

## CHAPTER 3

# Human Devils

## Affects and Spectres of Alterity in Eerie Cities of Georgia

Tamta Khalvashi and Paul Manning

Ilia State University and Trent University

### Introduction

Ghosts and ghoulies were once prematurely pronounced dead with the arrival of electrical lights and modernity. Yet, in the wake of what Roger Luckhurst has called the ‘spectral turn’ (2002), inspired by Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx* (1994), they have made quite a comeback in theoretical circles, and in urban studies in particular. Unlike traditional ghosts, however, these ghosts are usually treated as metaphoric spirits, with more kinship to the Hegelian spirit, an invisible force (similar to capitalism) advancing world history, than the spirits of folklore, implying the animating force of nature.<sup>1</sup> Their haunting thus is very abstract, acting very generally to destabilize all categories of dwelling, presence and totalized urban planning. In this way, the ghost, already a somewhat indeterminate kind of spirit, is reduced to an eerie figure of ‘spectral modernity’ (Luckhurst 2002, 528). Spectral modernity offers a period in which ‘time is out of joint’, incarnating the uncanny return of the repressed, where the figure of the ghost is both present and absent. Ghosts can thus be encountered at every turn in the city as a way of capturing the relationship between particular

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#### How to cite this book chapter:

Khalvashi, T. and P. Manning. 2021. ‘Human Devils: Affects and Spectres of Alterity in Eerie Cities of Georgia’. In *Modern Folk Devils: Contemporary Constructions of Evil*, edited by M. D. Frederiksen and I. Harboe Knudsen, 63–79. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33134/HUP-13-4>.

affects of haunting and particular kinds of places. Hence, unlike the ‘folk devils’ that are marked by political power or media as specific social groups threatening societal values and interests (Cohen 2011 [1972]), here devils and ghosts, instead, appear in their traditional and folkloric forms in the city. They surface in times of changing societal and physical structures while creating anxieties and doubts about the present. As such, these ghosts and spirits are both concrete and yet metaphysical.

This chapter is about spectral hauntings in Georgian cities. We argue that some Georgian goblins, just like the cities they dwell in, are experienced as eerie not solely metaphorically but literally. There are fascinating ethnographies of devils emerging metaphorically or symbolically in various Georgian cities and semi-urban contexts, such as devils of the refugee camps (Dunn 2018), the persistence of criminal devils in Batumi (Frederiksen 2013), or new elites as devils (Manning 2009, 2014). Yet, none of these ethnographies deal with devils from folklore that become figures of human alterity in the city, migrating from rural to urban environments to appear as real human beings. In doing so, we argue that human devils produce similar affects as Georgian cities, some of which appear empty, half-finished or broken (Khalvashi 2019). While ghosts are usually considered ex-people who have entered the ghostly estate, Georgian goblins were never originally people. They were originally goblins or devils, but in the process of urbanization and modernization terms for goblins became ‘slangy’ terms for kinds of strange people created by sudden urban changes (Manning 2014). The Georgian goblins, in this sense, are radically different from Western ghosts in that, as non-humans, they might at some point become humans. Western ghosts operate in the opposite manner: generally they are humans who attain a condition that is monstrously opposed to humanity. Georgian goblins hence are a fascinating point of departure. They demonstrate how Georgian cities are haunted by spectres of alterity that are felt by their residents to be eerie. As urban geographer Steve Pile puts it,

It is easy enough, I think, to see how certain feelings – and their ghostly presences – might appear in cities. Of course, people feel things and if those people are in cities, then they are going to feel them there. And, just as surely, cities might make people feel things: all those strangers, all those dark alleyways, and all those stories of violence. But this hardly means that cities are ghostly – and it certainly doesn’t mean that we have a sixth sense in our encounters with places, does it? (Pile 2005, 243)

At the core of spectral modernity then is the eerie sensations produced by specific urban spaces. The term *eerie* was introduced from the vocabulary of everyday hauntings into theory by the late Mark Fisher (2016), to replace the over-used *uncanny*, which demarcates among other things crossings of the familiar and strange. According to Fisher, terms like *eerie* or *weird* are different from the *uncanny* as the former is about the strange that does not belong to the

familiar, while the latter is about the strange within familiar, or the familiar as strange. To be sure, ‘the weird brings to the familiar something which ordinarily lies beyond it, and which cannot be reconciled with the “homely”’ (Fisher 2016, 11). Hence, while uncanny is centred on the self, weird and eerie work at this from the other direction: ‘they allow us to see the inside from the perspective of the outside.’ As Luckhurst (2017) glosses Fisher’s explanations, ‘the weird is a disturbing obtrusion of something from the outside in. It is the insidious intrusion, the confounding juxtaposition, the thing found in the wrong place.’

If the weird is ‘the thing found in the wrong *place*’, the eerie is the place itself; it is a feeling connected to certain places or landscapes: ‘*places* are eerie; empty landscapes are eerie; abandoned structures and ruins are eerie. Something moves in these apparently empty or vacated sites that exists independently of the human subject, an agency that is cloaked or obscure’ (Luckhurst 2017). In moving from their rural haunts to haunt empty, unfinished or broken urban spaces, and in transitioning from non-human to human creatures, Georgian goblins and the cities they emerge in are in this way felt as eerie, obscure agencies, highlighting anxieties and moral conditions related to urban spaces that have changed, fallen into ruin, and become strange and unfamiliar. Hence, traditional folk spectres do not necessarily go out of fashion with modernity. Instead, they express quite novel, indeed modern, urban anxieties about crumbling or simply relentlessly changing modernity, demarcating a zone of the eerie.

Georgian goblins, like the vanishing hitch-hiker of North American folklore (see Beardsley and Hankey 1942), are in this way modern spectres of a modern urban alterity. They haunt the spaces in between, as they are reworkings of the folkloric spiritualism embedded in urban contexts. But Georgian goblins, unlike North American ghosts, become permanent human residents of such urban settings; they move from haunting roads in the woods to haunting the streets of the city, causing enduring anxieties of alterity and eeriness. Californian ghosts, like the vanishing hitch-hiker, in contrast, present themselves as wondering or migratory ghosts, who create temporary fears of alterity. In fact, the vanishing hitch-hiker is a stranger, almost always a young woman, who wants to go home. By the late 19th century, it seems, the Gothic ghost, which was a homebody haunting only houses, was replaced by a new ghost, the cosmopolitan wandering ghost that marked dislocations and anxieties caused by long-distance movement, a ghost that haunted the spaces *in between*. Georgian goblins do not have such homeless nomadic and liminal characteristics, as they become embedded permanently in urban or semi-urban settings. As human goblins, they haunt modern, yet crumbling infrastructural spaces, but their spectral presences become morally and affectively pressing in times of political and economic crisis.

In this chapter we discuss mainly three such goblins in Georgia: *kajis*, a kind of horned devil that once haunted the wild spaces and ruins surrounding rural villages that have now become haunting metaphors for eerie and unfamiliar aspects of cities changing rapidly after the end of socialism, and *dedjalis* and

*uzhmuris*, goblins more specific to just the Western region of Georgia, that are associated with Russian colonial and Soviet modernity projects. All these goblins have become modern, and in some cases, urban haunters. But we wish to show that ‘uncanny’ or ‘spectral’ modernity is not captured under the universal metaphoric sign of a universal haunter, the ghost-as-metaphor, but the anxieties of changing urban modernities are best explored *locally*, by attending to the ethnographic *specificity* of its imagined haunters (Luckhurst 2002, 536, 541–2) and their affects. Rather than capture all these anxieties under the ambiguous and ubiquitous term ‘uncanny’, the affects these haunters express are much more akin to what Fisher calls ‘the eerie’, absences of familiar others, and the destabilizing signs of unknown *forces* (like capitalism) that transform the familiar spaces of the city into unfamiliar, strange, empty ones.

### Kajis in the Would-Be City

One year ago, the two of us went to Anaklia, a small village in western Georgia located on the Black Sea coast in Samegrelo, north along the coast near the breakaway region of Abkhazia. Having been occasionally a peripheral coastline of the Ottoman Empire with a small but strongly fortified seaport, Anaklia had previously served as a maritime outpost and trading zone. While the importance of Anaklia reduced significantly during Soviet and early post-Soviet times, recently the village has emerged at the centre of the Georgian state’s ambitious plan to turn it into a deepwater port city of global significance, ‘connecting Asia with Europe’. An intent to construct a large new settlement and a major economic hub under the name Lazika was unveiled by former president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili in 2011. The name Lazika was a reference to the Greco-Roman designation for this region, symbolically highlighting Georgia’s postcolonial search for the place in Europe (Maisuradze 2018). The aspirations to become more European meant the transformation of Anaklia at the border with Russian-controlled Abkhazia into a postmodern urban utopia. However, after the defeat of Saakashvili’s party to the Georgian Dream coalition in 2012, the incoming prime minister and country’s richest oligarch, Bidzina Ivanishvili, first suspended the project in the name of unfeasibility, and then the government revived the similar project under the name Anaklia. All these preceding infrastructural proposals laid a foundation for the latest rationale for this place that includes Anaklia in the Chinese-led ‘One Belt, One Road’ initiative, aimed at forming a transnational corridor and web of unprecedented logistics in Georgia to connect China with European markets (Aslanishvili and Gambino 2018). While the entire village settlement along the Black Sea coast was destroyed to free up the space for the deepwater port, the project has since been suspended due to new political struggles and overlapping geopolitical interests over the region. Hence, Anaklia today is an eerie place, as most buildings and port infrastructures are still empty or incomplete. Straddled between

rural and urban (dis)order, and between past and the future scenarios, Anaklia in this way emerges as a special place to study hauntings.

As we sat in one of the semi-urban cafes of Anaklia, a Megrelian woman in her sixties explained to us that there are human kajis coming to Anaklia from Adjara, a neighbouring region of Samegrelo, which has the largest Muslim population in the country. She raised her head in overt unease while portraying kajis as Muslim human beings with small horns and big beards. As she explained, human kajis conduct funerals among local Muslims living in the ‘Turkish neighbourhood’. What struck us was that kajis were spoken of not as certain rural spirits or ghosts very well known in western Georgian folklore and myth but as powerfully real creatures, apparently as human monsters who were Muslims, or, rather, Muslims who were kajis. To be sure, Muslims who acquired goblin-like qualities in Anaklia gestured towards the lack of humanity, because humanity, in a way, meant a moral condition that excluded Muslims (see Frederiksen 2020). Muslims, therefore, could not appear except as in a self-reversed apparition, as an embodiment of the goblin or an inversion of humanity that is never fully human. In fact, the woman seemed distressed when portraying the Muslims as kajis, which reminded us that the eerie effect is often and most easily produced when something that people hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before them in reality. For the woman we talked to, the mythical kajis were always a part of village imaginary, but they now came in real human shapes. Muslims as kajis were thus haunting Anaklia, unsettling the very presence of the place. In fact, kajis terrified the woman, for she had no idea what they might portend for the work-in-progress city. Suspended between modernity and tradition or between urban and rural realms, Muslims as kajis inspired a sense of uneasiness about not quite being modern.

Legendary kajis are anthropomorphic beings, basically horned goblins, which keep company with a bestiary of other fantastic beings on the margins of the villages of Georgia, small creatures called *chinkas*, and nymph-like succubi called *alis*. What the kaji, the chinka and the ali have in common is that they are legendary creatures; that is, stories told of them can be told ‘as true’ (what folklorists call ‘legends’). Encounters with such creatures can be narrated as having happened not far from here, down the road, to someone known to the narrator. These legendary creatures form a set of anthropomorphic others that taken together represent an inversion, an anti-model, of the age and gender categories of human society: the ali is a young maiden; the chinka is a child; the kajis comprise all the age and gender categories. For the most part, their physical monstrousness is minimal; largely they all differ from normal humans in that they lack human concerns for grooming (long hair and nails) and dress (they are nude or wear rags). In fact, the very act of grooming them can allow alis and chinkas to be domesticated or, in the case of kajis, make them go away. Their lack of physical attributes of civilized grooming and dress is matched by the alterity of their habitats, which are typically wild or deserted exterior places, typified by the woods. However, while the chinka and the ali are

basically homeless sprites (who can be domesticated), the eerie humanity of the kaji is displayed in the fact that they have their own homes, their own villages in erstwhile or primitive human-like habitations. Kajis, in this way, live in caves in cliffs and ruins, abandoned places of erstwhile human dwelling, and roads. Just as the kaji avoids domestic spaces and things, so, too, it cannot be domesticated even if it is caught.

The kaji, by contrast to the ali and the chinka, is therefore a complete stranger. While the kaji is the incarnation of a certain kind of alterity, the absolute *stranger*, it is also, in spite of its occasional monstrosity, very much imagined in an explicitly anthropomorphic fashion, having both sexual dimorphism and sexual reproduction. Moreover, kajis are the most *social* of all the goblins. The society of the kajis has all the attributes of a human society: 'The *Kaji* is tall in body, portly and has small arms, [but] like a man he has as customs: lamenting the dead. So consider the following, that *Kajis* even have a political order and life, too' (Korneli 1888, 2). Thus, the kaji, the most socially distant from humans and potentially the most physically monstrous and aggressive, is also paradoxically the most human and most social other. Unlike ghosts in North America, no one seems to derive pleasure from telling stories about kajis because these stories mark one as a backward and superstitious.

If the legendary kaji has fewer and fewer opportunities to star in narratives about encountering strangers on roads or in the woods and giving them a good thrashing, the other kaji, the 'slangy kaji', is no longer a fantastic anthropomorphic being but a real human, and has much clearer associations for city dwellers than its mythological counterpart. This kaji is no longer found near villages but only in cities. It no longer is found listed in a folkloric bestiary but in a dictionary of slang (Bregadze 2005). Here the kaji keeps company with another group of beings, called by names like *goimi* ('hick', meaning not a rural person in the village but one who is behaving like a villager in the wrong context), as well as a series of horned creatures: *jikhvi* ('ibex') and *rkiani* ('horned one'), often used together: *rkiani kaji* ('horned kaji'). A kaji, in this strongly derogatory sense, is defined largely by not knowing, or not caring, about general norms of urban civilized comportment; indeed, a general disregard for, or even aggression to, 'civilized' social norms is the defining feature of both the real and the metaphoric kaji. A kaji is a person out of place, a person who has crossed some major social boundary. As one of our friends put it succinctly, a human could become a kaji either by being a recent arrival from the village, in which case it was the enactment of village norms in the city that makes one a kaji, or by suddenly being elevated in rank or coming into a lot of money, in which case it was the way the person had moved in social hierarchy.

Drawing along these lines, there are really two kinds of such kajis in the city. The first kind are those who have crossed the spatial boundary between the village and the city without changing their behaviour appropriately. After a long period in which socialism restricted the movement of rural people through a system of urban residence permits, the lifting of these residence restrictions

meant that rural populations moved en masse into the city. This must have seemed like alarming numbers, changing the cultured environment of the city into 'a big village.' The second kind are the new elites, nouveau riche and other parvenus, whose movement in social space instead indexes the social mobility provided by the end of socialism. More recently, it appears, the term *kaji* can be used for the foreigners flocking to Tbilisi and investing in real estate. Like the *kajis* of Anaklia, foreigners from Turkey, Iran and the Gulf states are also seen as radical strangers. Their presence is registered both in the physical changes to the cityscape wrought by 'wild capitalism' and in the abrupt shifts in established orders of hierarchy and prestige created by these conditions. Strangers to the city are like the *kajis* of the village in that they cannot be domesticated simply by cutting their hair and nails, or washing their hair and giving them curls. The *kaji* is thus, paradoxically, very 'modern.' With each new crisis of sudden political and economic change in the city, a new variety of *kaji* is born.

Although *kajis* as outcasts mainly reside in narratives and daily conversation of urban Georgia, they do not 'stay there' but are accentuated by the media and politics. In fact, the current president of Georgia, Salome Zurbishvili, at an opposition rally in 2005 addressed her supporters by saying that 'the *Kajis* are not coming, they are going.' She referred to the then ruling United National Movement Party, now in opposition, which she identified as the *kajis* of Georgian politics. Her words were taken up by the media and *kajis* since then have become more frequently evoked in political struggles and urban protests in Georgia. Hence, *kajis* are not only coming; they also keep coming in larger numbers. The sense that they are not only aggressive but numerous is important, because it is their inexplicable presence distributed across the city that makes the city strange, unfamiliar, desolate and *eerie*.

### Spectres of (Post)coloniality

Spectral tropes in Georgia have a longer history and it is crucial to draw points of connection between past and present hauntologies and interrogate the spectral imaginations of those who are figured as Muslim *kajis*. While *kajis* of Anaklia keep coming from Adjara, Adjara itself is haunted by multiple human demons. These demons gesture towards the materiality of colonial configurations in the region, which uncover the play of the past and its continued presence. Indeed, alterity in Adjara is deeply embedded within the spectral apparitions connected to Russian and Ottoman colonial histories. Invocation of Christians as demonic ghosts and Turks as devils, in this sense, reinscribe such colonial histories of the place even as it is characterized as 'post' colonial. Ghosts, thus, seem to have not only morality but also politics in Adjara, evoking a haunting sense of history and presence (Stoler 2006).

The rearrangement of Russian and Ottoman colonial boundaries in western Georgia strongly challenged the lives of Muslim inhabitants. The Russian

Empire enforced colonial settlements and urban infrastructures by expropriating agricultural land in Adjara and depriving people of direct control over their surroundings. The Muslim peasantry and nobility hence expressed resistance towards the Russian imperial spatial transformations and an unequal social division that strengthened the movements for greater autonomy (Turmanidze 2009). These histories have left imprints in the dedjali mythology and legend, in the forms of spectral thinking and imagination, prevalent in the 19th and 20th centuries. If kajis became figures for alterity of Muslims, then Muslims in turn referred to Christians as dedjalis, denoting Christian demons with the potential to endanger Muslim livelihoods. A dedjali is a giant monster with red curly hair and a wide forehead, which reads 'qaf', meaning qafir or faithless in Arabic (Shioshvili 2010). It resides in the east, while being chained at the rock at the bottom of the sea. If a dedjali is unchained, it can bring the end of the world (Mgeladze 2010/2011). According to one of the folk tales, 'He (Dedjali) is a Christian, and he converts people to his faith by convincing them or deceiving them; if he is not able to convince people, then he beheads them with a sword' (cited in Shioshvili 2010, 53). As a Christian devil, a dedjali is thus endowed with the ability to destroy normal life and transgress the very inner souls of people by changing their religion. The civilizing efforts of Russian Empire in Adjara was, in this way, experienced not only as a material but also as spiritual dispossession and loss.

Dedjali mythology spirits were not being imagined solely in 'traditional' spiritual terms, as the souls stemming from spiritual worlds. The spectral imaginings took an ostensibly more 'modern' form, as the spirits were associated with the concepts of empire, infrastructure, Christianity and war. Thus understood, dedjalis emerged as objectifications of demonic potential residing inside all imperial subjects. These spirits evoked fears and animated a perceived threat oriented not only towards Russians but also Georgian Christians, whom Muslims saw as the embodiments of Russian colonial rule. These kinds of fears marked the salient difficulties of Muslim Adjarans in recognizing the 'civilizing' efforts of Russian colonial work on their territory. From these spectral evocations of alterity and dispossession, we thus see clearly the horizon against which the Muslim Adjarans marked themselves off. Both the discourses of colonial civilization and the very materiality of colonial infrastructure produced spectral visions and divisions, along human and non-human lines.

The modern devils in Batumi, then, begin to intersect, in ways similar to the colonial dispossession, with forms of spectral imaginings of alterity. If Dedjali had been a monster that evoked the fears of dispossession inflicted by the Russian colonialism, Eshmaki ('Devil') evokes anxieties oriented towards contemporary Turkey's economic domination over the city. Indeed, colonialism endures in the form of extraction and dispossession in contemporary Adjara (Khalvashi 2018). In the days of post-socialist neo-liberal restructuring, dispossession became 'a political logic' that rests on the entanglement of colonial and postcolonial modes of extraction (Abourahme 2018). These resurface around a

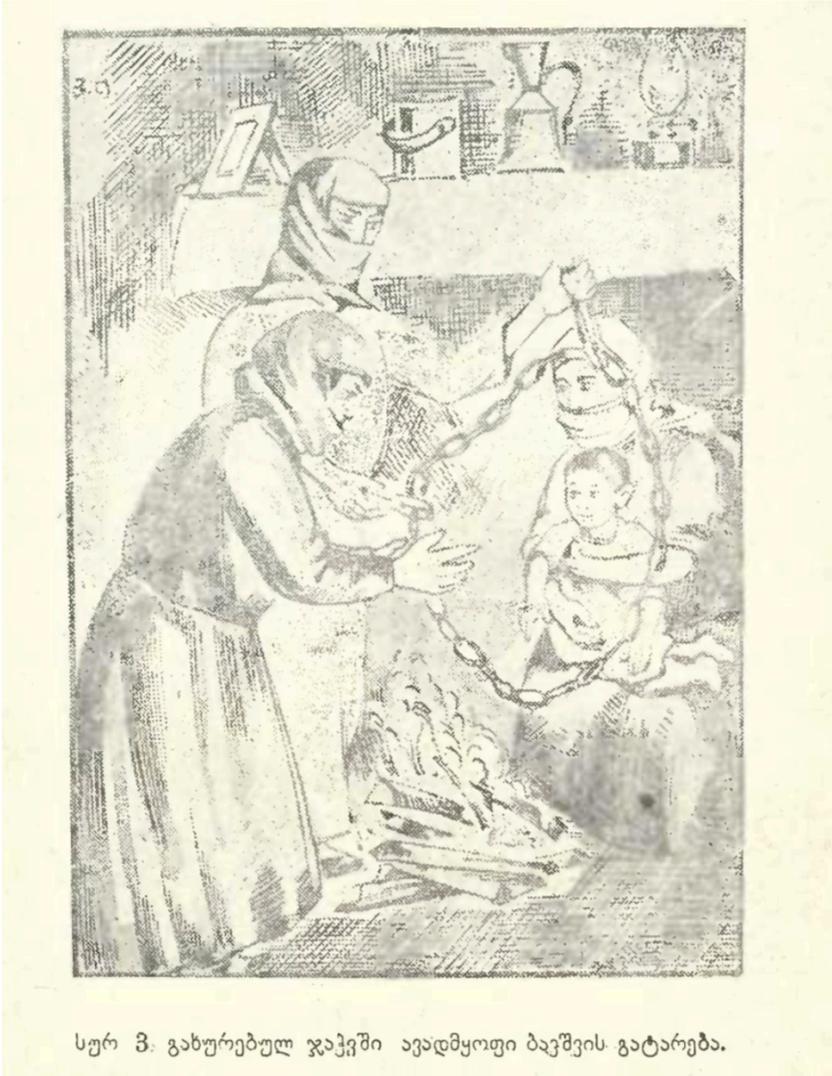
set of economic and urban anxieties (like debts, eviction and speculative construction), ecology (like hydroelectric dams) or geopolitical configurations (like Turkey or Russia) in Adjara. Financialization in light of massive unemployment, in fact, has produced a set of evictions in the capital city, Batumi. A kind of material dispossession thus spurred the narratives of spiritual eviction from humanity itself. Those who borrowed money from Turkish moneylenders or micro financial organizations indeed started to refer to Turks as ‘devils’ (*eshmaki*) or non-humans (*araadamiani*). It is not only Turks who have appeared as devils but also their Georgian partners who started to work for them. The classic binary division between colonized and colonizer, or between victim and perpetrator, that underpins such colonial experiences, does then not hold for this case. The devils are both insiders and outsiders at the same time for they share the eviction from humanity. In other words, human devils no longer bear the traits of humanity.

### Spectres of Bad Mood

Certain demons and ghosts have in this way been at the centre of not only colonial but also postcolonial modernity projects in Georgia for a long time. This is why ghosts and spirits are often the objects of total banishment in various modernity projects to guarantee the succession of history from religious to secular, nonrational to rational or traditional to modern continuum. Soviet and post-Soviet modernity projects in Georgia demonstrate these efforts by making ghostly imaginaries abject. Yet, as Avery Gordon (2008) reminds us, disappeared spirits do not remain hidden away but reappear both as eerie apparitions and real human beings, as well as negative moods, atmospheres and affects.

Some of the most restrictive policies oriented towards the banishment of spectral apparitions were crafted and implemented precisely in the name of Soviet modernity. Indeed, portrayal of village people as duped by superstitious beliefs in goblins, like *uzhmuris*, suggest that the spirits were important figures of abjection in Soviet modernity project, as they unsettled the linear history of Soviet modern life. In their ghostly shapes, *uzhmuris* are spectral reminders of absent presences that serve as a boundary between outer and inner space. In some versions, *uzhmuris* are found in swamps or industrial ruins, and they are evil spirits that mainly haunt children and pregnant women. Like *jinn*, *uzhmuris* occupy a realm of the unseen, escaping human perception. People haunted by *uzhmuris* are subject to folk prayers in order to get rid of these evil spirits. Although they are spirits of rural nature, they can be associated with humans and dwell in urban areas too. It can cause illness and grumpiness, hence people with ill temper are called *uzhmuri*. *Uzhmuri*s thus can turn out to be real and corporeal.

The hauntings and healings of *uzhmuris* described by Georgian ethnographers during Soviet times (see Figure 3.1) convey the clash between



**Figure 3.1:** Healing a child haunted by uzhmuri through passing her through warmed chains in Adjara, 1935 (a drawing made by Vale Ilyushin for Jemal Noghaideli's book *Ethnographic Study of Adarians' Everyday Life*).

**Source:** Noghaideli (1935).

secular and spiritual worldviews at the time. Local Soviet ethnographers described these spirits as remnants of the past imbedded in outdated tradition and superstition that subverted the modern Soviet ways of life. The presence of such views in fact pushed spiritual beliefs and their occult

traditions behind, and became sources of shame embedded in the realization of one's own alterity. Small wonder, then, that one detects the deeply felt polarity about such traditions today, even though these spirits are still believed to continue haunting people and places.

Indeed, trying to portray spectral narratives about uzhmuri as indexing a backward superstitiousness is manifested in the film *Uzhmuri*, made by an early Georgian woman director, Nutsa Ghoghoberidze, in 1934. According to the plot, a large field of uzhmuri in Samegrelo is the residence of 'a green toad queen'. The Soviet government, in the name of industrialization, decides to build a canal along this field, but the villagers are against it, not least because of the belief in evil spirit of the field. Here Megrelian peasants are defined in opposition to communists. They epitomize the resistance to hand over the lands to the Soviet government. As such, peasants are portrayed as irrational figures and class enemies who resist the Marxist-Leninist project of modernization. Hence, the communist planners do not take seriously the villagers' worries about the field of uzhmuri, and they enter the field; they are nearly swallowed by the swamp but eventually rescued by their fellow communists. The film went through multiple censorships, and the director was later deported to a concentration camp in the Russian arctic, while the set designer, Petre Otskheli, was put to death during the Stalinist purges. The film producers, in this way, were made invisible by the Soviet state as the unseen and mysterious creature of the uzhmuri living in the fields of Samegrelo.

With the sudden and unexpected collapse of state socialism in the 1990s, uzhmuri as a sign of ill-temperedness became part of the everyday life. Individuals who had hitherto been mostly *haunted by* uzhmuri suddenly found themselves to *be* uzhmuri. In contemporary urban slang, similarly to the term *kaji*, the term uzhmuri thus moved from denoting an object of superstitious belief to denote a category of people who themselves are like uzhmuri, having a toxic character that can be contagious for relationships and surroundings. The *kaji* and the uzhmuri thus have in common that they are slang terms for people whose aggressive behaviour or toxic bad moods make them incompatible with ordinary ordered social and urban life; they are, so to speak, 'monsters from the Id' (to borrow a phrase from the science fiction film *Forbidden Planet*). This mysterious origin of uzhmuri could be easily accounted for socio-economic demise and the concomitant emergence of pervasive grumpiness. But uzhmuri were not simply understood by people in western Georgia as being caused by raising socio-economic inequality and the omnipresent unemployment or poverty. Instead, they were caused by unpredictable forces that took the same enigmatic, capricious and gloomy shapes that often characterize the post-socialist political world.

In this sense, uzhmuri, in urban slang, can be understood as an affect that can be transmitted from person to person (Brennan 2004) or that can create a toxic miasmatic atmosphere, so you could say it is literally 'in the air'. According to

Teresa Brennan, ‘the transmission of affect’ is what influences us from without, either from other people, externally, or from the outside, the outer environment. Uzhmuri, in this way, emerges not solely out of the interiority of human subject but is generated from outside of human interiority. This is perhaps why most human uzhmuri are perceived with some sense of humour in Georgia because the grumpiness and ill-temperedness of a person is not conceived solely as her/his own property. Instead, uzhmuri people are perceived as manifestations of that which is beyond their direct control. As a person becomes a magnet for another’s bad mood or inner tension, it does so because of the affective forces of the outside, which is the residence of uzhmuri.

It seems critical to understand that uzhmuri, like dedjalis, eshmakis or kajis, all manifest spectres of multiple alterities in Georgia. What they have in common, however, is that they are the kinds of goblins that refashion themselves from being monstrous, unseen creatures into being real human beings. In moving from their erstwhile haunts to haunt the spaces of modernity and/or the nation, and in transitioning from non-human to human creatures, they emanate and transmit eerie affects. By turning from goblins to corporeal human beings, they therefore highlight the specific, lived experiences of ghostliness, both internal and external and not a generalized, metaphoric condition of spectrality.

### Orcs or Kajis?

‘How can I not like this [festival] in Anaklia, am I Kaji, or what?’ explained a woman in the would-be port city of Anaklia in an interview with a Georgian journalist. The journalist was investigating local perceptions about Anaklia becoming the place of an electronic music festival named Kazantip in 2014. It was one of the world’s largest electronic music festivals, whose booming rhythms and bass beats spread across the Black Sea, and it sparked a sharp reaction from the powerful Georgian Orthodox Church as well as conservative civic activists. They marched to Anaklia from the capital, Tbilisi, and organized a series of protests against the festival for its perceived immorality. Yet, the residents of Anaklia, whose livelihoods depended mostly on agriculture, had looked forward to the festival, hoping to cash in on the influx of tourists who had been expected to attend the festival in large numbers. ‘Nobody is against these festivals’, emphasized 55-year-old Merab. ‘The only people against it are outsiders.’ Paradoxically, kajis, who normally came to the capital from the village or were imagined as Muslim goblins, now appeared as Christian conservatives flocking to the village from the capital of Georgia. A woman, who emphasized that she did not consider herself to be a kaji to oppose the rave-fest, highlighted that for her kajis are now conservative urbanites from Tbilisi.

Kajis have indeed moved from the margins to the conservative mainstream. For the liberal urbanites in Tbilisi, kajis in this way have become equated with

orcs from Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.<sup>2</sup> The orc identity is simultaneously reclaimed as demonic and used as an epithet for anti-Western conservatives among Georgian liberal elites. The term 'orc' has been taken up by liberals and used for a wide range of things: the orc is someone who is nostalgic for Soviet times, pro-Russian and ultra-conservative. The orc thus remains a fighting character and it is a metaphor for the 'Russia versus the West' tension in Georgia's geopolitical imaginary. So, orcs, like kajis, stand for internal darkness, meaning that both kajis and orcs are negative projections in need of abjection from the national body. The savagery of kajis, however, is transformed into a primal strength for orcs, as they form politically driven neo-conservative groups and act as only real and true residents of the city.

Since the outbreak of recent protests under the name 'Shame Movement' in Georgia in June 2019, kajis and orcs have made quite a comeback, and have done so in contradiction with each other. The protests broke out after Sergei Gavrilov, a Communist Party member of the Russian Duma, visited Tbilisi through the Interparliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy and sat in the chair reserved by protocol for the head of the parliament. The opposition marches inevitably compared the Georgian government to traitors and the system as run by orcs. The connection between the orcs and the Georgian government epitomized the rejection of the West, rendering the ultra-conservative groups of Georgia into a weapon against the West. On the other hand, the urbanite conservatives or the supporters of the government referred to the opposition who blocked the central streets of Tbilisi as kajis in need of wiping out from public spaces.<sup>3</sup> They were worried not only about the threats to the government that these protests imposed but also about the modern urban order that had been disrupted by multiple tents and bonfires used by the opposition. These discussions have found their habitat not only on the streets of Tbilisi but also on the internet. The internet has become a new bestiary of creatures real and demonic. Both orcs and kajis were perceived to have their trolls on the internet, working either for the government or the opposition.<sup>4</sup> While streets were haunted by human devils, the internet was haunted by virtual ones.<sup>5</sup>

The changing forms of traditional characters show the ability of goblins to update themselves; they reveal something about the emotional and affective contents that social changes entail. Hence, a multitude of non-human beings in human appearances intervene and are on the rise in daily urban lives of Georgia. They become manifest in times of societal, political or urban crisis, which makes spectral geographies particularly important to explore anthropologically. Spectral apparition then 'is a visible indicator that something is very wrong ... and the thing that is wrong is that it is not really finished yet' (Wagner 2012, 35). As Anthony Vidler argues elsewhere in *The Architectural Uncanny*, buildings and cities, like human bodies, may 'fall ill' and even die (1999). Vidler's sentiment echoes the Georgian cities, which experience the constant breakdown of infrastructures, buildings and streets, making the cities look sick. However, urban forms in Georgian cities are not only like sick human bodies

but also like evil spirits, while being intruded upon by unfinished construction sites and the ruins of never-materialized future cities. To be sure, incomplete urban forms, just like goblins, are not something that were once felt domestic and rendered strange in the process, as Vidler would have it. Instead, they, very much like kajis, intrude as total strangers, and this strangeness is the property of the space itself. So, the ruins of Anaklia are different from ruins of post-war cities or archaeological ruins as described by Vidler, because these ruins have never been rendered intimate or been made familiar to the community. This is why while Vidler stays close to the notion of the uncanny to underline the hidden terrors of the domestic environment evoked by modernity or post-war displacement: future cities, like Anaklia, evoke eeriness. As argued in the introduction to this chapter, eeriness is evoked by spaces and bodies that have never been domesticated or rendered familiar. In this sense, Mark Fisher's definition of the eerie as a property of place best captures our argument:

A sense of the eerie seldom clings to enclosed and inhabited domestic spaces; we find the eerie more readily in landscapes partially emptied of the human. What happened to produce these ruins, this disappearance? What kind of entity was involved? What kind of thing was it that emitted such an eerie cry? (2016, 11)

Urban forms in Georgia are eerie because the assumed modernity itself is materially incomplete. Thus, the ruins of the future city haunting Anaklia are eerie, and the familiar agents, people, are missing, but we don't know what eerie agencies replaced them. And, as the Georgian proverb goes, devils take possession of abandoned churches.<sup>6</sup> Much like human devils, who are deemed to have bodily weight and flesh but are still devoid of humanity, unfinished cities form part of spectral modernity that are deemed to be devoid of modern urbanity. Empty and incomplete buildings or infrastructures are, thus, like demons themselves. What defines cities and humans as being eerie is then that they evoke similar affects related to alterity and estrangement. The Georgian cities and goblins do not simply designate alterity in terms of modernity; they gesture towards certain obscure vicinities between internal and external, modern and non-modern, and human and non-human entities. Much like in Amazonia, where there is a particular configuration of distinctions between humans and non-humans (Viveiros de Castro 1998), Georgian goblins are irreducible to Western distinctions between nature and culture. Goblins are perceived as humans and non-humans at the same time, as they adopt the human bodies, and this adoption is what differentiates them from Western ghosts. While devils and cities in Georgia reveal human or urban forms, they hide non-human and non-urban souls.

It is in this sense that there are forces larger than individual people, or even larger than groups, that affect people in Georgia, generating more goblins, which appear either from within people themselves, or from outside, or

both. In this sense, the unleashing of some kind of metaphysical being can be as much generated by dominant and powerful social forces as it could be by minority or marginalized groups. This is not the same kind of phenomenon as described by Stanley Cohen (2011 [1972]) in that the fears and anxieties expressed in this chapter do not appear to be threatening the wider social fabric; instead, the changes in the wider social and urban fabric appear to be threatening the people. This difference highlights the main point made by Cohen: that the moral panics and folk devils he studied were ones seen by people who felt themselves to be part of a dominant social group, whose values were somehow being threatened by some kind of intervening group, individual or phenomenon. This does not appear to describe what this chapter outlined. Instead, it demonstrated how wider political, economic and social changes in Georgia are experienced by people as disruptive, and thus unleashing some demons.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> According to Hegel, the *Weltgeist* ('world spirit') is not an actual object or a transcendental, Godlike thing but a means of philosophising about history. *Weltgeist* is realized in history through the mediation of various *Volkgeister* ('national spirits').
- <sup>2</sup> See a newspaper article where one of the liberal politicians refers to the opposition as Orcs: 'Ugulava: me da gabašvils aeroportš'i, sapasporto kontrolis zonaši orkebi t'avs dagvesxnen' (*Tabula*, 9 December 2019, <http://www.tabula.ge/ge/story/161357-ugulava-me-da-gabashvils-aeroportshi-sapasporto-kontrolis-zonashi-orkebi-tavs>).
- <sup>3</sup> One outspoken government supporter insisted that the opposition protest had to be forcefully dispersed and the blocked streets cleaned from the protesters and their tents: "Es sak'ajet'i karvebian-kasrebianad xom ar gavabrzanot' rus'tavelidan? Amovidnen qełši ra..." (*Resonance Daily*, 11 November 2019, [http://resonancedaily.com/index.php?id\\_rub=1&id\\_artc=82878](http://resonancedaily.com/index.php?id_rub=1&id_artc=82878)).
- <sup>4</sup> One Facebook page is called Orcs in Georgian, aimed at caricaturing the conservative mainstream of the country, therefore presumably associated with the liberals: <https://www.facebook.com/orkebi/>
- <sup>5</sup> In December 2019 Facebook shut down hundreds of fake Facebook pages and groups linked to the government in Georgia: 'Georgian Authorities Appear Linked to Hundreds of Fake Facebook Pages' (*JAMNews*, 21 December 2019, <https://jam-news.net/georgian-authorities-appear-linked-to-hundreds-of-fake-facebook-pages/>).
- <sup>6</sup> As the Georgian proverb puts it, if devils (*eshmakebi*) take over (*ep'at'ronebian*: 'become a patron to') an abandoned (*up'at'rono*: 'having no patron') church, an abandoned (*upatrono*: 'without a patron') city becomes the property of *kajebi* (lit. 'horned devils', also 'hicks') (Abrahamishvili and Bolkvadze 2003, 29, cited in Manning 2009, 90).

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