

## **Introduction**

### **A rose revolution is not a tea party**

On November 22, 2003, Georgian opposition leader and presidential candidate Mikheil (“Misha”) Saakashvili and his supporters stormed into the Georgian parliament carrying long-stemmed roses and demanding the resignation of President Shevardnadze.

Saakashvili’s first act as president was to ostentatiously drink a glass of tea the deposed president had left behind on the podium. In these few fateful moments, two potential revolutionary symbols were born: the rose and the glass of tea. Of the two, the moment of the drinking of tea was the most visually salient in the event itself: Saakashvili stood at the podium, raised the teacup before the cameras, as if making a toast, formally announced the revolution and followed this performative utterance with an equally performative and theatrically performed act of draining the tea glass. The long-stemmed roses were there throughout, of course, but were nowhere near as prominent, as only a few supporters thought to wave them about, and then only after the general kerfuffle, verging on a brawl, in parliament was over.

But in the following days, the rose handily beat the tea as revolutionary symbol, and what had been called by the generic name “velvet revolution” was immediately rebranded the “Rose Revolution”. The ostentatious Oedipal act of drinking the tea of the previous president before the cameras, it appears, did not make as transparent or attractive a revolutionary logo as a rose. But for a time these two acts were almost coeval in importance in revolutionary symbolism, and usually mentioned in tandem. When I wrote my first draft of a paper on the Rose Revolution in 2004, I also reported the

drinking of the tea along with the carrying of the roses, and their respective interpretations. But by the time I published it in 2007, the roses were still there, the tea had vanished. The deleted paragraph read as follows:

The facts of the Rose Revolution are well known, but since it is still ongoing, it is difficult to say which of the facts are the most important right now. For example, many reports of the coup of November 22<sup>nd</sup> mention that the victorious Mikheil Saakashvili's first act after taking the parliamentary podium from Shevardnadze was to drink the tea the deposed president had left behind. The meaning of this act, whether symbolically ingesting the essence of the fallen monarch, or marking an end to Shevardnadze's socialist-style long-winded and mouth-parching addresses, or simple thirst, was unclear, but for some reason it was considered as eminently newsworthy. For a short time, Mikheil Saakashvili became a figure seemingly incarnating Georgia's newfound unity and revolutionary agency, in much the same way that Shevardnadze had become a figure for post-socialist Chaos. Consequently, this small act could be attributed much larger political meanings.

At the time, these two possibly almost random acts and corresponding material objects (a rose, a glass of tea) became charged with revolutionary significance precisely by being imbued with the personal charisma of Saakashvili, which at that time was considerable. As many have argued, Saakashvili's embodied person formed a central organizing revolutionary symbol from which both the rose and the tea took on their revolutionary meaning: the symbol of the rose is almost as incomplete without Saakashvili holding it as the tea is meaningless without Saakashvili drinking it.

While Saakashvili and his supporters intentionally held roses as symbols of non-violence, he never seems to have assigned any meaning to drinking the tea beyond simple thirst. But between Saakashvili's penchant for political theatre and love of eclectic and superficial kitschy political symbolism, matched by an equal and opposite tendency in Georgian publics to search for esoteric meanings and hidden motivations underlying the surface of all performances and signs (Manning 2007: 177), meant that there was little or

no chance this either act would escape being treated as being meaningful performances. After all, in Tbilisi in this period, even “natural” events were interrogated to find hidden human political agencies, as, for example, the earthquakes which shook Tbilisi in 2002 were widely blamed on Russian or Abkhazian hidden agencies and underground technologies.

Accordingly, post-hoc rationalizations turned these material objects that had been random stage settings into inevitable symbols freighted with intentional meanings, transparent or hidden.<sup>1</sup> Of course, even material objects that are acknowledged to be unintentional can be very effective as symbols: when a nervous Saakashvili, for reasons known only to himself, chose to try to eat his necktie in the course of a televised BBC interview in the aftermath of the Russian retaliation to the catastrophic Georgian invasion of Ossetia, the necktie became a permanent symbol for the Georgian opposition, indexing Saakashvili’s extremely erratic personal behavior and incompetence during the conflict. But in the case of the rose, for example, this flower which had been a mere prop symbolizing non-violence became in retrospect a key symbol of the revolution.

**A rose is a rose. Or is it a flower? Or a color?** Aesthetically and iconographically, a rose is a better choice than a glass of tea for a revolutionary symbol. After all, the rose is already well-equipped with a whole range of conventional symbolic values. Once the rose was understood in retrospect to have been chosen as a symbol of the revolution as a

---

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the material circumstances need to be modified to fit the retrospective meaning, too. I find in retrospect I had taken it on faith that Saakashvili had been carrying a rose when he stormed into the parliament chambers, but upon reviewing video clips of the scene, the only rose I saw was carried by one of his supporters; the drinking of tea, however, was definitely intended to be caught on camera. But it makes a better story if Saakashvili was carrying the rose, it also underlines the way that at that time every single revolutionary act was connected to embodied agency of Saakashvili in was was, for a time, a true cult of personality .

whole, as opposed to merely a symbol of the non-violent tactics that brought it about, these various other conventional meanings of the rose, local or cosmopolitan, were brought into play to fill out the need to find encrypted significance in this otherwise transparent symbol. The rose as symbol of non-violence elicited the local reference that the first democratically elected president of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who was violently deposed, told his opposition “If you shoot bullets at us, we will shoot roses at you”. On the other hand, the rose, alongside the nightingale, is a symbol freighted with allegorical meanings in Persian and Georgian poetry. Along with these oriental symbolisms of the rose came references to the symbolism of the rose in European socialism, Rosicrucianism and even once I heard a reference to the House of Tudor.

If the rose was good to think for the local audience, it was also a good revolutionary brand for the export market, and there this choice of material symbol was enormously consequential. Soon after, a whole series of “color revolutions” with similar color or flower based names spread throughout the grey dictatorships of the world. The “color revolutions” influentially included Ukraine’s “Orange Revolution” (2004), while the list of “flower revolutions” included the Kyrghyz “Tulip Revolution” (2005, whose supporters could not decide on a uniform color). Even the completely unrelated Lebanese independence uprising was tendentiously rebranded by the press for export markets as the “Cedar Revolution” (2005). Because they had, or could be assigned, similar symbolism, a similar “revolutionary brand,” it was easy, for a moment, to sustain the impression that these different movements were all franchises of a single spontaneous “fourth wave” of democratization.

The fact that “color revolutions” and “flower revolutions” proliferated side by side after the Rose Revolution draws attention to the fact that the rose is not only potentially ambiguous as a conventional symbol, but even the material basis of its symbolism is ambiguous. Like any other material object, a rose “bundles” together different sensuous qualities and properties (Keane 2003: 414), some of which are symbolically relevant, others not, for any given interpretation. In some cases, there is ambiguity as to which is significant. Is the rose a color or a flower? Was the Rose Revolution the first in a series of “Color Revolutions” or “Flower Revolutions”?

Every material object affords a surplus of potentially meaningful qualities (Peircean “qualisigns”), which are not only ambiguous, but even potentially contradictory, affording symbolic potentials that can be used to undermine the material object as revolutionary symbol. Real roses, like revolutions, fade, lose their bloom, wilt, wither, die. In addition, roses have thorns. Transforming a material object into a symbol requires, in effect, idealizing it, abstracting away the symbolically meaningful aspects of materiality from the messy, repressed “mere materiality” of the remainder. In the limiting case, the real roses which were used in the revolution are replaced by images of roses. But because a rose really is a material object, this dross of materiality never goes away. Oppositional discourses of parody and satire frequently work, as Bakhtin reminds us, by mobilizing these repressed bundled elements of “mere materiality” and mining them for unintended subversive symbolisms.

**Tea Revolution?** But what if it had been a tea revolution? A glass of tea, compared to a rose, makes an awkward, even potentially silly, revolutionary symbol. But just as

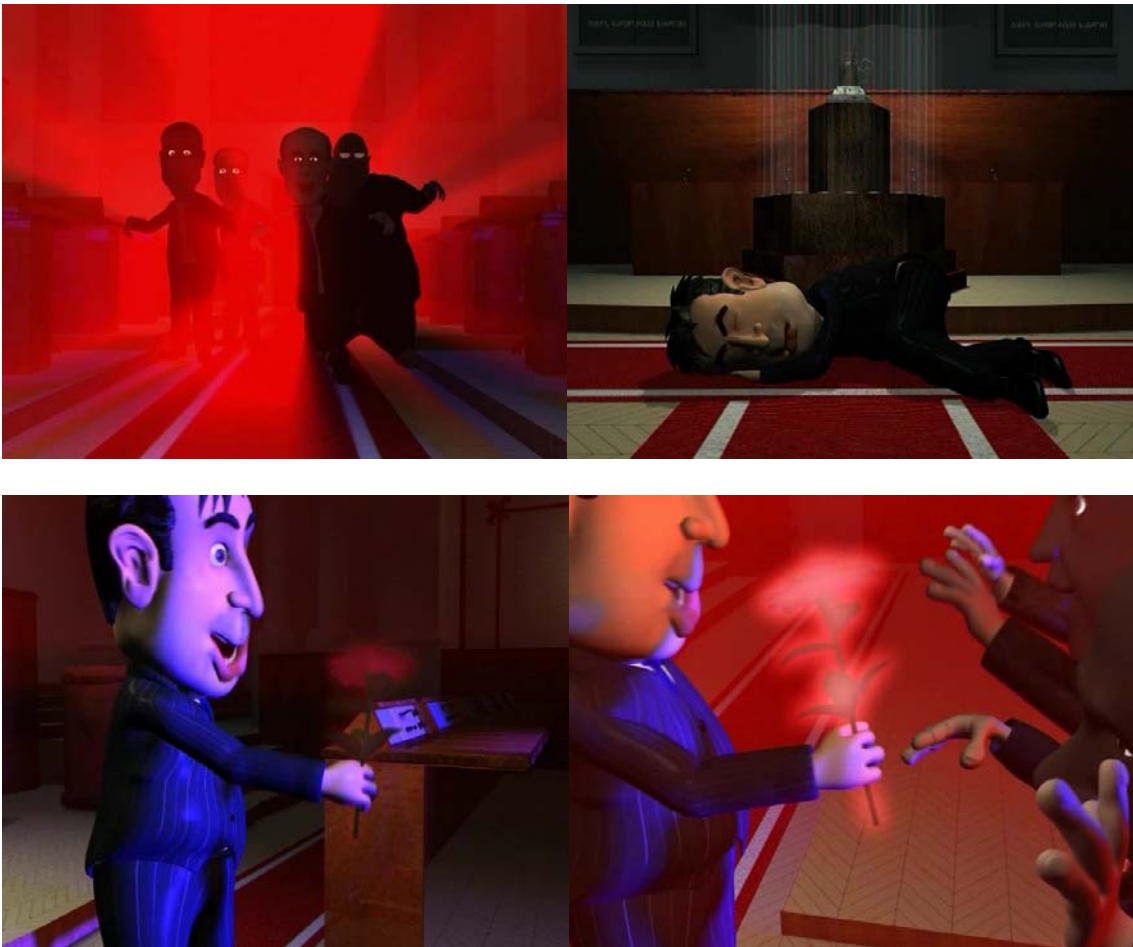
transgressive parody often foregrounds the repressed materiality of an idealized symbol like a rose, so replacing the idealized rose with the humble glass of tea might be an effective way to satirize the revolution as a whole. Perhaps that is why the creators of the oppositional satirical political cartoon series, *Dardubala II*, devoted an episode, the second broadcast episode of the new series, to exploring an alternate Georgian in which a glass of tea had become the foremost revolutionary symbol instead of the rose.

The episode opens showing a single glass of tea is shown on an illuminated pedestal in a dark hall. The clock shows 2am, the only lights come from the complex security arrangement protecting the tea. The tea is labeled: Exhibit 1: Tea. The hallway is obviously the Georgian Parliament, the very place where Saakashvili drank Shevardnadze's abandoned tea in an alleged act of bibulatory parricide.



Beneath the pedestal on the floor, the president Misha (Saakashvili) is shown sleeping. A shadow moves, a cat-burglar slinked through the hall, intent on stealing the tea. Using a boomerang, he finds that the tea is protected by some kind of force field. Meanwhile another burglar swings down on a rope to seize the tea, but overshoots and

topples behind a podium. At this point, the doors of the hallway open and zombie-like figures, illuminated in red, enter the hallway, lurching forward and groaning *chiiii* [tea] in much the same way that a stereotypical zombie groans *braaaaaains*. From the silhouettes it appears they are Saakashvili's ministers, perhaps seeking in turn to replace him by drinking his essence, the tea. The sleeping preside wakes, reaches for a rose which lies at hand. The rose glows brightly when he raises and brandishes it against his zombie-like usurpers, but appears to have no effect.



Shrieking *chemi chaiiiiiii!* (“my tea!”), he awakens from his nightmare lying on his back on his desk in his office, and begins a frantic search for the glass of tea. In what ensues, however, we learn that this was not all a dream. A glass of tea really is the national symbol, rather than the rose (as his confused assistant suggests). In the dream the rose figures only as a kind of apotropaic device, something to ward off tea-drinking zombies with, reminding us of the way that Saakashvili allegedly brandished the rose when he stormed into parliament. But in the waking world, in his office, the ubiquitous rose symbolism has been replaced by frankly pornographic drawings of naked women (since Saakashvili is popularly reputed to be a womanizer) holding the national symbol, a glass of tea (along with a series of plaques and diplomas all of which have ‘made in USA’ emblazoned on them with a red stamp). The actual glass of tea which is the national symbol is stored not in parliament, but in a secret underground chamber, to protect it from usurping tea-thieves.



Not only is the tea really the revolutionary symbol, but we also learn that there really are tea thieves in this bizarro-Georgia. For these tea thieves, stealing tea is a



serious business, quite unlike stealing wine, because tea is not merely a revolutionary symbol, but possessed of magical powers, able even to bring the moon down to earth! The rest of the episode follows the attempts of the robbers, two men, who in their attempts to steal the tea are aided by a mysterious woman with strange powers, like the ability to shoot lightning from her hands. When they do finally reach the tea, this mysterious woman drinks it and instantly undergoes a magical transformation to reveal that she is in fact the deposed president, Shevardnadze, who declares the score as a tie: “1-1”. Misha wakes up, once more, on his desk, and this whole universe where tea was the revolutionary symbol was but a dream, his cries for tea have been met in this universe by his assistant holding a purely prosaic glass of tea.



What exactly is it that makes a rose so perfect a revolutionary symbol, and a glass of tea such a silly one? In the moment of the revolution, the rose and the tea took on their significance in an almost fetishistic manner by reference to human embodiment, by the fact that it was the revolutionary hero “Misha” Saakashvili, who embodied the revolution in his person, who held the rose and drank the tea. But while a rose continues to make a

good revolutionary symbol without any (indexical) reference to human embodiment, nothing about the symbolism of the tea makes sense without reference to human embodiment. In fact two embodiments. After all, Saakashvili had to drink the tea for it to become a symbol, not merely raise it aloft as he had the rose. And the tea had to have been Shevardnadze's tea, imbued with his backwash or essence, depending on how you want to phrase it, for the symbolism to make any sense. In the Dardubala episode, too, the robbers are not trying to steal the *glass* of tea (as a self-contained symbolic object to put on a pedestal in their own house), they are trying to drink the tea and gain its magical powers (in one of their plans, they use a very long straw to try to drink it). And finally, at the end of the episode, the mysterious magical woman transforms herself into the ex-president Shevardnadze, regaining his form, power and position, by drinking the tea.

The rose takes its meaning from human embodiment at most contingently, but the tea does so necessarily. And the quality of that embodiment is very different in each case. Think how different it is to pick up a rose dropped by someone else from drinking the tea, backwash and all, left by the fleeing president. Holding a rose and drinking someone else's tea involve very different types of embodiment: the former a kind of closed off, finished, idealized "classical body", a body whose orifices are closed off or hidden, which is separated from the world of messy materiality, the kind of body one might sculpt and put on a pedestal; the latter what Bakhtin would call an open, "grotesque body", the kind of body whose orifices are open, both oozing backwash and drinking tea. As Stallybrass and White summarize Bakhtin's opposition in their classic study:

Bakhtin was struck by the compelling difference between the human body as represented in popular festivity and the body as represented in classical statuary in the Renaissance. He noticed how the two forms of iconography "embodied" utterly contrary registers of being. To begin with, the classical statue was always mounted

on a plinth which meant that it was elevated, static and monumental. In the one simple fact of the plinth or pedestal the classical body signaled a whole different somatic conception from that of the grotesque body which was usually multiple (Bosch, Bruegel), teeming, always already part of a throng....The classical statue has no openings or orifices whereas grotesque costume and masks emphasize the gaping mouth, the protuberant belly and buttocks, the feet and the genitals. (Stallybrass and White 1986: 21-22)

The rose as a symbol resembles the classical body: as a material object, it is bounded and easily separated from material and especially bodily involvement, it is complete as a symbol whether or not Misha is holding it. The moment he puts it down, it is just a rose, the attachment to his person is ended. Now consider the glass of tea. When we first see the glass of tea sitting on a pedestal like the paragon of a classical body, a sculpture, we smile because it is silly and out of place there. A glass of tea resembles the grotesque body (like the body, it has an open orifice), and finds its meaning only in reference to it. To be meaningful, this glass of tea must contain some of Shevardnadze's essence or backwash, and to be completed, it must be drunk, not merely held aloft. As if to underline the iconic and indexical involvement of the glass of tea and the grotesque, material body, on the wall of the office the glass of tea is shown being held and drunk by frankly pornographic (decidedly non-classical) drawings of women.

**Materiality and Meaning.** This is a book about how drink as an embodied material form mediates social life in Georgia in different times and places in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I have chosen to begin with the example of the rose and the glass of tea as revolutionary symbols partly because it allows me to begin to discuss some of the ways that the materiality of drinks like tea affords them different semiotic potentialities from objects like roses. 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, I 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). Along with much recent work in Peircean approaches to semiotic anthropology (Munn 1996, Keane 2003, Meneley 2008 ), I consider 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 in the anthropology of science and technology, while the other arises out of semiotic anthropological approaches to material culture, provide a vocabulary for describing how the materiality of objects gives them a “voice” in social forms.

Unlike the glass of tea, 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 physiological property of drinks has led to a rather unproductive division within the literature on drinking across the social sciences. The bulk of the literature seizes on this one property of drink as a technical and not semiotic property which has only logical-causal importance, linking it with excessive consumption, and makes the only question that can be asked about alcoholic beverages the social pathologies they may create physiologically. Of course, 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 soft drinks for that matter. But this same qualisign of high alcohol content not only contributes to the potentially pathological effects of alcohol on the human body, it also, for example, allows one to distinguish between good gifted vodka and bad, the former will catch fire, the latter will not. Alcohol content, instead, should represent a kind of “affordance” or “qualisign”, leading partially to the dualism inherent in drinking described in the following pages: alcoholic beverages have intended symbolic consequences and unintended socio-physiological ones, among them drunkenness, fighting and so on.

The way that drinking a glass of tea abandoned by a fleeing president could become the symbol of triumph of a revolutionary incumbent reminds us that drinks, as material symbols, 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.<sup>2</sup> Drinks are therefore a core example of “embodied material culture” (Dietler

---

<sup>2</sup> 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.

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.

Drinks are both good to think and good to drink, they belong to both dematerialized semiotic code and transgressive materiality (Jeanneret 1991: introduction). The mouth can stand as a figure for the polarization of mind and body, spirit and matter, meaning and materiality (see Keane 2003). The opposition between the classical body and the grotesque body finds a homology in the opposed functions of the mouth to produce

seemingly dematerialized language and to consume material food and drink, but not at the same time. These functions are physiologically consigned to be non-coincident, but in larger events of convivial consumption, such as saying and drinking a toast, or Misha's announcement of the revolution followed by drinking the tea, they are brought into close alignment. In fact, as we will see, Georgians view physical ingestion of wine without an accompanying verbal component of a toast which "blesses" the wine as being an animal form of consumption, belonging to what Bakhtin calls the "lower material stratum". Certainly this observation is not new, but is a commonplace from at least the Renaissance, that drinking, often as part of broader events of convivial feasting, can illustrate both idealizing and materializing, classical and grotesque, semiotic modalities, often within the same event as we will see below:

We live in a divided world, a world in which physical and mental pleasures are compartmentalized and ordered into a hierarchy: they either conflict with each other or are mutually exclusive. ... We have to choose whether to speak or to eat: we must not speak with our mouth full. However the banquet is the one thing that overcomes this division and allows for the reconciliation of opposites. It recognizes physical laws, reinstates the legitimate role of instinctive behaviour, but at the same time provides a place for conversation and a setting for good manners. The combination of words and food in a convivial scene gives rise to a special moment when thought and the senses enhance rather than just tolerate each other. The symposiac ideal reconciles the angel and the beast in the human, and it renews the interdependence between the mouth that eats and the mouth that speaks. (Jeanneret 1991: 1-2)

But the linkage of meaning and materiality, persons and things, the "embodiment of materiality," occurs not only in consumption, but also in production. 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. Therefore, what follows is not a book about “consumption”, because drinks do not only find their meaning in relation to drinking, they do not only embody the properties of persons because they are consumed by embodied persons, but also, because they are produced by embodied persons:

Production not only furnishes consumption with its object, in an external relation, and consumption not only provides production with its telos, but they also stand in internal relations, as Marx reminds us. Symbolic and technical categories of production are an immanent moment in consumption, and consumption internally informs the production processes.... Indeed, food and drink represent embodied epistemologies that are always already intertwined with the transformative work of production and consumption. (Heath and Meneley 2007: 593-4)

In fact, so far from being a book about production or consumption, this is a book that, following Munn, treats production, exchange and consumption as being but a series of moments in a long cycle of transformations of “fabrication”, which include both notionally “symbolic” and “technical” interventions transformative of qualisigns (“socially significant properties”) or affordances (“operational capacities of objects”), respectively:

This view of fabrication sets the stage for a study of making processes not simply as, for instance, technological construction, but rather as developing symbolic processes that transform both socially significant properties or operational capacities of objects, and significant aspects of the relations between persons and objects, between the human and the material worlds. Fabrication, seen in this way, does not end with technological construction, but consists of the total cycle of conversions effecting significant changes in the object. (Munn 1977: 39)

Such a perspective treats the very opposition of production and consumption as historically and culturally particular understandings that have been elevated to a spurious status as universals, in which the opposition between production and exchange or consumption recapitulates the foundational opposition in a naturalist ontology between



nature and culture, as does the opposition between the division of objects into symbolism and materiality:

In our naturalist ontology, the nature/society interface is natural: humans are organisms like all the rest—we are body-objects in ecological interaction with other bodies and forces, all of them ruled by the necessary laws of biology and physics. Productive forces harness, and thereby express, natural forces. Social relations—that is, contractual or instituted relations between subjects—can only exist internal to human society (there is no such thing as "relations of production" linking humans to animals or plants, let alone political relations)... Given the universality of nature, the status of the human and social world is unstable. Thus, Western thought oscillates, historically, between a naturalistic monism (sociobiology and evolutionary psychology being two of its current avatars) and an ontological dualism of nature and culture ("culturalism" and symbolic anthropology being two of its recent expressions). (Viveiros de Castro 2004: 480-1)

In the sense that different forms of capitalism and socialism at different times and places all remain based on changing understandings and valorizations of this foundational opposition of a naturalist ontology, the opposition becomes part of our analysis from within, especially as a categorical opposition to be interrogated ethnographically and historically.

Just as I argue in this book that there can be no account of consumption without production, and vice versa, so too my use of the cartoon parody to investigate the meaning of serious revolutionary symbols is a method that I use throughout the book. Using representations of drink from opposed serious and comic registers, I hope to give an account of drink that to some extent reflects what Herzfeld calls *disemia*, different representations of the same practices in their aspects of official self-presentation and intimate self-recognition. Drinks, too, are divided like the rose and the glass of tea between those that are symbols for official self-presentation and for intimate self-recognition, and even events of drinking contain within them similar oppositions, as we

will see below. “Laughter materializes”, as Bakhtin quipped, and therefore, provides a resource for investigating the material dimension of meaning that complicates a serious dematerialized view of drinking as a set of oppositions in a structuralist “code”.

### **Plan of book**

The hero of the revolution might well have been a glass of tea, rather than a rose. This book develops this insight into a more general theoretical program. The different chapters of this book are each devoted to a different aspect of 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. Just as a story about the Rose Revolution can be told from the perspective of the heroic hegemonic perspective of the “official” symbol, the rose, or the parodic perspective of the glass of tea, so in this book I look at Georgia both from the perspective of a “ritual” drink, wine, and the complex forms of sociability it mediates, but also from the perspective of other drinks which also do important work outside the limelight of official ritual, and sometimes even rival this hegemonic beverage.

I begin with wine because wine and its associated rituals of consumption because they are central to Georgian self-imaginings and self-presentations. Georgians pride themselves on a good many things about their country, musical traditions of polyphony, architecture, cuisine, but Georgians are most proud of their wine. Georgians not only claim to have invented wine (perhaps a plausible claim, given the large number of grape varieties indigenous to the country), but also the best method of drinking it, the Georgian feast (*supra*), which expresses in miniature the happy-go-lucky live for the day attitude

towards material cares and the strong commitment to tradition that Georgians believe is especially characteristic of themselves. One could develop an entire ethnography of Georgia based entirely on the theme of wine and drinking it: in fact, writing about wine and the supra is a topic that expected to interest foreign cultural researchers. Even the meaning of other drinks is always assessed with reference to the drinking of wine: when Saakashvili raised the tea glass, announced the revolution, and then drained the glass in one smooth gesture, it was as if he had just made a formal toast at a *supra*, but with tea instead of wine.

This book attempts to move beyond simply reproducing the Georgian idealized self-presentation encapsulated in the cultural image of happy-go-lucky celebrants of the gifts of the grape and their attendant rituals. Instead, I paint a broader canvas of Georgia viewed as a culture of drinks, including other drinks, some of which are rivals of wine for the affections of drinkers. I ask the following questions: in a country whose cultural self-definition of idealized authentic national *traditions* is given its idealized, hegemonic form in rituals involving the consumption of wine, what kinds of cultural and social categories do other drinks (beer, vodka, soft drinks) express? How do different kinds of drinks materially and socially mediate different kinds of social relations? How are Georgian ambitions for modernity expressed by criticizing or defending Georgian traditions of drinking wine or embracing other beverages? In what ways does considering an expanded menu of drinks expand our view of Georgian ethnography and Georgian modernity?

The first part of the book concerns wine, and specifically the way that wine mediates between the spheres of the political and the everyday in Georgian life. These

two chapters explore different discourses about the Georgian *supra*, a feast which is defined by the drinking of wine and the saying of toasts, which is frequently deployed ambiguously both as a political metaphor for dictatorship as well as an image of traditional forms of everyday life separate from politics and history. In the first chapter, using a variety of sources including cartoons from the Soviet humor magazine *Niangi*, I explore the contemporary discourses about the *supra* both as a utopian image of everyday life or society and as a dystopian model of the state. In the second chapter, I explore the that that this image of the *supra* as a position of critique of the state and society was created by the socialist state's ambivalent valorization of the *supra* as a symbol of everyday life, of unproductive consumption, corruption, but also as a symbol of socialist wealth and abundance and culturedness.

The second part of the book focuses on a single product, a fruit flavored soft-drink called Laghidze's Waters, in relation to Georgia's experience with modernity across the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and especially with the development of specifically socialist categories of consumption (the focus of the third chapter) and production, including "brand" (the focus of the fourth chapter). While the third chapter focuses on the self-conscious "modernity" of the Laghidze's Café, which opened in Kutaisi in West Georgia at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the way that the "architecture of sociability" (Ellis 2008) of this café not only epitomized the ambitions of late tsarist colonized elites to European style modernity, but also the ambitions of the socialist state to create a specifically socialist form of cultured consumption that both imitated tsarist period elite consumption as well as vied with Western bourgeois consumption. At the same time, as a "rival of wine", Laghidze's expressed desires of elites to civilize their own uncivilized people, where drinking and

drunkenness, and the supra, become symbols of uncultured practices of consumption. In the following chapter, we begin instead with the dead or dying Laghidze's café on Rustaveli Prospect in Tbilisi in the present day, and follow the fate of this café and this "brand" backwards in time and backwards into the sphere of production. While the newly arrived Western brand Coca-Cola is posited as the new "rival" of Laghidze's Waters, I look instead to the larger question of whether the language of brand can be applied to Laghidze's in the first place, and what the distortions that result can tell us about not only the alleged universality of the category of brand, but also the allegedly universal categories of production and consumption that subtend it.

If the second part deals with the Georgian experience of modernity, the third and final part deals primarily with Georgian visions of national tradition. Both chapters involve a pair of drinks often found together, vodka and beer, and the way that they symbolize not only masculine informal domains of sociability in the cities of Georgia, but the way that they symbol opposed spheres of ritual and non-ritual life among what most Georgian regard to be the exemplars of Georgian traditional life, the high mountain villages of Khevsureti. While in the plains, beer and vodka are paired as informal masculine drink par excellence, the very opposite of ritual beverage (beer) and a ritual chaser for the saying of toasts and for producing drunkenness (vodka), in the mountains of Khevsureti beer is the ritual drink par excellence, again associated with masculine sociability, but a purely ritual form of masculine sociability. By contrast, vodka, the "drink of devils" is associated above all with girls, love poetry and furtive practices of romance practiced only in these mountain communities. While chapter 5 discusses the traditional complementarity of vodka and beer in the traditional ethnographic life of the

Khevsurs before these communities were depopulated after World War 2, chapter 6 deals with the apparent success of contemporary Georgian beer marketers in “traditionalizing” new brands of European style lager as traditional Georgian drinks precisely by mobilizing images of ritual beer drinking in these mountains to market a drink that will be drunk in exclusively non-ritual contexts in the city. Interestingly, some of these attempts to traditionalize beer make reference to Khevsur traditions of poetry and romance, but deploy them in ways to reveal contemporary urban models of sexuality that include fantasies about the sexual freedoms of the mountains.

