things, it is appropriate to consume a martini, form the framework for the division of the film into investigation and solving the crime. It's worth looking at the two opposed *behavioral genres* expressing modalities of sociability to see how sociable interaction is imagined in the period, different forms of interaction hovering between private and public life, as these will help make explicit what would be an otherwise implied contrast with the genres of sociability in Georgia to be discussed in the next chapters. Also, because, the dinner party and the cocktail party as Euro-American forms are not merely external models for comparison, at various points they are internalized within Georgian modernity itself, since, we must recall, for Georgians modernity is exocentric, it is never here, now, but always better instantiated somewhere and somewhen else. The Georgian supra (feast, chapter 2) is both opposed to the Western dinner party and cocktail party, but at the same time, its current form owes a great deal from the 19th century onward to the European dinner party. At the same time, the supra stands for a kind of ritualistic order similar to the formality of the dinner party, and revolutionary attacks on the supra

and all that it stands for (variously the old regime, Stalinism, patriarchy, what have you) have adopted the Western cocktail party as their revolutionary standard.

Perhaps we could begin the contrast between the two genres in *the Thin Man* by noting how people are invited. In the cocktail party, they simply drop in (Nora calls the front desk and says 'Don't bother to announce anyone. Just send them all up.), at the dinner party, the guests are all suspects, so it their invitation card is a police warrant. Cocktails are present at both, of course, at the cocktail party they are the only thing present (The question of food is mooted as an afterthought: **Nora:** 'I've got to order some food.' **Nick:** 'Isn't it a waste of energy?' Eventually Nora calls food service: 'Send me up a flock of sandwiches!') and people drink as they choose. At the dinner party, at the end, the cocktails precede the meal, the cocktail party is, as it were, an informal beginning to the formal dinner party, and even here the guests are ordered to drink (Policeman dressed as servant: Have a cocktail. Male Guest: No, I don't care for any. Policeman/servant: I said, have a cocktail! Female guest: I guess he wants us to have a cocktail.)

.   The cocktail forms the focus of the cocktail party, food the periphery, at the dinner party, it is the opposite. A whole set of other features follow from the prototypically informal sociability of the cocktail party and the prototypically formal sociability of the dinner party. At the cocktail party, there is no central focus of attention, small elective conversational groupings, sitting or standing, prevail; at the dinner party, assigned seating and a central focus of attention, one single conversation. At the cocktail party, the hosts are also the servants, a certain egalitarianism prevailing between the guests and the hosts; at the dinner party, role distinctions are reinforced not only the hosts assigning the guests seating (and dragging them there using the police, surely a

metaphoric development of the more general unfreedom that is instantiated by the everyday dinner party), but also by the presence of servants. Further, cocktail parties accentuate the participant as an unattached individual whose gender and marital status is irrelevant, Nick and Nora wander freely and are not 'joined at the hip' (Dashiell Hammett's Nick and Nora Charles, as played in the movies by William Powell and Myrna Loy, epitomized the way thirties screwball comedies carried over the twenties' ethos of sexy and equal companionship between men and women) where the seating at a dinner party takes the couple as the basic unit that is ritually emphasized (in this case by seating couples next to one another). The cocktail party emerges as an egalitarian, informal, democratic, individualist form of sociability, the dinner party aristocratic, formal, authoritarian and non-individualist.

> Things changed quickly after World War I, hand in hand with another new American institution. "The 'party,'" wrote Malcolm Cowley in 1931, "conceived as a gathering together of men and women to drink gin cocktails, flirt, dance to the phonograph or radio and gossip about their absent friends, had in fact become one of the most popular American institutions; nobody stopped to think how short its history had been…. It was introduced into this country by Greenwich Villagers— before being adopted by salesmen from Kokomo and the younger country-club set in Kansas City." The new cocktail-party culture differed from Victorian styles of entertaining. Reduced immigration and rising wages meant middle-class households could no longer afford domestic servants, and kitchens and dining rooms in modern homes (and apartments) were too small for elaborate formal luncheons and dinners. Martini-and-Manhattan parties were a natural solution. (Rudin 1997)

Similar oppositions to these inform the oppositions between the genres of sociability, public and private, that are discussed in the following four chapters. Strangely, this particular form of sociability never found its way into the earlier anthropology of drink, such as Mary Douglas' *constructive drinking*, in which, characteristically, the focus is on the Durkheimian view of drinking as indexing and enacting social status attributes and relations in the manner of ritual (Mary Douglas 1979), though an important but neglected article on beer drinking in an African community, Ivan Karp, while building on Douglas' categories, reintroduces the category of sociability into the analysis of drink (Karp 1980).

Willy nilly, the latent common sense opposition instantiated in notions that dinner parties are 'formal' and cocktail parties are 'informal' genres of interaction (on this opposition see Irvine (1979), who uses the 'lecture' opposed to the 'American cocktail party' to illustrate the formal and informal poles one dimension of formality, which is the 'emergence of a central situational focus, characteristic of the former and not the latter, which consists of many small decentralized conversational groups) makes using metaphoric comparisons with these two genres a common gambit in social science literature, in particular to illustrate the opposition between 'formal', 'ritual' behaviors (a series of genres in which the social order is displayed in microcosm and social distinctions are reinforced, including commensality festivity: therefore dinner party) and 'informal' 'sociable' behaviors (in which activity, particularly conversation, is pursued for its own sake, the 'play form of association' (Simmel 1949: 255)). For Simmel, this play form of association is also a key domain in which modern ideologies of self independent of status are enacted, in contradiction to 'ceremonial' enactments of status

typical of the pre-modern self (an aspect of 'formality' which Irvine (1979) captures under the heading of 'positional identity'):

> This world of sociability, the only one in which a democracy of equals is possible without friction, is an *artificial* world, made up of beings who have renounced both the objective and the purely personal features of the intensity and extensiveness of life in order to bring about among themselves a pure interaction, free of any disturbing material accent. If we now have the conception that we enter into sociability purely as 'human beings,' as that which we really are, lacking all the burdens, the agitations, the inequalities with which real life disturbs the purity of our picture, it is because modern life is overburdened with objective content and material demands….In earlier epochs, when a man did not depend so much upon the purposive, objective content of his associations, his 'formal personality' stood out more against his personal existence: hence personal bearing in the society of earlier times was much more ceremonially rigid and impersonally regulated than now. (Simmel 1949: 257)

The Durkheimian view of the ritual order, strongly associated with the adjective 'formal' at both everyday and analytic levels (on which see Irvine 1979), is exemplified, by, among other things, the contemporary dinner party by Goffman (as well as, perhaps, the cocktail party, for Goffman, ritual is everywhere, of course, not only opposed to 'the everyday' [as explicitly in Durkheimian ritual theory], it informs the everyday as well). In ritual performances (which Goffman calls 'ceremony' here),

[t]he divisions and hierarchies of the social structure are depicted

microecologically, that is, through the use of small-scale spatial metaphors.

Mythic historic events are played through in a condensed and idealized version.

Apparent junctures or turning points in life are solemnized, as in christenings,

graduation exercises, marriage ceremonies, and funerals. Social relationships are

addressed by greetings and farewells. Seasonal cycles are given dramatized

boundaries. Reunions are held. Annual vacations and, on a lesser scale, outings

on weekends and evenings are assayed, bringing immersion in ideal settings.

Dinners and parties are given, becoming occasions for the expenditure of

resources at a rate that is above one's mundane self…In all these ways, a situated

social fuss is made over what might ordinarily be hidden in extended courses of

activity and the unformulated experiences of their participants. (Goffman 1979: 1)

Paralleling this sense that the dinner party, being 'formal' 'ritual', sometimes, is the

notion that events involving ritual, commensal festivity are somehow more typical of

'traditional' societies, something more characteristic of the past, while cocktail parties,

when they are adduced are always adduced to illustrate 'informal', 'sociable' forms of

interaction associated with the predicate 'modern'. Valerio Valeri, for example, begins

his exemplary discussion of feasting and festivity using the cocktail party and the

reception precisely to illustrate the modern's loss of traditional forms of festivity:

Our festivities are reduced to a shadow of what they once were. Cocktail parties

and receptions are enclosed like contagious diseases within the rigid limits of a

time and a space measured with avarice. Oozing the ennui of carefully controlled excitement, followed by the anxious calculation of one's success or faux pas, our modern festivities transmit an impoverished image of what festivities once were (Valeri 2001: 1)

As we will see in chapter 2, Georgians, both traditionalists and modernizers, would agree that the opposite of traditional ritual festivity (the supra) is best instantiated either by the cocktail party or the reception (*alapursheti*). But alongside this narrative in which the cocktail party is the harbinger of loss of tradition, the cocktail party and cocktail party conversation, associated with free mixture and egalitarian exchange of drunken opinion without respect to status, is also adduced as an example par excellence of Simmel's sociable interaction, that is, interaction pursued for no end other than itself, associated with freedom, egalitarianism, conversation and flirtation in their 'play form' unconstrained by external ends, opposed at every step to means-ends related 'business-like' behavior (Simmel 1949: 259). For Habermas, too, the opposition between ritual and sociable orders of interaction corresponds closely to the opposition between pre-modern 'representative' and 'bourgeois' publicity that frames his analysis of the emergence of the public sphere (see chapter 1 for a discussion). Needless to say, the unshackling of 'sociable' interaction in its various forms from ritual expressions of status and instrumental rationality is strongly associated as a unique achievement of modernity:

With the development of the salon form of public during the Enlightenment, formal conversation arrived as a new variety of discourse. Over centuries, we conjecture, the salon form appeared more and more frequently and with less and

less protection of boundaries via formal decorum, allowing for mixing among

previously segmented social groups. As noted by social historians such as

Habermas (1989), such social mixing in salons and coffeehouses gave rise to a

form of deinstrumentalized and proto-egalitarian discourse underlying the idea of

the modern "public sphere." It also, we argue, gave rise to the more mundane

cocktail party genre, along with casual, free-floating conversational exchanges in

a variety of social settings. It was a major sociocultural invention to break out this

more flexible and topically unconstrained form of discourse from the specialized

social rooting of domain. Conversation seems to arise mainly in those urban

settings in which rigid government and social convention is shaken up

continuously by busy mercantile activity with other urban centers. (Misch and

White 1998: 6)

If these oppositions can take situational form in the distinction between behavioral genres

that populate notionally private life (cocktail, dinner party), it is not surprising if the

differences embodied in drinks can also take durable spatial form in public, with whole

public spaces more or less permanently devoted to specific forms of sociability, and these

spaces and forms of sociability in turn coming to define and potentiate new ways of being

in public and durable social groupings. Here as a point of contrast, we move from the

elite sociability of Manhattan in the 1930s to proletarian sociability of Britain in the

1930s, where we find the objects of another exemplary literature on drinking in relation

to notions like sociability, private and public life, namely, pubs and, more surprisingly,

cafes, which also find their place in Georgia both as objects of analytical contrast and

also imitation.

Architectures of sociability: cafes and pubs

For thinkers like Habermas (1989), in contrast to Simmel (1949), sociability is strongly associated not with the 'play form of association', but the possibilities of liberating reason in public discourse from the shackles of status relations. Habermas' teetotaler sociability is not the sociability of the drunk or the flirt. For this reason, perhaps, the drunken holding forth and coquetry of the cocktail party participant that finds a natural home in Simmel's theory is replaced by the more sedate, alcohol free, environment that Habermas fantasized as being typical of the 18th century coffee house and, of course, as Ellis makes clear, the post-war espresso bars of his own youth (Ellis 2005: chapter 13-14). Certainly, in the pre-war period, prior to Habermas' generation, the café had its own theorists that might have agreed with a more Simmelian model of sociability as the normative core of the café experience, in 1926, Polgar's 'Theory of the Café Central' celebrated the essence of the *kaffehous* sociability as follows:

> The Café Central thus represents something of an organization of the disorganized. In this hallowed space, each halfway indeterminate individual is credited with a personality….The only person who partakes of the most essential charm of this splendid coffeehouse is he who wants nothing there but to be there. Purposelessness sanctifies the stay' (cited in Ellis 2005: 218)

By contrast, Habermas' coffeehouse sociability includes a higher purpose, the formation of qualitative new, modern forms of publicness, unleashing reason without respect to the status properties of persons:

[For Habermas], [r]ethinking the public sphere as a course of action rather than an over-arching grid is closely bound up with re-examining what might be claimed about the particular form of *sociability* upon which it allegedly depended. Habermas states that the public sphere 'preserved a kind of social intercourse that, far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status altogether.' Social standing, political influence and economic power were dismissed from the historical public sphere as irrelevances, so Habermas supposes, in that the force of the superior argument was all that would 'carry the day', rather than physical force, rank or judicial machinery. (Laurier and Philo 2007: 267).

For Habermas, particularly salient for the emergence of 'publicness' and the kinds of sociability underlying it are not genres of behavior (cocktail, dinner party), but durable public spaces, 'architectures of sociability', that provide a locale in which such sociability in which reason can find a home can take on a durable form and lead to the emergence of a public sphere, the central one in Habermas' theory, of course, is the 18th century coffeehouse, which Habermas imagined as a 'calmly ordered world of educated heads eloquently discoursing with one another' (Laurier and Philo 2007: 268), a model that deviates considerably from the historical reality (Ellis 2005, 2008, Laurier and Philo 2007). In particular, writers such as Laurier and Philo (2007) and Ellis (2005, 2008) draw our attention to the permanent material features of these places, the 'architecture of sociability' (including, for example, long tables shared by customers who sat themselves at available seats as they came in) that both emblematized and provided affordances for the specific qualities of sociability (real or ideal) associated with them: '[T]he space of

the coffee-house confirmed and established the kinds of sociability found there. Beyond coffee, then, the central activity of the coffee-house is discussion, conversation, gossip and talk' (Ellis 2008: 258; Laurier and Philo 2007: 270). While Habermas imagined the form of sociability encouraged by the architecture in his idealized coffee house to be a homogeneous one, a ground in which the rational discourse of the public sphere could grow, recent work, particularly Ellis, have found instead a heterogeneous collection of sociabilities (some of them very far from the respectable intellectual discourse imagined by Habermas), not just Habermasian publics, but a motley array of counter-publics as well, whose formation was potentiated by these architectures of sociability (Ellis 2005, 2008, Laurier and Philo 2007). In chapters 3 and 4 particularly, I hope to show how the architectures of sociability of modern Georgia house similarly heterogeneous forms of sociability.

But the architecture of sociability was also an architecture of exclusion. Problematizing Habermas' focus on the open accessibility of these places to individual irrespective of status, these writers remind us that this was a polite fiction at best, within the coffee house the egalitarian norms of sociability applied only to a subset of those present (the customers, for example), and the status exclusions of the coffee house were invisible to the extent that they occurred not within the establishment, but at the front door (Ellis 2008: 163-163, Laurier and Philo 2007). Thus, the 'architectures of sociability', in Ellis' felicitous phrase, cover distinct kinds of sociability, some of which are given durable form in oppositions between different kinds of establishment (the sociability of the pub versus the sociability of the café), as well as commingling within them.

Briefly, let us take the opposition between the café and the pub in some specific place, say, Britain in the 1930s, with a particular emphasis on Wales (purely because this is an area I know something about historically and ethnographically) as a way of exploring these themes for comparison. One reason to choose this example is the same reason I dwelled on the form of the martini, because an exemplary, and yet largely neglected, work in the ethnography of drinking, indeed, an exemplary work in ethnography in general, has as its object the 1930s British pub. The work is exemplary not only as an first attempt to revolutionize both the subjects and objects of ethnography, an ethnography about modern mass culture where the ethnographers were also a 'mass subject', a collective enterprise writing under the name 'Mass Observation', but also because of its detailed attention to the constitutive materiality of social life. Certainly the earliest ethnography of modern British life, Mass Observation's *The Pub and The People* (1987[1943]), places the pub in an anonymous English town dubbed Worktown within a framework of architecture of sociability, one which also recognizes the heterogeneous forms of sociability that are found therein, given remarkable graphic representation as follows:

> It is no more true to say that people go to public houses to drink than it is to say they go to private houses to eat and sleep. These are the things that people do in pubs:

SIT and/or STAND		
DRINK		
TALK	about	betting
		sport
THINK		work
		people
SMOKE		drinking
		weather

SPIT   politics
                                                       dirt
Many PLAY GAMES
                         cards
                         dominoes
   darts
                         quoits
Many BET
              receive and
              pay out losings and winnings.
PEOPLE SING AND LISTEN TO SINGING: PLAY THE PIANO AND
       LISTEN TO IT BEING PLAYED
…..
(Mass Observation 1987[1943]: 19-20)

And this ethnography is at the same time sensitive to how the internal architecture of the

pub at that time, with its different rooms devoted to different status (gender, class) and

different styles of behavior, how the stylistic difference between rooms within a pub

recursively recapitulates the outlines of the differences and similarities between different

kinds of pubs (Mass Observation (1987[1943]:100-102), on recursion as a semiotic

process see for example Gal 2002), on the one hand, and the differences and similarities

between the public house and the private home, on the other (Mass Observation

1987[1943]: 103-6). Asking why a typical pub in that period is divided into three spaces

(the vaults, the taproom, the parlor), Mass Observation asks:
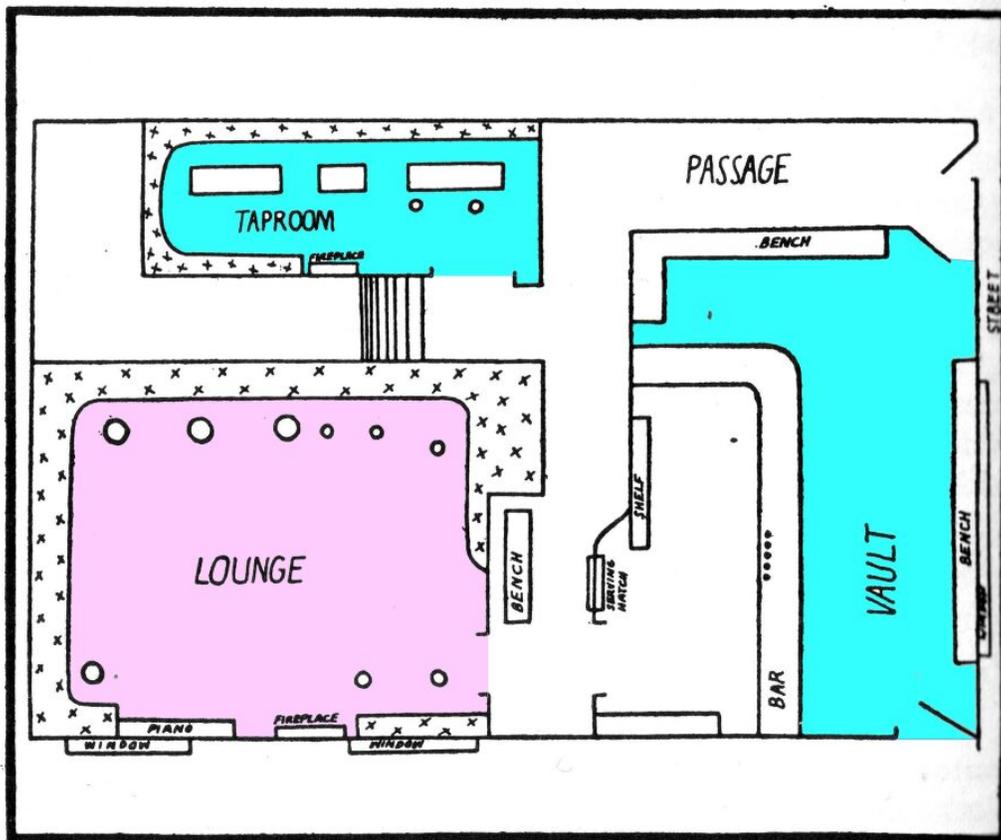
Figure: The Social Geography of the 1930s Pub: Class and Gender

Some hypothetical observer, who had never seen or heard of a pub before, would be struck by this division into three architectural realms, of different sizes, and of different types. Is, he may wonder, its significance religious, Trinitarian perhaps, can it correspond to the needs of the pub-goer, or does it signify three lines of social cleavage? … And he might proceed to make an analysis of the difference between the various rooms. (Mass Observation 1987[1943]: 96-7)

And it s precisely the discussion of the symbolic, materials and social distinctions between these 'architectural realms' which provides one of the most masterful analyses of an 'architecture of sociability' in Ellis' sense (Mass Observtion 1987[1943]: chapter 4). Each of the rooms has its own characteristic material appointments, including presence or absence of seating, pianos, sawdust on the floor or spittoons, generating its own specific inclusions and exclusions. The criterial sign of the relative status and respectability of any individual pub room, it turns out, is the presence or absence of a certain popular form of houseplant, the aspidistra 'the front-window, best-room symbol of the private house' (Mass Observation 1987[1943]: 103) which indexes bourgeois respectability and femininity. The second index is the presence or absence of spitting as an activity (a sign of rough masculine proletarian behavior), as opposed to spittoons (which like aspidistras are material signs of bourgeois respectability), which are never used for actual spitting: 'In the zones of maximum salivation—the vaults of beer-houses whose customers are largely labourers and old men—the spittoon itself is not found. Instead there is an area for spitting into." (Mass Observation 1987[1943]: 206).

The vault and the taproom are united as being room for men only, while the parlor is a room that allows both women and men. The vault is a room where one can only stand (Mass Observation 1987[1943]: 105), while seating is provided in the taproom and parlor, with the most seats in the parlor. In the vault one never finds aspidistras Indexes of feminity) (Mass Observation 1987[1943]105), while the parlor always has more aspidistras than any of the other rooms. In the vault one finds the most spitting (indexes of masculinity), but, paradoxically, the fewest spittoons, spittoons always being found in inverse proportion to the possibility of their being put to proper use (discovered by a

simple methodology of testing each for dryness!). The taproom, a place where men can sit, without women, playing games, the vault is a space for maximally egalitarian male interaction, the parlor a place for the display of femininized respectability. This is the distinction between the rooms of any single pub, homologous stylistic distinctions are found between fancy pubs (which have more 'parlor' like characteristics in all rooms) and more proletarian ones (which have more 'vault' like characteristics in all rooms). Similarly, the opposition between the polar spaces, the masculine egalitarian vault and the feminine respectable parlor, recapitulates the distinction between public houses as a whole (as masculine spaces) and private homes as a whole (as feminine spaces). If the private home is initially opposed to the definitionally public space of the pub ('public house'), like so:

HOME	PUB
Private house:	Public House:
Not open to strangers	Open to strangers
Feminine Space	Masculine Space
Bourgeois Values	Egalitarian Values
Respectability	Freedom from respectability
(No Spitting!)	(Spitting allowed)
Formal	Informal

The question then becomes why do we have ONE room of the pub that closely resembles the home, in particular, the best room of the private home(with the presence of aspidistras

in both the front window of the best room of the home and the parlor, the best room of the pub, being crucial to the analysis)?

HOME	PUB	
	PARLOUR	VAULT
ASPIDISTRAS	ASPIDISTRAS	NO ASPIDISTRAS
Feminine Space	Feminine Space	Masculine Space
Bourgeois Values	Bourgeois Values	Egalitarian Values
Respectability	Respectability	No respectability
No spitting!	No Spitting!	Spit anywhere!
	(Dry spittoons)	(No spittoons)
	Sitting	Standing
Formal	Formal	Informal

Mass Observation's observations on the 'architectural realms' of the pub show how the nominally egalitarian space of the pub recapitulates in its architecture of sociability all the status divides of Britain in its time (gender, class, respectability etc…), but does so, for men at least, as *stylistic* variables (that is, while women can only enter the respectable room of the pub, the men can choose, as they can choose in their clothing (also analyzed masterfully in this work (Mass Observation 1987[1943]: chapter 5)), to represent themselves in 'rough' masculine style (the model citizen of this group is the Irish pub-goer or the unskilled 'navvy') or 'respectable' feminine style (a style imitative of middle

class pub goers and their establishments) (Mass Observation 1987[1943]: 107). They

conclude:

> In the lounge [also called parlour] there are padded seats and chairs; a piano with
>
> a stool fore the pianist; no standing. Aspidistras and other places in 75 per cent;
>
> pictures on the wall, or modern wall décor; never stone floored, but lino,
>
> rubbercloth, etc….In brief, the lounge is a large comfortable room with
>
> decorations such as may be found in any Worktown home, but on a large scale, on
>
> a middle-class level of comfort, with servant and service, everyone in smart
>
> clothes. You do not come to the lounge alone. If you do you are conspicuous.
>
> You come to the lounge with your social group, ready made, and sit at a table,
>
> have no special interaction with people at other tables. There is no sex division
>
> within the lounge. Each table tends to be a hetero-sexual group…. The saying 'A
>
> woman's place is in the home' is still current in Worktown where 44 percent of
>
> the adult women earn their own or their families' livings directly. And the
>
> woman's place in the pub is that part of it which is a home from home, a better
>
> home than the ordinary worker's home….And, as usual, the woman's part of the
>
> pub is the one of cleanness, ashtrays, no random saliva, few or no spittoons. The
>
> vault is the place where men are men. In the lounge they are women's men, with
>
> collar studs. For that, as usual, they must pay another penny. (Mass Observation
>
> Mass Observation 1987[1943]:106-7)

Thus, the pub not only creates distinct and heterogeneous forms of sociability in its internal divisions of rooms, as well as being the clientele of different kinds of pubs, but also, in this period, in contrast to other 'architectures of sociability'.

But partly the pub is a place too that addresses a common problem of everyday sociability, the problem of simply where to be, where to hang out, in public, at a time during the depression of high unemployment, for example.   Surprisingly, alongside the home of the 'respectable' teetotalers of the chapel, and alongside the pub, which had its own rougher clientele, and various kinds of Workers Institutes, in Wales of the same period Italian coffee shops (often called Bracchis) had sprung up everywhere. The massive efflorescence of Italian coffee shops in Wales and other rural areas of Britain before WW2 does not find much mention in the literature (this is one blank spot on Ellis' otherwise masterful survey).

Poverty, of course, is a factor in whether or not one is able to hang out in a pub or café. As a result, among the 'architectures of sociability' in Wales in the 1930s, for the unemployed in down and out industrial landscapes like the (fictionalized) Terraces, might have been something as simple as a brick wall at the bottom of the yard, as Gwyn Thomas' novel, *The Dark Philosophers* (2006 [1946]) is the locus of down-and-out sociability for the eponymous heroes of that novel (whose narration is a first person plural collective narrator 'we', similar to Mass Observation):

> Naturally, with this increase in prosperity, our lives became a lot freer than they had been. We could now afford to abandon the brick wall at the bottom of our yard, where we had talked our way through innumerable evenings. That was one thing that made us glad. Our clothes had been thin, the bricks cold and we would, no doubt, have contracted various complaints if we had been doomed to sit permanently on that wall, to do all our talking upon that spot until our tongues, the bricks, or time itself caved in. (Thomas 2006[1946]: 117).

Such simple 'found' architectures of sociability solve the same problems in contemporary

Georgia, whose economic conditions are as bad or worse than those confronting these

'dark philosophers'. In every neighborhood in Georgia, similar public places, benches or

curbs, are inhabited by unemployed male philosophers, forming what is called in local

slang a 'stock exchange' (*birzha*), a grouping passing the time for free in sociable chat.

But such makeshift architectures of sociability also serve for beer refreshment, as we will

see in chapter 4. The underlying problem, an economic one leading to mass

unemployment, raises the problem of public sociability, how and more importantly where

to kill time in public, if one has no money, no job, and no place to go.

Returning to the novel, this makeshift hangout the Dark Philosophers was replaced,

upon getting some income, with 'the refreshment and confectionary shop of Idomeneo

Faracci', alongside the Workman's Institute, which afforded a complex architecture of

sociability for heterogeneous forms of sociability, including those very few that

Habermas might have approved of: "The Institute was a useful place for all voters whose

minds liked to dwell on those serious topics with which the Terraces slopped over, and

there was room there, too, for those whose maximum in the way of mental action was

billiards, ludo or just coming in out of the cold.' (Thomas 2006[1946]:117). But the most

serious of the 'voters' living in the Terraces are the 'dark philosophers', who resemble a

rather darker form of philosopher than Habermas might have welcomed into his coffee

shops. These philosophers preferred the Italian Coffee shop for unleashing their dark

powers of reason, seeing there a kind of comfortable equivalent to the brick wall in the

garden that had been their haunt before:

> [F]or the purpose of quiet talk among ourselves, when we felt a strange craving
> for that loneliness we had known so often on that brick wall during the cold years,
> we preferred the back room at Idomeneo's. This room was cosy and cheerful,
> having sawdust on the floor and a large stove in the middle, which had a complex
> system of airshafts that made the layout of an ordinary man or woman look
> simple. (Thomas 2006[1946]:118)

Here the dark philosophers engaged in their dark philosophy, certainly not the kind of

unleashing of reason Habermas would have approved of, perhaps one more in alignment

with the dark times, including, for example, plans to occasion the untimely demise of a

local preacher whose sermons had a pacifying effect on the radicalism of the population,

precisely, as it happens, by making him happy in a manner that would prove fatal. This

café, too, it should be noted, also afforded, like all Italian cafes in Wales, drinks more to

the taste of the local 'voters', using earlier models of Italian espresso machines (really

more cisterns for hot water) to brew cordials, tea and milky approximations of lattes.

> Our own drink was tea and we drank a lot of it. We had taken a vow to get our
> stomachs as dark as our philosophy before we finished, and every time we
> ordered a fresh round of cups Idomeneo always put an extra pinch in the pot as a
> tribute to the fine brooding quality of our spirits.(Thomas 2006[1946]:119)

Certainly socialist Georgia also had a fair number of cafes, in addition to Laghidze's, a

series of tea shops and coffee shops (*qava qana* serving some version of Turkish style

coffee), such as those that played a role in the formation of Georgian avant garde

movements (discussed in chapter 3). Such durable architectures of sociability, in Wales

or Georgia, can give a permanence to such social groupings by giving them a place for

their sociability. Certainly, one such place, the Tea House (*chais saxli*) across from the

first building of the main university, was a charmed place under socialism with its own

distinct clientele, who formed relationships there that now are constitutive of the

solidarities of the new government, many of whose members were old 'Tea House' patrons. Such places, relatively common under socialism, are noticeable only in their absence, since they have undergone a mass extinction in the post-socialist period, being replaced across the board with places for masculine beer driven sociability, with the interesting side effect that non-drinkers in general, and women in particular, have fewer places in public to go under post-socialism, although, here, too, new places have ppeared here and there, though the old places are all now gone (chapter 4).

In this introduction I have chosen a series of examples to illustrate the way that drinking has been imbricated in various theoretical models of categories of western modernity, private and public, ritual and sociability, etc. Partly I have chosen to do this to make explicit the implicit models of comparison against which the Georgian forms of 'fluid modernity' will be assessed, partly to delineate how internally heterogeneous in fact this implicit model really is, and partly to show how extremely concrete Western forms are traded on without analysis as offhand examples drawn out of the hat to illustrate theoretical ideal types. To that end, I also have focused on less usual, as well as less idealized, points of comparison, preferring these to the ones that have become established in the literature (for example, the Habermasian coffee shop as ideal type, against which all empirically existing architectures of sociability must be judged and ultimately be founding wanting). I have also focused on ethnographic works and discussion that have not, to date, played a major role in the literature on drinking, publics, sociability, but which have been influential for me in formulating what follows. Because of the peculiar way in which Western forms figure for Georgians as salient points of contrast, as ideal types for imitation, it is impossible to be critical of the putative

homogeneity of the Western forms, lest we reproduce out of laziness or smug

complacency the very inequalities that dominate the Georgian self-perception of

modernity I discuss in this book.