

## **Animating the City**

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*The following is the text of a talk I gave at NYU Department of Media, Culture and Communication and Anthropology in 2014. It was an experiment that led to other things, but because it contains a lot of material like film clips (which are inserted as Youtube URLs) that cannot easily be published, and it has an opening very similar to the opening I used for another paper on this site (though it uses it as a point of departure for a very different focus), I have decided to place it with the original slideshow, here as a slightly modified talk version, mostly just correcting any errors or marking places where I am not sure and adding some citations, but certainly not all. The result is a complete, published and citable document covered by the usual creative commons license. Cite it as Paul Manning 2014. Animating the City. With whatever URL you found it at.*



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**ANIMATING the CITY: SAFAVID SOUNDSCAPES  
in SOCIALIST TBILISI**

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and Communication.*

**5 pm, Kimball Lounge, 1st Floor  
246 Greene Street**

One summer afternoon in Tbilisi I and my friends Elizbari and Malkhazi, both natives of the Georgian capital city of Tbilisi, had bought some beer from a local store near Malkhazi's home in the residential neighborhood of Ortachala. Since for various reasons it would not do for us to drink in his home -- I have forgotten the exact reason, but beer is often casually drunken outside the home-- we randomly chose a deserted spot nearby: a patch of gravel with a large fallen tree, next to a decrepit building. As

we were drinking Malkhazi surveyed our beer drinking spot, raised his beer in a heroic pose, and proclaimed: "*ortach'alis baghshi mnakhe, vina var!*" (In the gardens of Ortachala see me, who I am!). We all laughed at the absurd poetic reference. It was a famous line from a Persian-style Georgian poem, a *mukhambazi*, a genre emblematic of Georgian urban literature, the literature of "Old Tbilisi". This particular poem, written by Georgian prince Grigol Orbeliani, contains the line quoted by Malkhazi in its final stanza [poem]:

In the gardens of Ortachala see me, who I am!

In a happy-go-lucky feast see me, who I am!

A toastmaster with a drinking bowl, see me, who I am!

Well in a fist fight see me, who I am!

Then you will fall in love with me, saying, 'You are precious!'

**[Ortachala]** The mythic gardens of Ortachala, a garden island in the Kura river celebrated in this and many other mukhambazis, was very unlike the parking lot by a dead tree in which we found ourselves: This was an Ortachala with no gardens, no happy-go-lucky feast, no toastmaster heroically holding up a bowl of wine. Just my friend Malkhazi holding up a bottle of beer next to a dead tree in a parking lot. In fact, it was not even clear if we were technically *in* the Ortachala of myth, since no one in Tbilisi actually seems to know where it was precisely [*this is not exactly true, but we certainly weren't in the ortachala of myth*]. The garden of Ortachala was an island that has since ceased to be a garden and had ceased to be an island too. The world of Ortachala's gardens portrayed by the mukhambazi, a lost island world submerged under residential development, are in this sense like Old Tbilisi as a whole: a mythic literary commonplace that has ceased to be an actual place, surviving only in fragmentary citations like the one made by Malkhazi.

The mukhambazi, and urban literature as a whole, never really found much of a welcome in the modern Georgian literary canon: much like the city of Tbilisi that gave birth to it, Georgian urban literature seemed to be not very Georgian at all. It seemed rather a Persian literature translated into Georgian. **[kinto slide]** Its typical speakers were not tragic-heroic peasants but street-peddlers called *kintos* who were mostly known for their ability to drink wine and fleece Georgian peasants of their money. Its typical themes were light-minded, frivolous, drunken scenes of celebration involving these *kintos*. It therefore belonged neither to Georgian folklore nor Georgian literature. Everything about this indigenous urban literature seemed "Oriental", a heterogeneous category denoting all that was abjected, cast aside, in the formation of the modern "European" city of Tbilisi.

My task today is to make this seemingly trivial and banal literature, mostly about drunken street-peddlers called *kintos*, reveal something about Georgian urban life in the "divided city" of the Russian colonial period. I **also** want to ask what the insistent recitation and remediation of the mukhambazi in other urban genres, especially in socialist films about the city, shows us about the emergent mythology of a specifically Georgian socialist city. To do this, I want to analyze the mukhambazi as what Nicholas Harkness, in his book *Songs of Seoul*, calls a *phonosonic nexus*, an intertwined, interanimating assemblage of voices and sounds [Note that I am not at all sure about this characterization of a *phonosonic nexus*, which Harkness (2011) characterizes as "Music and language, audible sound and the sounding body, individual persons and generalized personae all are linked through the phonosonics of vocalization". I am treating this as a matter of shared qualia between the indexical linkage of human body to sound [phone, Greek "voice"] and the fact that a voice, once produced, is iconically and indexically capable of sharing qualia with a whole system of sounds, some human, some non-human [Latin *sonus*, sound]. My treatment of it comes out most clearly in *qualic transitivity between human and nonhuman* (See Harkness 2013) in the georgian word *k'ilo* (accent, dialect, tune..) below]. Refracted across a series of urban literary genres, poetry, plays, operas

and films, the mukhambazi becomes a kind of haunting echo of a Safavid Persian garden, a spectral soundscape that animates the colonial and socialist city with an oriental alterity. The mukhambazi permits a kind of vicarious participation in the life of the city, the lively animated voices and sounds of an Oriental city that is always overheard, quoted, mimicked or mocked; a European urban identity that is haunted by a spectral alterity in the echoes of a submerged underground or surrogate Oriental alter ego.

### **"See me, who I am!": The "Not I" of the Mukhambazi and Vicarious participation in the City**

Malkhazi's absurd invocation of the mythic gardens of Ortachala worked by citationality, a bathos produced by establishing both a real indexical connection --we were drinking in Ortachala, after all, it wouldn't have been funny anywhere else--as well as maintaining an irreducible difference between between the mythic gardens of Ortachala and a contemporary parking lot with a dead tree. Citationality, real indexical connection crossed with irreducible difference, where the quoting voice and the quoted voice are non-identical, is also a central characteristic of the mukhambazi as a genre. The voice of the mukhambazis is a cited, quoted, or better, ventriloquized voice. Beginning with Prince Grigol Orbeliani's cycle of urban poetry at the very beginning of the Russian colonial period, the mukhambazi became essentially a genre figuring **vicarious** participation in the urban milieu, one that enacts an indexical connection to the city, but vicariously, at arm's length, so to speak. **[Orbeliani]**

The author, Prince Grigol Jambakur Orbeliani, is an emblematic figure for both the urbanization and Europeanization of Georgians, and the Orientalization of the city they lived in. Orbeliani was an extremely high-ranking Georgian aristocrat, whose hereditary titles from the Safavid period included *Jambakur* "Son of Heaven", a Persian term implying direct descent from the Emperor of China. **[map--> focus]** Unlike most Georgian nobles, whose estates were largely rural, the Orbeliani family was an urban family who had a large palace and grounds in Tbilisi which formed the "Orbeliani district". This

district was in the middle of what was to become the Russian administrative center in the emerging European part of Tbilisi and Orbeliani, near the Russian Viceroy's court where Orbeliani became a powerful bureaucrat, whose titles would eventually include Governor-General of the Tiflis province.

Orbeliani's divided literary repertoire expresses his ambivalent European and Oriental personae. When Georgian prince Grigol Orbeliani wrote European romantic lyric poetry, as he did around the same time he became a Russian colonial bureaucrat, the "I" of his poems typically expressed directly the inner feelings of the poet: a figure of European identity. By contrast, when Orbeliani tuned his hand to the "oriental" mukhambazi, he always adopted a vicarious stance, one emphasizing alterity. [**see me, who I am!**] Each line of the poem cited above ends with "See me, who I am!", and yet the "I" of the mukhambazi is never the poet, but always the animated voice of the petty street trader or kinto, so much so that this kind of poem comes to be called a "kinto poem", after its stereotypical speaking figure. The voice of the mukhambazi and the voice of the kinto are largely interchangeable. Thus the mukhambazi is an intrinsically double-voiced text in which the urban author, variously high born Georgian aristocrats like Orbeliani or marginal non-Georgian writers, engaged in acts of ventriloquism, or rather, **animation**, *speaking through* the abject oriental urban other, the kinto. This same *vicarious* stance (Inoue) seems to portray a certain Georgian ambivalence about being in and belonging to the colonial city from the 19th to 20th centuries: laying claim to the status of urbanite vicariously and asymptotically, by quoting, citing, performing, staging, mocking, mimicking the voice of the true citydweller, the kinto, who is an overheard oriental Other but also a surrogate, underground self.

I wish to explore this process of vicarious participation in the Oriental space of the colonial city by exploring the trope of animation, hence my title, 'animating the city'. The mukhambazi animates the city in various ways, which I will collect under the rubrics of Alterity, Animation, and Abjection.

(1) First, in terms of alterity, the mukhambazi animates the city as an exotic, unfamiliar "oriental" space defined by the inter-animating properties of human voices and nonhuman sounds. Here

the mukhambazi creates a diegetic space centered on drunken feasting and singing of lowly urban characters, kintos, in the gardens of Ortachala. Voices and sounds obviously give a sense of lively 'animatedness' (Ngai) to picturesque urban scenes. But insofar as humans and nonhumans exchange animating properties, especially of sound, a kind of inter-animation, a kind of distributed soulfulness, is involved in these scenes as well.

(2) Secondly, the mukhambazi decomposes the speaker into what Goffman called a participant framework, a series of role partials, which I have glossed here as author and speaker. While in later works such as *Forms of Talk* Goffman famously pulls together these fragments of the speaker under an overarching dramaturgical trope of performance, based on the theatre of live actors, here I deploy instead Goffman's earlier *Frame Analysis* to show how the relation of these role partials might be analyzed using tropes of animation, deploying metaphors drawn from puppetry, for example. Here the mukhambazi is analyzed as a specific kind of vicarious double-voiced text, in which the author speaks through, animates, the voices of the characters, but never identifies with them.

(3) Thirdly, animation implies an animating principle, a soul. In Georgian literary criticism of the period, borrowing from romanticism, true literatures are defined by having or expressing a "national soul". This "national" soul can be individual, as in lyric poetry of a genius poet, or it can be collective, as in the collective voice of the people in folklore. A self-animating speaking subject produces a literature that has a soul, a fragmentary speaker that is animated by an alien author is **abject**, more like a soul-less puppet. The soul-less mukhambazi represents a kind of "abject" literature, an unoriginal, frivolous literature, a copy without an original, an empty form without an animating soul, in which the fragmentary voices of kintos are animated by alien authors.

(4) Lastly, in socialist period films, these varied tropes of animation carry over from the literary image of Old Tbilisi into the filmic one. The major change here is that socialist representations of the city seek to *re-animate* this abjected urban literature, by giving it a national, Georgian, soul, turning the

texts of the city into a kind of authentic folklore analogous to the folklore of the peasants in the village. To achieve this humpty-dumpty-like re-animation, following the spirit of the socialist revolution, the voice of the mukhambazi is disassociated from the voice of the kinto, who is, after all, an oriental figure of petty commerce, belonging to the discarded, politically retrograde, simultaneously oriental and petty capitalist, world of the bazaar, and reassigned to a more emblematically socialist urban figure, the productive craftsman, or *qarachogheli*.

### **The sounds of the colonial city**

The poem cited by Malkhazi was perhaps the most famous of a series of mukhambazis written by the Georgian prince Grigol Orbeliani in the early 19th century, just at the time that he, like many other Georgian aristocrats, was entering into Russian bureaucratic service, to become the most influential Georgian in the Caucasus at the time of the writing of this poem. At the same time that Orbeliani was writing such poetry that expressed what he called his "Asiatic" persona, he was also experimenting with European literary forms like romantic lyric which befit his more public Russophile literary persona. [Map] The hybrid European and Oriental repertoire of Georgian urban aristocratic poets like Orbeliani echoes the emerging orientalist binaries of a divided colonial city, a city that was undergoing rapid rebuilding and repopulation after its devastation by the Persian Qajars at the end of the 18th century, to become the Russian administrative center, and most populous city, of the whole Caucasus by the end of the 19th century. Georgian aristocrats like Orbeliani expressed their own ambivalent position in this divided colonial city as not-quite-Europeans and not-quite-Orientals by their equally divided urban poetic repertoires, which included both imitations of European romantic lyric for their official public selves and rather more privately circulated Oriental mukhambazis expressing their surrogate, underground "asiatic" selves.

In a poem from 1925, entitled "a mukhambazi, which is not to be sung", the modernist poet



Titsian Tabidze imagines Grigol Orbeliani coming home drunk from Ortachala. It is a simple but powerful image, because it is a long walk [**map 2**]. It is a long walk in both physical and in social space, from the lowest of the low, the drunken haunts of kintos, to the highest of the high, the historic palace of the Orbeliani family, located in the European city near the Viceroy's Palace. In effect, the distance between the lyric and the mukhambazi, between Orbeliani's European and Asiatic literary personas, mirrors the emergent social and spatial divisions of the divided colonial city, the distance between the island gardens of Ortachala and the Orbeliani palace on the other side of the city.

Following in Orbeliani's footsteps, generations of urbanizing Georgians would confront for the first time in the obvious material semiotic contrasts of the colonial city-- the straight boulevards of the Russian city and the winding streets of Old Tbilisi--a version of the same paradoxical question: How to become a Tbilisian, or rather, "How to become 'European' and 'Oriental' at the same time"? As in many colonial urban situations, both identities present themselves as asymptotes, aspirational identities that always remain alterities: if Georgians have raced after European identity only to discover it racing over the horizon like a mirage, they also kept their participation in the Oriental city vicarious, at a distance.

This brings me to my theme of alterity. The mukhambazi represents the city as an acoustic orientalized space animated by a collection of specifically *oriental* sounds and voices. This "oriental" city of sounds is not a stereotypical oriental city of winding streets and bazaars, but of **gardens**, specifically the shady lanes of the gardens of Ortachala, where drunken kintos sing mukhambazis, imitating the way the nightingale serenades the rose [**feast in ortachala**]. The way this *urban* poetry centers on *garden* settings seems to recall the Safavid Persian ideal of the "city garden", whose model is Isfahan. It certainly reflects the allegorical gardens of Persian poetry, figurations of paradise. It also reflects the actual material semiotics of Middle Eastern urban space in which suburban gardens and cities existed in ecological and political symbiosis. In the Safavid period, after all, Tbilisi was celebrated as a city "hemmed by the gardens of heaven". [**image Gardens**]. These gardens are the

habitual scene of drunken rituals which align the qualities of human voices and nonhuman sounds: the human voice of the kintos and their habitual sayings while drinking (*allaverdi! iakhsholdi!*); the musical tunes like the *kupria*; the music of oriental instruments like the *duduki*, the *chianuri* and the *zurna*. All of these are bound together in the "sweet voice" of the mukhambazi.

Ritual feasting produces a what Nicholas Harkness has called a "phonosonic nexus", here, an acoustic image in which the qualia of human voices and nonhuman sounds blend into one another: the voices, the wine, the song, the melodies, blend into one another. In local poetic terms, each of these qualitative transitions of sound between humans and nonhumans elicits *eshkhi*, a rather specific term borrowed from the Persian term meaning "passionate love" that plays a key role in Persian mystical poetry and philosophy. In Georgian, the term *eshkhi* "love, beauty, or enchantment", refers both to the property of the desiring subject and the property of the object that elicits that love. **[nightingale and rose]** In the frequent poetic trope of the nightingale serenading the rose in the garden, *eshkhi* would be a *symmetric* property both of the subject (the nightingale) and the object (the rose) that elicits that love. Through such reciprocal inter-animation working pairwise between lover and beloved, love animates the entire chain of being. Taken together, the varied voices and sounds of drunken feasting in the gardens becomes a ritual, almost mystical, enactment of this love. Here the animating principle of soul or love becomes a distributed property shared both by the "voices" of both humans and nonhumans. The poetic garden city, in turn, is *animated* by the love expressed by these voices and sounds.

In this kind of poetry, both Persian and Georgian, wine-drinking and drunkenness have both mystical and literal referents. One urban writer, again adopting the voice of the kinto to adumbrate his drunken mysticism, asks, "what makes me drink wine?" and answers, in part, "The love (*eshkhi*) excited by the sweet voice of the *duduki* makes me drink". This initiates an extended set of iconic and indexical qualitative transitions, the *duduki* plays the tune of the *kupria*, the tune of the *kupria* in turn sweetens the *duduki* and the drinker, caught up in the song, becomes one with the instruments and flies

into the heavens in a mystic trance. The *soul* is *there*, where the human voice enters into mystical union with instruments like the *chianuri* and the *zurna*:

Listen, how the kupria sugars and sweetens the duduki, makes it sound out, lifts it, carries it up, so that it rises into the air and takes you with it, and then you will find out what makes me drink. When your heart begins to groan like a *chianuri* and the enchanting [*eshkhiani*] tune of the *zurna* soaks through your sides, your soul is *there*, where it comes out of your windpipe... you hold a bowl [of wine] in your hands and you fly up among the stars in your mind, you no longer remember others, nor yourself.... (Akhnazarovi, Art'em (Or-Ani). 1890. Ras masmevs ghvinos? K'int'os Aghareba [What makes me drink wine? The Confesion of a Kinto]. *Iveria* 1890 9 February, no. 31, page 4.)

Another urban poet (Giorgi Skandarnova, *Allaverdi! Iakhsholdi!* 1914: 9)) represents the "sweet voice" of the mukhambazi, the sounds of the duduki and song, wafting their way from the gardens of Ortachala into the city itself, and when they reach the center of the old city, they now waft their way into each of the households, animating the city as a whole.

For Georgian nationalist writers, however, the sound of the mukhambazi was anything but sweet. One such aristocratic poet, a close relative of Grigol Orbeliani's, wrote in 1884 a polemical aesthetic tractate against the mukhambazi form, directed presumably against Giorgi Skandarnova, the most famous practitioner from the non-noble estate, with deliberate irony itself cast in the form of a mukhambazi, suggestively entitled *I Do Not Like the Sound of the Mukhambazi*, which begins as follows (this poem is discussed by Shaqulashvili, Manning and Shatirishvili 2011):

*To the poet,*

I do not like the sound of the *mukhambazi*,  
The sound of the *k'int'o*, the sound of the central Bazaar;  
With this sound of what would you sing, poet,  
If not of wine, toastmasters and *k'int'os*,  
Their *duduk'i*, *dip'lip'it'o* and *zurna*, [these are instruments]  
Their pointless buffoonery, whooping?  
I do not like such scenes,  
What else would you say with a *mukhambazi*, tell me?

The key repeated word here is *k'ilo*, which I have translated as "sound", but which can mean variously 'meter', 'dialect', 'accent', 'intonation', 'tune'. In another example of "qualic transitivity" (Harkness 2013) of the phonosonic nexus, the poem uses a shared indexical and iconic property of *sound* to link together different aspects of the city, now understood as undesirable forms of noise: the sound of the *mukhambazi*, the sound of kintos, the sound of the central bazaar, the sound of instruments like the *duduki*, the sound of drunken festivity.

In this poem, not only is the sound of the *mukhambazi* polemically aligned with the pointless noise of urban spaces in general and urban scenes of drunken festivity, but it is further abjected by its inability to transcend those scenes, an inability to stand as a referential voice with respect to other scenes that are the proper objects of literature. The *mukhambazi* is not a true literary form because it can only sing reflexively about the very drunken scenes in which it is typically performed: "What else would you say with a *mukhambazi*, tell me?" the poet asks. His answer, for the rest of the poem, is to suggest a laundry list of referential themes appropriate to true European literature: the sublime beauty of nature, the tragic romantic beauty of a maiden, patriotic heroism in war, and finally the plight and exploitation of the peasant.

## **Animation**

When this author challenges his unnamed poet "With this sound (*k'ilo*), of what would you sing, poet?" he draws attention to the way this double-voiced genre itself is characterized by **animation**: a division between the voice of the poet and the voice of the kinto through which he sings. This property of animation appears to be a central innovation of Grigol Orbeliani himself, who is, after all, another "poet" implicitly addressed in this poem. As one Georgian scholar notes: 'Grigol Orbeliani considered his mukhambazis to be the monologues or songs of his characters: the poet stifles, neutralizes his own voice, himself making [his characters] speak, abstracted away from them.' (Gatsereia 1959: 059)The **alterity** of the genre, the division between the voice of the poet and the voice of the kinto, therefore necessarily also involves tropes of **animation**, the projection of the self/role dualism onto two distinct bodies or persons, as in puppetry (as opposed to the performance of an actor on stage, where the sel/role dualism coexists within one body, that of the actor): the poet makes the kinto sing, animates him.

In this particular analysis of animation I take inspiration from Erving Goffman's tentative **deployment** of dramaturgical tropes of animation, rather than embodied performance, to explore self/role dualisms, in *Frame Analysis* (1974). I am also strongly influenced by an argument made recently by Teri Silvio (2010, see by now Silvio 2019) which suggests that animation should be regarded not simply as an extension of the existing hegemonic "performance paradigm", but as an alternative model of and for human action in the world that, at the very least, affords insights complementary to those afforded by the performance model.

With *Frame Analysis*, Goffman began a process of breaking down what he called the 'black box' of the unitary speaker into a fragmentary and heterogeneous assemblage of participation roles, such as principal, author, animator, animated figure, linked together by processes that he called

"animation". The resulting fragments of the speaker could be articulated not only as momentary stances adopted by a single speech actor, as an actor playing a role (**performance**), but also could be externalized and materialized, distributed across multiple speech actants, some human, some non-human, as a puppeteer voicing a puppet (**animation**). Developing this point, Shunsuke Nozawa has recently argued in a paper on "characterization", such a decomposition of the "black box" of the "speech actor" results in a kind of Latourian distributed agency, a speech assemblage distributed across multiple 'speech actants', some human, some non-human. In the example at hand, for example, European lyric and the folklore of the peasant involve "black-boxed" speech actors (performance), the kinto is always part of an assemblage of speech actants (animation).

Once this particular pattern of alterity and animation had become a conventional property of the mukhambazi, the vicarious voice of the kinto could be animated by many different authorial intentions, and the mukhambazi could "speak with different voices in an increasingly differentiated colonial society" (Ram 2007: 1552). The same vicarious voice of the kinto could, appropriated by a highborn aristocrat like Grigol Orbeliani, amount to a kind of literary slumming. On the other hand, adopted by marginal non-Georgian urban writers, the abject voice of the kinto could articulate a social critique of these same Europeanizing aristocratic orders from the perspective of the lowest of the low, as in the following excerpt from multilingual, Russian and Georgian "Kinto poem", addressed by a generic kinto to a generic aristocrat:

Aside, aside, you aren't my equal

I am a *kinto*, but you are a *gentleman*!

My *school* is the counter of the *market*

My dance floor is the gardens of Ortachala

My *spirit* – is a jug of wine.

My *music* – is the soul of Stepko's *zurna*

## Abjection

As this last example shows, the properties of alterity and animation lead to abjection. It is surely no accident that the animated voice of the mukhambazi is the carefree voice of the lowest, most abject, urban character, the kinto. Originally, I think, the hedonistic happy-go-lucky drunken figure of the kinto served as a local version of similarly abject figures that populate Persian Sufi poetry, 'inspired libertines', urban hoodlums and lowlives (*rind*). The kinto, like the Sufi *rind*, illustrates through his largely allegorical life ethical themes, such as detachment from self and society, anti-materialism and warm-hearted generosity. In the colonial period, the kinto moves further from being an allegorical human figuration of an ethical system, a renunciation of worldly ambitions, drinking allegorical wine in allegorical gardens, to a more concrete figuration of the lower orders of the real city, drinking literal wine in literal gardens, often delivering a pointed this-worldly social critique. The lowly kinto moves from being an allegorical ethical figure to being a real ethnographic figure.

The kinto, then, is an abject figure, in the sense of being the lowest of the low, cast aside. But the kinto is abjected in another sense more closely tied to my discussion of animation. In her discussion of the overheard, abjected voice of the Meiji schoolgirl in her book *Vicarious Language*, Miyako Inoue productively develops Kristeva's category of the abject into a specifically linguistic category between the unified speaking subject of modernity and the non-speaking object. Thus, between what Goffman calls the 'black box' of the unified speaking subject and the mute object lies a zone of abject figures, 'a community of fragments' that each embody part, but not all, of the speaking subject. Generalizing from her work, I imagine the zone of abject speaking figures as being fragmentary speech actants created by tropes or processes of animation: puppets, dolls, babies, pets, stenographers, typists. For example, I'm thinking along the lines of dogs as "abject" speech actants as analyzed by Kohn in his influential

analysis of Runa dog speech: "For people to communicate with dogs, dogs must be treated as conscious human subjects; yet dogs must simultaneously be treated as objects lest they talk back" (Kohn 2007: 13). Such abjection is precisely the stance built into the structure of the mukhambazi, a structure which involves animation by the author of the voice of an abject other.

The mukhambazi was also abject in the sense of being a literature cast aside from the canons of modern Georgian literature. Not merely an abjected genre, but a self-abjecting genre, the mukhambazi was increasingly adopted as a parodic genre devoted to mockery. The mukhambazi could, as we have already seen, be used for self-parody, but it could also be used to parody other genres of urban literature, such as the weekly newspaper serial (pronounced *feleton or peleton* in Georgian) associated with the urban literary bohemia and a new class of professional writers (*feletonists* in Georgian ) were also abjected by association with the older urban literature of the mukhambazi. For example, a satirical cartoon from 1908, entitled, "A feast of some drunken lads, a 'Mukhambazi Latiauri' of the so-called Feuilletonists" shows a group of such literary professionals, taking the form of several sundry species of animals seated around a writing desk, drunkenly singing a mukhambazi which expresses their desire to abase true literature with gossip, fabrications, lies and innuendo (**Slide**).

### **Re-animating the city**

By the twentieth century, the received position was that the poetry of the city represented an excluded middle: since they lacked either individual or collective authors, mukhambazis belonged neither to authentic literature nor yet to authentic folklore. Furthermore, urban literature did not have a "national sound" (*k'ilo*) nor a national soul. The mukhambazi had an foreign *k'ilo* or sound, it represented a bookish, artificial, weak and wan imitation of Persian literature, directed to frivolities, it did not flow organically from the heart and soul of the "real people", the peasants.

At the beginning of the socialist period, a Georgian modernist poet, Ioseb Grishashvili, himself



from Tbilisi, decided to rescue the literature of the city from its abject status. In his work, the *Literary Bohemia of Old Tbilisi* (1928), Grishashvili's central project was to create a folklore of the city, to restore city texts to the same status of the authentic folklore of the peasant. He wanted, in other words, to give the fragmented texts of the city a true original creative author, he wanted to give the *re-animate* these texts by giving them an organic animating principle, a *soul*. [qarachogheli slides] To do this, he needed a collective author who was truly creative and productive: not merely a producer of words, but also, in the socialist period, a producer of things. He found this authentic author in the urban guild artisan, the qarachogheli, whom he saw as expressing a true 'synthesis of Georgian-Persian relations'. So Grishashvili conducted a minor socialist purge of the authors of urban texts, replacing across the board the kinto, an effeminate oriental figure associated with petty commerce, with a heroic, masculine figure, the guild artisan or qarachogheli, a figure more appropriate to the revolutionary socialist narrative celebrating production over capitalist exchange. The kintos as he saw it, were the debased 'dregs of the family of the qarachoghelis, raised in the streets and at the backgammon tables'; they were not creators of traditions, like the qarachogheli, but destroyers of them. The kintos were formed by the social conditions of the bazaar, a milieu which was both oriental *and* capitalist, and therefore completely antithetical to socialist civilization. As part of this purge, all of the desirable properties of the abject kinto were transferred to the masculine, productive qarachoghelis. In particular, urban texts that once were imagined as being spoken by kintos were now transferred wholesale to the qarachoghelis. (Grishashvili cartoon)

These changes are epitomized in a cartoon from 1959 (slides 21ff), where Grishashvili himself is depicted on the podium, holding his book, surrounded by the characters of his urban mythology. The landscape in the background moves from left (Old Tbilisi) to right (New Tbilisi). In the foreground, left to right we have musicians playing 'oriental' instruments like the *duduki*, then the kinto, carrying fish in a basket on his head, along with various other stock characters of the urban mythology. The new heroes

of Grishashvili's revisionist urban narrative, the qarachoghelis, occupy the limelight, they are shown front and center offering him a heroic toast, mysteriously attended, as they always are, by a ram.

Grishashvili's revisionist mythology of the city was given filmic expression in the 1948 socialist musical film, *Keto and Kote*. This film, whose production was ordered by well-known Georgian and lover of musicals, Josef Stalin, is based on a 20th century opera of the same name and an even earlier 19th century play, *Khanuma*. This can be seen clearly in the final scene in which Keto and Kote's fathers stumble upon their children's wedding celebration already in progress. All the social orders of the city are shown celebrating, starting with the lowest, the kintos. Here the kintos are epitomized by their somewhat effeminate "oriental" dance, which to this day many Georgian nationalists find deeply upsetting, followed by the masculine, indubitably heterosexual qarachoghelis, who basically do not dance at all, and form a collective speaking subject to deliver a mukhambazi collectively:

**Kinto and Qarachogheli** [http://youtu.be/Eq\\_DsRYTBCI](http://youtu.be/Eq_DsRYTBCI) (3 minutes) (press control-click to open)

Unlike the play and the opera which are full of kintos, kintos are largely erased from the film as speaking figures. Instead, the characteristic voice, mannerisms and dance of the kinto are animated vicariously by other characters. In one scene, two kinto-like characters, Siko and Sako, who are clerks to the merchant, Keto's father, Makari, perform a comic version of a "kinto" song and dance routine to cheer up a disconsolate Keto. Pay attention to the doll in this scene:

<http://youtu.be/EFl-026crXo> (a minute and a half, thereabouts) (press control-click to open)

I draw attention to the figure of the doll because it nicely underlines the tropes of animation and

abjection. As an object, a lowly commodity, the doll stands in abject opposition to the expensive gifts (a diamond studded tiara, an expensive dress) that her father, a wealthy merchant, is showering upon her in a (failing) effort to cheer her up. The lively animated kinto dance and song of Siko and Sako animates the disconsolate Keto, and she animates the doll, making it dance to the kinto song. The doll in turn vicariously animates, reflects and expresses Keto's own internal states for her, moving from being an inanimate thing as she herself lies disconsolate on the couch to a living happy and somewhat creepy entity that moves with and expresses her own delight at the dance of the kintos.

In this basically socialist re-animation of urban texts, the mukhambazis penned by Grigol Orbeliani are reassigned to the intelligentsia character of Kote, and are now animated not by kintos, but by qarachoghelis. The qarachoghelis speak as a collective actor, as we saw in the previous clip, each taking a turn or a line to compose themselves into a speaking collectivity: a many-to-one relation that, as Teri Silvio argues, is a typical trope of animation. Moreover, the scenes with qarachoghelis involve another kind of "re-animation", exploring animation as an *organic* relation between the individual intelligentsia author and the working collective speaking subject who animates his words.

Both these aspects of collective re-animation of verbal art have clear socialist significance, locating speech and speakers squarely in a paradigm of production. When they are first introduced, the qarachoghelis are shown emblematically in a purely masculine context of production. Kote, upon his return to Tbilisi from education abroad, is shown singing on a patriotic theme. The camera switches to a scene of the qarachoghelis at work in a smithy, hearing him sing in the background. They pause to listen, and when asked by a passing old woman, they define Kote not as an idle partying aristocrat, but as a friend of the people, a student, "pure like us, a lover of work". His purity of heart and love makes him sing, that is, animates him. Kote in turn produces songs that the people also sing, animating the city with his songs: an organic relationship flowing from his pure heart to the people.

**Qarachoghelis: "Kote is singing"** <http://youtu.be/gKp-qcHTP8M>

Later, Kote is refused his request to see Keto at her home by Siko and Sako. The way Siko and Sako deliver this message, however, emphasizes the trope of animation, but quite differently: they speak comically in perfect unison, presenting themselves as being mere mechanical relays of Keto's quoted words. Kote walks away, disconsolate. The scene then shifts to a darkened background image of Old Tbilisi, represented as a strongly acoustically and visually demarcated and bounded off oriental space, quite unlike any other scene in the film, heralded and animated by the plaintive sound of the duduki and the vocal refrain of the mukhambazi, *Hari Haralei*. Into this orientalized acoustic and visual space, the qarachoghelis appear. The script strongly underlines that this scene should be filmed in as picturesque manner as possible, calling for the appearance of the qarachoghelis to be "painterly [or picturesque] shot".

The picturesque qarachoghelis greet Kote collectively in choral song. When he explains his lovelorn predicament, the qarachoghelis announce their intention of collectively animating his lovelorn lyrical mukhambazis on his behalf. Here relation of animation is defined once again as being a result of organic intimacy: Kote is close to the people, the people sing his songs:

<http://youtu.be/IjuuSwgkdxQ> (2 minutes) (**press control-click to open**)

In the next scene, where the script calls for a "fantastic procession", the qarachoghelis enter the garden to serenade Keto. They sing collectively but, unlike the comic characters, Siko and Sako, not simultaneously, delivering line by line a series of mukhambazis, concluding with the famous mukhambazi with which I began, shown here:

## Qarachoghelis in Garden <http://youtu.be/boh50NZmgS4>

In this scene the qarachoghelis become a *collective* speaking subject which represents the true collective, the folk, now read as being an urban-proletariat, singing Kote's songs in an organic relationship with the author, who is now defined as a member of the *organic intelligentsia*. The double-voiced alterity, the animation, of the mukhambazi is maintained, but here they serve collectively as his mouthpiece, for love, out of love. The relation of animation itself is re-animated as an intimate *organic* relationship mirroring the intimacy of the intelligentsia and the people, the individual genius and the folk, both of whom are animated by the same "national soul".

I suppose it is appropriate to conclude a paper on animating the city with an similar example from an actual animated cartoon about the city. The cartoon *Tsruna and Tsrutuna* came out in 1961 at exactly the time that Tbilisi was undergoing perhaps its biggest physical extension in space and population. This was also a time when Grishashvili's book was re-released as a kind of users' manual of urban mythology for these newly urbanized Georgians entering the city. The plot of this animated film involves star-crossed lovers, both of whom are country mice. The female mouse is abducted by an evil aristocratic rat, and the lovelorn country mouse turns for help to the city mouse, who is, naturally, a qarachogheli. Everything about this clip strongly follows the model in *Keto and Kote*. Here, as there, the acoustic and visual space of Old Tbilisi of the rodent qarachoghelis is strongly demarcated from the rest of the cartoon as a kind of set piece, visually and acoustically *orientalized*. The city mice are shown working, then shown drinking, toasting and dancing on a raft against the darkened picturesque backdrop of the Kura gorge, not far from the island gardens of Ortachala. Most of all, they sing mukhambazis. In the second part of this clip, they are shown, just as in *Keto and Kote*, collectively serenading the captive female mouse on behalf of the male country mouse with mukhambazis to the plaintive sound of the duduki.

**Qarachogheli Mice** <http://youtu.be/G19A1hjRznk>

In these socialist urban films and cartoons, the mukhambazi continues to provide the animating soundscape for the urban landscape. This is, however, a mukhambazi transformed, repurposed, revoiced, **re-animated**, as part of a specifically socialist mythology of the city.

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