

'Eaten for a Word': the Intersection of Food and Revolution in Russia.

by

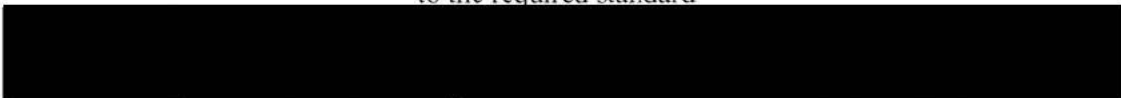
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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the linkages between food and revolution in Russia, from 1850 to the present. Food is examined as both material and symbol, and situated in notions of hunger, consumption, power relationships and identity formation. The paper begins by discussing the writing of the populist A.N. Engelgardt within the context of common views of the peasants in the late-nineteenth century. The second chapter looks at the 1905 and 1917 Revolutions as they relate to food politics and class identity through the writings of Andrei Bely and Victor Pelevin. The final chapter discusses the social and literary theory of M.M. Bakhtin, specifically of the carnival and banquet traditions, and reflects on the relationship between his philosophy and the historical reality of Stalin's government, the Gulag labour camps, and the politics of consumption. The conclusion touches on some contemporary Russian literature, notably of Victor Pelevin and Andrey Kurkov, which respond to events since the Revolution of 1917.

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Introduction

In my opinion, there never is a situation where one can actually know and foresee things with an absolute certainty. For the human will, intent on immediate self-realization at all costs, forms an integral part of the "ripe" situation as part of its objective relations.

—Georg Lukács, "Bolshevism as an Ethical Problem"

This paper will explore the relationship between food and the Russian Revolution. Various histories of the Revolution have highlighted the complementary pressures of agricultural crisis, shortages of urban bread supply, and the frequency of famine and war as direct instigators of the social unrest that resulted in one of the most documented and influential political changes of modern times. This is not so strange if one thinks of the relation that food has to politics for the individual consumer once its supply is challenged. Therefore, food is easily one of the most critical manifestations of political and social conditions (and conditionings) into the private space of the citizen. With food—its quality, its supply, and its class implications—comes a variety of "external" signs that reflect on the individual. The externality of these can, of course, be questioned, in that there is never a clear demarcation between the public and private, the political and familial, and other vagaries of a social life. What food does achieve, though, is a materialising of the politics of health, nationality, class, and many other life-values of the individual. One can picture the modern-day organics buyer or the vegetarian; or one who aims to support local or national farming in an age of international agriculture. There are also the individuals who buy beyond their means to project a certain socio-economic status. These examples do not even begin to approach the present-day political paradox between wealth and value in the "North's" access to the majority of the world's "Southern"-produced food-goods. It could be said, then, that the abstraction of the political in our lives is grounded and represented by the food we buy and consume. Political identities are produced and consumed daily within the home. With food, the choices we make or choose not to make are reflections of our politicised identities.

Roland Barthes has called food "a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour" (50). To say that codes of social behaviour and communication are represented by and embodied within the culinary is to establish the symbolic nature of this most important of human materials. In stressing the societal role played by this material, one also affirms the relationship of class identity to food, in the sense of both material and symbolic dimensions. My discussion in this paper will use food as a means to exploring the division between these two logistical realms, focusing on class formation before and during the Russian Revolution through the literature and letters of the day. I will look at how the lower classes were revolutionised in order to revolutionise society, how the individual became the foodstuff of social change or, as Bakhtin said,

"carnivalised" into a new mode of being. I will employ Bakhtin's notion of the carnival feast to explore the ways in which this took place: discussing the historical Revolution itself as an example of the carnival, and suggesting similarities between the changes in folk-identity of this period and the capacity for change which Bakhtin invests within the somatic "series" of his carnival feast.

Bakhtin's best known work, *Rabelais and His World*, presents a theory of the role of food in relation to human labour in the world. This exploration of labour has obvious and appropriate resonance with historical materialism, especially given the stress on labour within the rhetoric of the Russian Revolution itself. For Bakhtin, the banquet is human labour culminated in food, and is important as a highly symbolic social event. If we compare this to Barthes' view that "an entire 'world' (social environment) is present in and signified by food" we encounter some important similarities (54). Firstly and basically, both Barthes and Bakhtin share a basic anthropological assumption of food as ritual. It provides the venue or occasion of social communication and activity. Secondly, and more strikingly, food is also seen as a producer of the social reality. By embodying social production (i.e. labour), food transfers the material of the world (in its most basic of consumable forms) into the human sphere, thereby helping to define that world, and thus producing the social environment that Barthes speaks of. In Bakhtin, this socially-productive aspect of food is described in more detail.

Bakhtin's notion of the banquet is not merely an instance of food being eaten, of food 'behaviours,' but something that is *a priori* to the collective and social. The banquet is the coming together of individuals to represent their own struggle in the world. This act of eating does not only define the social environment, it is also an act of empowerment that symbolises human control over the world:

Work triumphed in food. Human labor's encounter with the world and the struggle against it ended in food, in the swallowing of that which had been wrested from the world. As the last victorious stage of work, the image of food often symbolized the entire labor process. (281)

Not only are food and labour linked in this way but, as Bakhtin stresses, they overlap with each other. Food both is, and is of, labour:

There were no sharp dividing lines; labor and food represented the two sides of a unique phenomenon, the struggle of man against the world, ending in his victory. It must be stressed that both labour and food were collective; the whole of society took part in them. Collective food as the conclusion of labor's

collective process was not a biological, animal act but a social event. (281)

This collectivity ritualises the peoples' power: it enacts a geophagous "swallowing" of the wrested world, it "triumphs over the world, devours it without being devoured [...] The limits between man and the world are erased, to man's advantage" (281). Food is thus a "social event" of simultaneous production and consumption; it is the culmination of labour and the human contest with (or in) the world. Food is the mediation and union of the two artificially isolated worlds of the 'social' and 'material' environments.

Attending to this distinction allows for a further nuance to be made. If Barthes' definition of "world" can continue to be interpreted as the "social environment" present in food, then the banquet can become a swallowing of the *social* surrounding as well as that of the material world which Bakhtin describes. In this way, the feast, already a result of how people produce and consume the world (thereby producing their social reality), also becomes a simultaneous consumption of the image of that social world. That is to say, the collective consumes its social semblance as it consumes the world.

This interplay of consumption and production will become quite important in this paper as I argue the manner in which food and notions of revolution have interacted in Russia since the late-nineteenth century. Ideologues in Russia have a tradition of using images of food and hunger in their political rhetoric, greatly influenced by the dominance of agriculture in issues of social disparity and economics. The movement towards revolution was based upon the collective: a social solidarity found in the strategic union of the underprivileged and those speaking for them. Food was active in actualising this collectivity. Firstly, the basic hunger of the lower classes helped to politicise and mobilise a group of disparate individuals. In hunger (for food and for political power) they began the labour of producing a new "social world." Secondly, and closely related to this hunger but not necessarily a product of it, images of food became the means to this class-collectivity: they articulated a strategic revolutionary identity for the disenfranchised to adopt. The most interesting and complex culmination of this tradition of food imagery is found in the work of the twentieth-century social and literary philosopher Mikhail M. Bakhtin, particularly in his theories of feast and carnival. As I will discuss, Bakhtin's ideas are based in a materialism which is predicated in the work of Marx, and closely linked with notions of production and consumption. Bakhtin's ideas also serve to highlight the extension of the revolutionary hunger I have described, as it was realised in the sinister collectivity of Stalinism, particularly the labour camps of the Gulag.

Louis Marin has written that "all cookery involves a theological, ideological, political, and economic operation by the means of which a nonsignified edible foodstuff is

transformed into a sign/body that is eaten" (121). The semiological materialism Marin presents has its origin in Marx's historical materialism. Marin's "cookery" suggests the social and political occasions in which food occurs, as I have already begun to touch on, while also recognising food as the carrier of the signs and metaphors which serve to create the ideological. Marin's notion of food is thus related to my claim that political representations of food and class were closely tied to the formation of revolutionary identities. Strikingly, this idea that the sign provides a material basis for the ideological appears in the work of the so-called "Bakhtin circle" of the 1920s, particularly in V.N. Volosinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*.¹ In it, Volosinov establishes that "ideology may not be divorced from the material reality of sign" (21). For Volosinov, ideology is not merely an abstract aspect of consciousness but a tangible materiality, situated in the objects of the world. Furthermore,

consumer goods, just as tools, may be combined with ideological signs, but the distinct conceptual dividing line between them is not erased by the combination. Bread is made some particular shape; this shape is not warranted solely by the bread's function as a consumer good; it also has a certain, if primitive, value as an ideological sign. (10)

Thus, food, as a physical material, carries with it the various ideological accessories it has been invested with. Once more, we encounter food as a defining part of the labourer: food is both a product and producer of the social identity of those who consume it. Marx himself has written that the human subject

begins to distinguish himself from the animal the moment he begins to *produce* his means of subsistence, a step required by his physical organization. By producing food, man indirectly produces his material life itself [...] As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with what they produce, with *what* they produce and *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions which determine their production. (*The German Ideology* 409)

¹I will refer to this work as Volosinov's throughout my paper, regardless of the controversy over authorship that has claimed the work as Bakhtin's own over the last twenty-five years. Although there are frequent and obvious linkages or shared concepts between the writings of both from this period (late 1920s), a logical reason why Bakhtin would choose to publish a book—and one which appeals to the dominant political ideology more than any others he wrote before or after it—under a pseudonym when he himself was not yet under the scrutiny of censors or police, in my view, does not present itself.

It would be too easy to take from this a statement to the effect that people become food at the time they produce it. However, there is a subtlety in what Marx says that should be recognised. If food is burdened with the political, as I have suggested, then the individual who eats it is taking part in that political reality. Moreover, if we follow Marx, not only does the individual consume the ideological along with the material food, but he or she is consequently made "consumable" for political purposes through the relationship with his or her food that has been established. This paper will be an exercise in showing how this production of consumable people was achieved in the Russian Revolution.

Because of the historical situating of this discussion, I have chosen to follow a timeline roughly synchronous with the history of the Revolution, from the populist movement in the late-nineteenth century to present attempts to understand Russia's communist period. Not only is such a structure the best means for expressing the development and construction of class and ideology in Russia over this period, it will also allow for Bakhtin's thought to be properly understood within its social and historical contexts. Such a concern with historical contexts was important in Bakhtin's own development of his ideas. In *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel*, Bakhtin writes: "Where there is no passage of time there is also no *moment* of time [...] If taken outside its relationship to past and future, the present loses its integrity, breaks down into isolated phenomena and objects, making of them a mere abstract conglomeration" (146). However, even though the paper follows a chronology of the Revolution, I cannot stress enough that this is not another history of the Revolution. Immense vaults of theories have been dedicated to the populists and Bolsheviks at the turn of the century, to the rise of communism in Russia, and to Stalin's reign. I do not wish to contribute directly to this field, although much of my research has benefited from it. What interests me is to explore the metaphors of food and consumption, tracing them through Russian literature and political writings from the late-nineteenth century to the present day. It should be noted from the start that such a time frame provides a broad background for a rather specific topic. In light of this, I will touch briefly on specific periods or ideas I feel are important in demonstrating the development of the union between revolution and food in Russia. I wish to establish that there is more than a mere accidental or tacit situating of the *political* within the *consumable* when encountering Russian thought; in fact, the ability to eat was not something accorded to all. This is important. To eat, regularly and well, was itself a highly politicised act in Russia, and it was an act that was predicated on a highly charged and inequitable "consuming" of food-related labour.

In the pre-Revolutionary years, the influential poet-revolutionary of the Bolsheviks, Vladimir Mayakovsky, wrote three brief lines that link this notion of food as class symbol with the promise of an impending violent change to both society and the individual:

Eat pineapples
Guzzle grouse
Your last day draws near, bourgeois... (16)

My first section will discuss food as a sign of class in the theories of the populists, a group that was in many ways the ideological precursor to the Bolsheviks. At times romantic and humanist, the populists felt that the newly freed peasant class (i.e. liberated serfs of the Emancipation of 1861) represented both Russia's purer past and the potential future for the country. Their back-to-the-land philosophies were firmly based in an acknowledgment of the social potential within the peasant (a very progressive view), and a situating of political change within continued agricultural reform. One could say that their dual concern with the peasant class and Russia's farmland represents the foundation of the union between food and revolution in Russia. My discussion of the populists will focus on A.N. Engelgardt's *Letter from the Country, 1872-1887*, a series of dispatches to a progressive political and literary journal out of St. Petersburg, written while he was 'internally exiled' on his family estate. I will use his letters to illustrate the important call for reform that the populists were responsible for, how these views were frequently threatening for the Tsarist government, and how the populists engaged in a problematic stereotyping of peasant identity that contributed to the eventual disintegration of their school. Thus, the first chapter will document the way in which images of food and hunger were employed by the intelligentsia to describe social disparity and to popularize notions of collectivity.

The following section will describe the actual role food played in the Revolutions of 1917. Food was an explosive issue in Russia at the turn of the century; the agrarian strikes, bread shortages, and all-consuming wars that Russia had spent most of the last hundred years fighting contributed to the downfall of Imperial Russia. In actively connecting "bread" with worker identities, and in reinforcing the political nature of the underclasses' hunger, the Bolsheviks and other revolutionaries gave direction to the popular movement. This section will look at the material-symbolic relationship of the October cry of "Bread, Land, Peace" and will suggest some ways in which class identity, particularly that of the relatively new proletariat, was something that could be taken on at will (the symbol of the "overcoat" in Russian literature is significant here). This section will look to Andrei Bely's 1916 novel, *Petersburg*, and to Victor Pelevin's 1996 novel, *Buddha's Little Finger*, for a discussion of the ways in which class identity, food, and revolution were inextricably linked and brought

to a political culmination in the rise of Russian communism. Thus, the second chapter will explore the manner in which food as material and symbol helped to actualise the collective mentioned above: both serving to mobilise diverse groups within the population into rebellion and helping to produce a sense of class identity among the revolutionaries.

From these circumstances, I will draw linkages in the next section to Mikhail M. Bakhtin, who was active in 1920s intellectual circles. I will use this chapter to suggest possible similarities between fluctuations in class identity and the "series" of food, drink, sex, body, defecation and death that are a part of Bakhtin's social and literary theory of the carnival. This section will summarise how the political and literary representations of class identity helped to "prepare" or "produce" the folk for revolution, how the Revolution itself served to bring these people into the "body politic" (i.e. the collective), how Stalin's rise to power, and his subsequent protection of his dictatorship took the form of a "consuming" of the Russian people, and how this process concluded in the "defecation" (if not the defection) of the eaten population, often to enforced labour and death. As Bakhtin suggests, the carnival is often a temporary 'feast' of cultural renewal, followed by the reinscribed and often reinforced power dynamic that existed before. Alexandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* and *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* will be important pieces for showing how the revolution was, itself, a brief carnival feast followed by the political fast of Stalin's reign. Solzhenitsyn is also important in his acceptance of the simultaneous reality of the actual and the symbolic while searching for the 'truth' behind this part of Russia's history. In this section, I will also touch upon aspects of Bakhtin's own life, and the possible resonance issues of food, hunger and consumption could have had with his own experiences and the development of his philosophy under Stalin.

I will then conclude this paper by further exploring the notion of death through consumption, as well as the agency of laughter in Bakhtin's carnival, illustrating how contemporary novelists have reacted to the communist era in Russia through these two frames. This brief final section will look at how current writers such as Victor Pelevin and Andrey Kurkov introduce an interplay of laughter and death into their fiction, and how they represent the varied Russian past with wit, sarcasm, and irony. These contemporary writers frequently push the interplay of food and consumption with identity into what could be termed a carnivalesque variation of this Russian rhetorical tradition.

Before continuing, it should be mentioned that the majority of the works I will discuss in this paper are works in translation. There are always possible problems that could stem from this. Firstly, the ideas I base some of my interpretation on are always already interpreted. I am therefore using sources which are necessarily mediated, and thus somewhat fallible. In another sense, though, there is a benefit in approaching works whose

words are never "original" and whose ideas must be encountered in the immediacy of the meaning they communicate. To explore the English translation of ideas whose limits are not constrained to Russian, even though their current manifestations may occur in a written Russian, is to recognise from the start the potential application or extension of these ideas. It also acknowledges the unrepeatable nature of an isolate idea. Ironically, within the discipline of translation there is often the assumption that previous translations of a given work were unable to achieve a true representation of that work. It is with an understanding of the fallibility in my own work, and in the work that supports my ideas, that I move forward. Where possible, particularly in relation to passages in which I have focussed on specific aspects of the actual language or grammar used, I have tried to verify the intent of the original versus its representation in translation. I have made it clear in the text where this is the case.

There are some other considerations to remark on before beginning this paper. I will continue under two basic assumptions: the notion of consumption can be applied equally to identity-politics as it can to economics, and a certain class division can be understood between the "folk" and the "cultural elite" or "ideologues." In *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer are quite clear that the culture industry is based upon a projection of the self onto the commodified and consumable world. The act of leadership, as well as the commercial event, are both integrated with the notion of an identity that has been constructed around the individual-consumer (who is very much homogenous with other individuals). Similarly, aligning the author's creation of a hero with the individual's conception of self, Bakhtin writes that "we are constantly looking and intently on the watch for reflections of our own life on the plane of other people's consciousness, and, moreover, not just reflections of particular moments of our life, but even reflections of the whole of it" (*Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity* 16). As he relates further, one can never fully grasp one's own life, its limits are always beyond the ability to know, and one can only know of the *whole* life of an other. Thus, the ideologues' representation of the "folk" became a reflection of self for many peasants, and thus a powerful image upon which to model themselves.

Adorno and Horkheimer write that the individual's "yardstick is self-preservation, successful or unsuccessful approximation to the objectivity of his function and the models established for it" (28). Thus, to participate in the everyday is to take part in a consuming of this (image of) self. In *Minima Moralia*, Adorno develops this idea:

The dual nature of progress, which always developed the potential of freedom simultaneously with the reality of oppression, gave rise to a situation where peoples were more

and more inducted into the control of nature and social organization, but grew at the same time, owing to the compulsion under which culture placed them, incapable of understanding in what way culture went beyond such integration. (146)

My paper will suggest that class identity in Russia became extremely fluid in the period leading to the Revolution, largely due to revolutionary pressures for the "integration" of one's identity into a "progressive" society that Adorno speaks of. Essentialised identities were both ascribed by others, as seen in the work of the populists to define and understand the peasantry, and made available—even distributed—to all, as seen in the adoption of revolutionary selves immediately following the workers' revolutions of 1917. This is very much what the epigraph from Lukács refers to: the "ripe"² situation of revolution was dependent upon the drive to embody the self within a revolutionary 'site.' The term "ripe" here is important in its suggestion of both the culinary as well as a certain selection process, as though choosing the reality—personal and social—from which future conditions may grow. In the case of the Russian Revolution, this was a society free of class power divisions, in which rampant individualism—the scourge of collectivist existence—would be eradicated.

For me to make my assertions based on class divisions, then, is to make rigid something I see as plastic, and is thus, at times, problematic. However, when looking to the "folk"—understood as both the peasants and the proletariat, that is, the multitude upon whom the physical enacting of the revolution had to rest—I assume that, as individuals, they were manipulated in some way into their revolutionary identity. As Adorno suggests, this manipulation was a process of consumption, both by the members of the folk and by those who fed social and political critiques to them. Therefore, food—or consumption—can be used in this metaphorical sense. At a more basic level, too, there is a valid distinction to be made between the peripheral folk and the artists and writers who represented them to the centre. For, as Lynn Visson writes, "the gap between the satiated and the starving" was one which was clearly visible in all of Russia at the time (69). And although it may not be said that all writers and *provocateurs* who were animating the folk were well-sated with

² The word is from the German "reif," which shares both of English's primary meanings of "ripe" and "of the right moment." The word has a long tradition of use in Marxist debate, particularly regarding determinism. The subject of Lukács' discussion here, and the fact that he places the word in quotation marks, suggests that he is responding to one of the earliest usages of the word in this context, found in Engels' *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (1850) in which Engels discusses the historical and political bases for a class' self-domination. An excellent history of the word ripe's usage in Marxist thought can be found in "The Political Economy of Utopia," the sixth chapter of Peter J. Boettke's *Calculation and Coordination: Essays on Socialism and Transitional Political Economy*, London: Routledge, 2001.

regular meals, the power-relationship—which, if anything in Russia, amounted to a food-relationship—is best understood as one between those who ate and those who were eaten.

Chapter One

I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landowners, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.

—Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal*...

In the subversive philosophies of the populist camp, folk-class identity was understood in terms of agriculture and food. From the Napoleonic Wars and the fighting in the Crimea to the agrarian revolts, the 1905 uprising, the Great War and revolution of 1917, the society was either in constant conflict or trying to recover from previous upset. The nineteenth century was therefore a time of great upheaval for Russian society. This social situation had profound effects on the well-being of Russians and the prevalence of hunger and famine which, in turn, brought further unrest. At the same time, though quite late relative to other European countries, the industrialisation of Russia was gathering force. This movement into industrial capitalism drastically changed the slavo-feudalism of the Romanov Empire. Over the course of a few decades, the Russian population experienced a rapid restructuring of land, money, and human capital. Like the wars, conflicts, and exiles during this time, the process of industrialisation initiated a heightened mobility among the populace, severing people from places of security and tradition while also allowing them to see the disparity of a more varied cross-section of society, and therefore politicising them. Many among the population sought a response to the confusion of this period.

At the height of the mid-nineteenth century, the Russian populists were in the midst of a heated debate that would eventually bring about their demise as a cogent school of contemporary thought. At issue was whether or not they, as educated members of society, were in a position to bring revolutionary ideals to the general populace—whether they could speak for and represent the true views of the peasants and workers. The opposing positions of this argument would, in the near future, be played out by the Bolshevik and Menshevik parties. In the typical Menshevik approach, the Revolution was expected to happen in the future through a gradual proletarian movement toward revolution (Marxist determinism). Fueled by the populist-influenced writing of Lenin, the Bolsheviks pursued a more immediate wresting of political control in the name of the people who would be taught the significance and need for the Revolution after the fact. Such an approach was established early on in Socialist circles.

Mikhail Bakunin, who was tremendously influential both internationally and among the Russian populists, felt that the "workers, regardless of the political and religious prejudices implanted in their mind, are *socialist without knowing it*" (101). Bakunin warns his audience that this proletariat, inherently socialist (and thus potentially revolutionary),

may resist you without suspecting that these ideas are only the most faithful expression of their own interests, that these goals carry in themselves the realization of their dearest wishes, and that the religious and political prejudices in the name of which they may resist these ideas and goals are on the contrary the direct cause of their continued slavery. (100)

In the familiar words of didacticism, Bakunin was giving voice to this debate, which would tear apart Russia's governments for decades to come. This was not something the populists could easily resolve. Ivan Turgenev, in his classic novel *Fathers and Sons*, has a character highlight the irony of this rather elitist debate among the intellectuals and reformers "while all the time the real question was getting daily bread to eat" (68).

Unsure of exactly who had the most to learn from whom, numerous educated Russians sought the rural peasants and workers, encouraged by the call of populist leaders to 'Go to the People.' These seekers — artists and poets, professionals and philosophers— were responsible for a much needed shift from romantic notions of the Russian countryside to an awareness of the oppressed and poor, the mistreated underclass of the agrarian world that made up nine-tenths of the country's population. Novelists, essayists, and visual artists played an important role in this shift in public perception. For many of them, the peasants represented a new people, a basic and earlier people, a "folk" possibly related to Rousseau's image of Man at the beginnings of society. These citizens of primordial means and methods held a different potential for those who viewed them, whether it be political, moral, societal, or artistic. "For here," writes Cathy Frierson, "was a group of educated members of society confronting something they found unsettling and strange —the peasantry— and they set out to conquer that unknown territory through description, through language, through texts that would facilitate understanding" (1992, 6).

Following the typical train of humanism, and perhaps seeking to grasp their future through a better understanding of the folk, the cultural elite rode out to the peasants in order to learn (and communicate to the rest of the population) what these people had to offer Russia. It was felt, or perhaps hoped, "that the essence of a just and equal society existed already in the Russian peasant commune [...] and constituted the cornerstone on which, so the populists maintained, a federation of socialized, self-governing units [...] could be erected" (Berlin 211). The populists' rather specific goal notwithstanding, it was generally felt that a wellspring of moral, political and economic potential could be found; "they were seeking not distinction from the peasants, but some kind of identification with them" and a model capable of guiding Russia into the approaching century (Frierson 1992, 9). So, as Marshall Berman suggests, the argument was *not* simply about getting enough daily bread

as we encountered in Turgenev, at least not for the educated elite. Berman writes that, generally, intellectuals "turn out to be dependent on the market not for bread alone but for spiritual sustenance—a sustenance they know the market cannot be counted on to provide" (118). The 'ride out to the country,' to Russia's past and hopefully its future, was thus a search for direction, for a political and spiritual sustenance—an original, basic food for thought.

Although A.N. Engelgardt did not ride out to his family's abandoned country estate in 1871 with the aim of simply learning from the peasants, he soon became one of the preeminent beacons of populist practice for Russia's progressives. Forced into 'internal exile' by the Tsarist government because of rebellious student meetings held under his rectorship in St. Petersburg, this prominent chemist and man of letters became one of the strongest voices researching, describing, documenting, and dispatching to the cities news of the agricultural reforms in the countryside and the people most affected by them—the peasants. Until this point, the peasants had been faceless and unknown, yet made up the majority of the population, and were thought to be more Russian than those reading about them. Engelgardt's *Letters from the Country* were immensely influential for the populists and bureaucrats of the day, as well as for the next generation of revolutionary thinkers, including Lenin. "Engelgardt declared that, in an era of nascent industrialization, urbanization, and professionalization, the future of Russia lay in the countryside and in the hands of the peasants" (Frierson 1993, 13). Like most populists, Engelgardt considered peasant issues (and thus the understanding of the peasant identity) and agricultural issues (and thus the means and methods of food practice and production) as the two central challenges facing Russia at the end of the nineteenth century. Because of his epistolary form, "he offered contradictory appraisals not only of 'the peasant' but also of the 'agrarian question,' that is, of prospects for and approaches to agricultural reform" (14). Although never recognizing this frequent shifting or qualifying of his stance on these two issues, Engelgardt's refreshingly candid and emphatic writing serves this discussion well by grounding the populist debate within the country—both in content and location. Furthermore, it is important to be aware of this rural situating of his letters as they were directed at an urban audience, one which was often eager to derive the general from the particular in the stories that thinkers such as Engelgardt exposed them to.

In 1861, the year of the Emancipation and ten years prior to Engelgardt's exile to the country, Ivan Turgenev created the original nihilist character, Bazarov, in *Fathers and Sons*. Bazarov shares a number of characteristics with Engelgardt himself, similarities which provide insight into the prevalence of this 'ride to the country.' Both are modern men of

science, organic chemists, who have departed from city life for the countryside, taking with them political positions that are unsavory to the elite of the day. Both Engelgardt and the character of Bazarov carry a populist mix of sympathy and design for the farming peasants, and conduct themselves in a way that shuns authority while elevating the everyday of the peasant (whether speech, clothing, or food habits) to a level equal with that of the higher social circles they come from. Near the close of his novel, Turgenev seems to signal the deterioration of Bazarov's delusions of equanimity in a frustrated attempt to communicate with a local farmer. "Alas for Bazarov, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously; Bazarov who knew how to talk to the peasants (as he had boasted when arguing with Pavel Petrovich) —Bazarov the self-confident did not for a moment suspect that in their eyes he was after all nothing but a sort of buffoon." He is also, of course, "gentry," as the peasants call him in explaining away his attempted conversation with them (218). Similarly, when reading Engelgardt we must remain aware of his gentry roots, however disarming his figure is for visitors from the city who encounter him in his peasant's wool trousers and sheepskin boots. Such a reminder is not to isolate class and freeze Engelgardt into it, but to acknowledge that there were powerful assumptions and behaviours behind his letters that we cannot fully see. For the most part, Engelgardt's intentions were well directed, and he is still remembered in Russia today not only for his writing but also as the man singly responsible for the introduction of phosphate fertilising techniques into agriculture. This was a technique he developed during his exile and is quite likely responsible for increasing the overall food production in Russia for decades after his death in 1893.

It was while working on small-scale agricultural reform for his own farm (seeking a model for the country to follow) that Engelgardt first began to write his *Letters from the Country*, describing what he perceived as the salient qualities of the peasants he encountered within the Smolensk province. Initially, he found it difficult to even introduce flax, a new crop, into his farm's production —largely because of peasant superstition and hesitancy when confronted with change:

So, I thought, this is the end; in two or three days [the mites] will eat it all, so there's your flax for you, there's your innovation. They'll say that we told you that flax would not grow here, that even our grandfathers did not work with flax. The question here was not money, of course; the loss of one hundred rubles paid for the cultivation of four desiatinas would not have ruined me, but the business would drag on, and with the introduction of anything new, the first thing is success [...] and if in the course of several years everything goes well, then you can earn so much trust that [the peasants] will take up any novelty." (65)

Engelgardt describes the initial reluctance of the peasants, then the eventual support they show for his innovation, in order to broaden it from the one or two peasants advising him into a model for administering his envisioned land reform to peasants on a much larger scale. Early on, then, we see Engelgardt expanding his account of specific farm happenings into broader patterns of peasant behaviour that could be administered and directed on a more general (or national) level. Throughout his letters, Engelgardt uses his experience on the farm to critique both the government and the peasant. As is often the case, his reform contained within it a return to a more "original" way of living (coupled with his own view of what science could offer society). In particular, like many of the populists of his period, Engelgardt stressed the importance of the collective labour of the peasant *artel* (reserved, largely for non-agrarian work) as a model capable of being brought to all Russian farming. As Isaiah Berlin observes, the populists viewed "*artels* as the basis for all freedom and progress" (228).

New farming methods could have enormous implications for the social structure of the peasant household. Criticising the individualism he saw as the root of current farming problems, Engelgardt wrote that "the peasants live in separate households and every household has its own separate farm which it also manages through its own supervision. [...] What an enormous waste of labor, food products, heat and so forth!" He goes on to suggest, in a call that prophesied the Bolsheviks' greatest failures in social reform,³ "a common dining hall" where "households baked breads and prepared food together." This he compares to the effective labour of his own (post-Emancipation) estate farm which employs a few labourers who work under the sole direction of Engelgardt himself. "For me," he writes, "a landowner, for example, everything is much cheaper than for the peasant because everything is done together, in common" (87). In a later letter, Engelgardt picks up this favourite issue of his, providing a detailed rationale for the benefits of collectivity in farming (and cooking, heating, storing, etc.): "Under serfdom, peasants did a lot of jobs together because joint labor was often more profitable. That is why in the first years after the Emancipation, the peasants, out of old habit, still did several jobs together and did not find such jobs oppressive" (116). Although it is sometimes difficult to dispute the logic of his proposed collectivist farming method, Engelgardt comes dangerously close to becoming an apologist for the unarguable efficiency of enforced labour. Again, one has to question who among his audience will be receptive to such ideas. Ironically, it is an argument shared by feudal lords and large industry as well as by communalists.

To be fair to Engelgardt, however, it is the potential of the folk that leads him, repeatedly, to the question of collectivity and the *artel*. For Engelgardt, the *artel* was a

³I will discuss the Bolshevik State Dining Halls in the second chapter.

labour method, based on equal work effort and shared responsibilities, that brought the actual peasant into a state of full personal potential: "A man can be a swindler, a drunkard, a villain, a kulak, a scoundrel as a man in and of himself, but as an artel digger he is honest, sober, and conscientious when he is in the artel" (157). He found this was demonstrated most directly in their interaction with each other. "The foreman [...] works equally with the other diggers, eats the same food that the others do. [...] In the diggers' artels, all of the members are equal, they eat together and they pay for the food out of the total amount they earn" (160). Like most populists, Engelgardt envisioned a Russian society which would *selectively* adopt such peasant social practices for the larger national systems of economy and governance. The "soviet" and the "mir" were direct results of populist interest in peasant social structure and served as the models for the world which the revolutionary parties attempted to build in the Russia of the new century.

The populist concern with agricultural reform was situated directly in what they felt the peasant could teach the rest of society. Tied to this were notions of what the peasant was and what the peasant could be; questions of class identity and representation dominated. This was often linked not only with peasant labour practices but also with folk food habits. In a certain sense, food became a short-form way of representing the social value Engelgardt was propounding. As with the *artel*, Engelgardt felt large, one-family farming households were the most promising familial structures, partly for their labour practices and partly for their shared responsibility. He writes that "the fundamental cause of prosperity and relative well-being of large, undivided families lies in the fact that the land is not divided, the work is done together, the whole family eats out of one bowl" (163). Similar to his discussion of the *artel*, Engelgardt's description of the extended-family household is founded upon the potential he sees in collectivity. He elicits this potential through an image of eating practice which acts as a signifier of economic and social relations. Engelgardt's description of this "one bowl" shared by all is the representation of union and equality, and it is presented with the hope of educating his readers and influencing policy-makers.

In Turgenev's *Father's and Sons*, Bazarov becomes involved in an interesting conversation in which he, arguing for a nihilist-informed egalitarianism, makes a call similar to Engelgardt's. Bazarov, a would-be doctor, says: "We know more or less what causes physical ailments; and moral diseases are caused by the wrong sort of education, by all the rubbish people's heads are stuffed with from childhood onwards, in short by the disordered state of society. Reform society and there will be no diseases" (102). At first reading, it would seem that Bazarov is decrying the poor education of the masses while suggesting (earlier in the conversation) that all are equal. But it is not the actual "rubbish" of education

that Bazarov sees as an impediment to progress; it is the "disordered state of society" which is to blame, in short, its lack of management. This is precisely the argument Engelgardt makes in favour of the extended-family farmhouse: that there be one senior male who administers, much like himself, everything that happens within the farm and kitchen. Perhaps the one difference between the two is that, while cursing individualism, Engelgardt does not necessarily reject the notion of individuality. Bazarov does.

In a speech intended to shock his host, Bazarov, being partly sarcastic and partly serious, makes his claim for egalitarianism within the doctor's privilege of viewing all humans as homogenous.

'All men are similar, in soul as well as in body. Each of us has a brain, spleen, heart and lungs of similar construction; and the so-called moral qualities are the same in all of us — the slight variations are of no importance. It is enough to have one single human specimen in order to judge all the others. [...]

'And you suppose,' said Anna Sergeevna, 'that when society is reformed there will no longer be any stupid or wicked people?'

'At any rate, in a properly organized society it won't matter a jot whether a man is stupid or clever, bad or good.'

'Yes, I see. They will all have identical spleens.'

'Precisely, madame.' (102-3)

This synecdoche, where all humans become homogenous spleens, is a turning of people into organs and, as I will explore in the next chapter, into food.⁴ Turgenev demonstrates his subtlety as a novelist and thinker here as the spleen becomes a metaphor for Bazarov himself. The irony of this didactic nihilist dying from pyaemia, a blood-poisoning (i.e. the failure of the spleen) is only heightened by the romantic concept of the spleen as the seat of the emotions and impulses being associated with the coldly calculative Bazarov. He is literally cooked by fever and eaten by his own blood and his own unrequited love — a love that is unthinkable within his world without authority. Ironically, Turgenev presents the collective (represented in the spleen) destroying the individual (Bazarov himself) in a manner far removed from the 'one bowl' which Engelgardt advocated.

This metaphor, of the reformers and nihilists consumed from within, is reflected elsewhere in Russian literature of the period. Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, written in 1868, portrays the nihilists as foolish or melodramatic, most notably with the character of Ippolit who is dying from tuberculosis. In Dostoevsky, "the members of the current generation of

⁴Having seen Anna for the first time, Bazarov exclaims that she has "a magnificent body! [...] Shouldn't I like to see it on the dissecting-table!" (97). Here, scientific inquiry overlaps with sexual appetite and the suggestion of death. We shall see it mirrored in the third chapter's discussion of Lenin's embalment.

Russian nihilists, who have been nurtured on the liberal ideas of atheism, secular humanism, and utopian socialism preached by their fathers, the 'European' Russians of the 1840s, are often described as cannibalistic creatures" (LeBlanc 134). Having brought a group to Prince Myshkin seeking money on a trumped-up debt, Ippolit and his peers are accused of being self-serving by Lizaveta Prokofievna Yepanchin, a self-important lady of high-society: "You're so eaten up with pride and vanity, you'll end up devouring each other, I prophecy that for you" (301). Indeed, this devouring is a recurrent symbol within the novel, and is always associated with people who question social mores. Ippolit himself is a *consumptive*, constantly reminding people of his impending death from tuberculosis. Like Bazarov, he ridicules the behaviour and beliefs of authority and, like Bazarov, he is being consumed by both his disease and his addiction to the high-society he hates. In this we see the how the "physical ailments" and the "moral disease" which Bazarov described are embodied within Dostoevsky's character of Ippolit. This is not far removed from Engelgardt's model of socio-agricultural administration, presented as an antidote to the social ills of his day. The difference, here, lies in that Ippolit's 'one bowl' is more likely the 'high society's bowl' than it is the collectivity which Engelgardt hopes for.

Devouring is also a metaphor in *The Idiot* for power-relationships. Ippolit says: "I agree that otherwise, without this ceaseless devouring of one by another, it would have been totally impossible to organize the world; I am even prepared to admit that I comprehend nothing of that organization." Referring to religion, Ippolit also asks: "Why couldn't I just be devoured without demanding that I praise what is devouring me?" (436). This resonance between inner-turmoil and social unease, most often encountered in language of food and consumption, preoccupied Dostoevsky. He "tends to exploit the act of eating not as a mimetic device for representing the details of everyday life in nineteenth-century Russia but rather as a metaphor for illustrating human conflicts in modern life between the sexes, the generations, and the social classes" (LeBlanc 125). The image of devouring in *The Idiot* is complex in that it is not simply a self-destruction (although the 'progressives' of both *The Idiot* and *Fathers and Sons* die) but, as self-consumption, it still retains an aspect of sustenance. The politics of disparity is a food that fuels the nihilists, though they themselves do die from their self-consumption. Yet, it could be argued that they simultaneously achieve the destruction of others' complacency. This is, perhaps, what Berman terms as "innovative self-destruction" —Marx's vision of progress in bourgeois society. Are the nihilists, then, simply a fashionable intergenerational divide and "crisis," necessarily a part of the bourgeois society they deride? This was certainly an element of the criticism of Turgenev's novel by the young progressives of his day. Dostoevsky's novel, however, offers a

somewhat more opaque answer to the question, one which has strong connections to the moral and social debate in Russia at the time.

In *The Idiot*, the comically opportunistic character of Lebedev regales the other characters with a highly exaggerated account of cannibalism. It should be noted here that cannibalism was well documented in Russia throughout this time and well after the turn of the century. The frequency and depth of famine had a disastrous effect on a rural population already starving for half the year. In Lebedev's story, a medieval man admits in his old age to having "killed and eaten personally, in deadly secret, sixty monks and several lay infants, about six, no more—that is, very few compared to the number of clerics he had consumed. He had never laid a finger on any lay adults with this purpose in mind" (396). A lengthy, comic debate ensues in which Lebedev himself, and then his story, are ridiculed. Specifically, the other characters are interested in why there is such a difference in number between the clergy and lay infants. In an account that rivals Swift's "A Modest Proposal" and that shares the implicit accusation of the *consuming of people* by the state, Lebedev suggests that the reasons behind the man's unbalanced cannibalism are quite clear. First, as many of the guests guess, the number of clergy is so disproportionate to infants "probably because in the twelfth century monks were the only thing you could eat, because they were the only ones who were fat" (397). It is significant that this is the first thing for the audience to conclude from the story, denoting a largely unspoken social knowledge of hunger that Dostoevsky portrays in his affluent characters. On the other hand, the medieval man's eating of infants is viewed as proof of his guilt. Lebedev states that "six attempts are quite sufficient to allay the pangs of conscience" (398). Lebedev's story serves to present the idea of social cannibalism; an eating not of the poor (which is the case with Swift) but of the rich: a turning of society upon its head. The importance lies in that in each variant — Swift's quintessential satire and Dostoevsky's psychological tragedy— the cannibalism is clearly situated within a class-based power struggle.⁵ As Cathy Frierson writes, Engelhardt and Dostoevsky shared the image of "food as both subject of inquiry and metaphor [...] as a cultural marker in a binary vision of Russian society" (1997, 51). She expands on this; saying that, for Engelhardt, food "became another marker of the cultural divide between the haves and have-nots in Russian culture, between those who exploited and those who were exploited, between those who consumed and those who were figuratively consumed" (61).

⁵Oddly enough, Bakhtin does not discuss this passage from *The Idiot* in his earliest work, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Although Lebedev's verbal story-within-the-story logically fits into Bakhtin's discussion of Dostoevsky's carnivalesque and dialogic tendencies, he spends more time describing the role of Prince Myshkin: "Wherever Prince Myshkin appears, hierarchical barriers between people suddenly become penetrable, an inner contact is formed between them, and the frankness of carnival is born." (146).

Food was thus employed as a sign for communicating the social imbalances in Russia at the time.

To return to Engelgardt, we should look at how these peasants became so associated with a metaphoric food; that is, how were food and class so closely linked? How was the image of the collective —what Englegardt hints at in his 'one bowl'— more than just an efficient food (and labour) rationing, but something that could reflect social and political choice? As Frierson suggests, food —as both material and symbol— was a precise marker for presenting a "binary vision of Russian society." In his *Letters from the Country*, Engelgardt frequently describes eating practices in order to denote class, as well as to educate and challenge the preconceptions of his readers. "For us, who have never gone hungry," he writes, "for us who take a stroll before lunch in order to stimulate the appetite, of course, the position of the starving peasant who has made it to the next harvest is not entirely comprehensible" (77). Food, then, and hunger quite literally divide the classes for Engelgardt. The act of eating is something which often establishes this division, not only by dish and by quality but also by behaviour and assigned labour. Yet, as we saw with his description of the two 'collectivities' (in the *artel* and the 'one bowl'), food for Engelgardt could also be a unifier and a sign of (or perhaps a means to) equality.

Food, though, is not simply an accident of birth, class, and geography. Reading from Engelgardt's letters, one begins to develop the impression that food is somehow essential and necessary in describing a person. Of course as Berlin has said, the essential was exactly what the populists sought. For example, a labourer who has left the land —something Engelgardt abhorred, especially in the peasant who *was already there*— also leaves behind a certain essential food.

Once he has bitten into a pie and had a taste of mead, he no longer wants black bread, gray cabbage, manual labor, or a coarse caftan. Such peasants who have abandoned the land, have gotten on track, and have a good position usually do not return to the village and land. (177)

Food is not merely a class-signifier then; it is deeper, it is a class-essence (though an essence tied to a largely class-based "manual labour"). As described earlier, the populists sought in the peasant, and in the countryside, the answers to the social problems they saw residing in the cosmopolitan city. Engelgardt suggests that for a peasant to encounter the *Europeanised* city was to become divided from his or her own true self, that 'core Russian' he or she was seen to represent. Such a view of the "essential" (often the food) of the peasant was put forward regardless of whether that food-sign was linked more to nurture

than to nature. Indeed, in describing the tendency of peasants to spread rumours of impending land reform, Engelgardt suggests that even the youngest child will speak at length on the topic, as it is a part of folk heritage and not simply a socially-enforced position: "Any boy will lay out for you in an orderly fashion, systematically, [...] the essential points of the muzhiks' views about the land, since he imbibed those views with his mother's milk" (229). Although this is a figure of speech, it leaves the reader to wonder whether 'what was bred in the bone came out in the flesh' for Engelgardt himself.

Engelgardt's own food/class assumptions occasionally appear in his writing. A number of times he lists his cupboards for his winter preparation with an extravagance of detail that recalls the novels of Rabelais. At other times, his populist concern with the starving peasant confronts his need to manage his own affairs. This is evident in a passage relating to the usufruct surrounding the village commons which, if indeed lost, has not been fully erased from the local memory. Engelgardt writes:

Mushrooms grow in my woods in abundance. At dawn's first light in the summer, all of the babas from the neighboring villages run to my woods after mushrooms so that there are surely as many as one hundred and fifty people in my woods each day. [...] It seems to me that there is no gain for the landlord in forbidding the gathering of mushrooms on his holdings, to say nothing of the fact that the hungry peasants feed themselves [before the harvest] solely on mushrooms, and that this is just the kind of prohibition that leads to unpleasant conflicts. It is well known that the peasants, not only here, but even in Germany, do not recognize the forest as private property and do not consider poaching of wood to be theft. (76)

When Engelgardt discovers that some peasants have overstepped the unspoken right of access he has granted them and chopped down some trees on his land, he becomes quite upset. He gathers a number of the peasant women together and announces to them that "if there is going to be wood poaching then I won't allow mushroom gathering, tell the [other] women this" (76). "Since then there has been no wood poaching" (77). Engelgardt, though quite liberal and sympathetic to the poverty and need of the peasants, seems more than comfortable with using food as law, food as power, and food as threat to achieve his own class-assigned role as a large estate farmer.

A more benign food/class assumption, but one rooted in his own class upbringing, is apparent in an earlier letter of Engelgardt's. Describing his initial arrival on his estate in 1871, Engelgardt tells his readers that "when I settled in the countryside, I resolved not to retain drivers, or cooks, or footmen, that is, all that constitutes the accoutrements of landlords' houses" (25). He does, however, employ a peasant couple, Avdotia and Ivan, to

manage his farm with him. As Frierson remarks in her introduction to his letters, Engelgardt devotes a significant amount of space to describing these peasants and, by doing so, establishes them as important and worthy of the respect of his readership. Early on, Engelgardt has Avdotia cook for the household:

Avdotia, who possesses unusual culinary skills and diligence, and also the knowledge every baba has on baking bread, making cabbage soup and meat pies, began to cook for me splendidly, as well as making various supplies for the winter: pickles, marinated mushrooms, fish and crayfish conserves, preserves, creamy cheeses. I explained to her that in making syrup from berries, the most important thing is to boil them to the point that, because of the acidity, the crystallized sugar becomes winelike and the syrup thickens so much that no fermentation can take place; I explained that there will be no spoilage in preserves, no mold in pickles, and so forth, as Pasteur showed, if no bacteria of lower organisms fall out of the air into them; I explained the influence of high temperature on bacteria, albumen and so forth. Avdotia understands all this splendidly. (25)

Though he frequently avows how much he is learning from Avdotia, Engelgardt describes in detail his own instructions in the management of the household and the kitchen. Even in Engelgardt's letters, one can see the central populist debate of who should be teaching whom. His tutelage in the making of preserves (the contents of which sound somewhat removed from "the land") is remarkably similar to a passage in Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*. In this, Bazarov's superstitious mother, Arina, is being characterised via her domesticity:

Arina Vlassyevna was a true Russian gentlewoman of the old school [...] she believed that if the candles carried in procession during the Easter night service did not go out there would be a good crop of buckwheat, and that a mushroom will stop growing if a human eye has looked on it; [...] she never ate veal, pigeon, crayfish, cheese, asparagus, Jerusalem artichokes, hares or water-melons because a sliced water-melon suggested the head of John the Baptist; the mere mention of oysters made her shudder; she loved food—but fasted strictly; [...]and] she was an expert housewife and knew all about preserving and jam-making though she did not touch a thing with her own hands and was generally reluctant to move from her chair. Arina Vlassyevna was very kind hearted, and in her own way far from stupid. She knew that the world is divided into the gentry who were there to give orders and the common people whose duty it was to serve.... (144)

For the character of Arina, there is very little to question in the way she manages the kitchen, even though she does not participate in it; she is simply part of the Russian class-teleology. With Engelgardt, one encounters a more skeptical view of the social strata, and it would be in error to suggest he was seeking the classless homogeneity of a character such as Bazarov. Yet, with the passage in which he directs Avdotia, there is the suggestion that he can easily fall into the role of a steward. Such paternalism was evident throughout the populist concept of peasantry, and Engelgardt often unwittingly presented himself in this way.

One has to remember, though, that many of the populists' views being propounded by Engelgardt and his contemporaries were, early on, quite new. To give serious attention to the rights and responsibilities of those who, ten years earlier, had been faceless serfs was an important eye-opening for an urban readership that had rarely even encountered a peasant. Many of Engelgardt's anecdotes served to dispel images of who the peasants were for the urban intellectuals and officials reading his letters. Engelgardt, whose eloquence seems matched only by his terseness, would often confront the typically derogative images of the peasants held by the upper classes and reflect them back onto his readership. In one instance, he asks his audience, the professors and bureaucrats, whether they are dedicated at all times to their work. He then directs their attention to the common representation of the peasant as lazy: "But we want workers, illiterate people who have received no education whatsoever, who have struggled their entire lives in want, receiving pay which hardly assures them their daily bread, to be the models of honesty, industry, and diligence!" (85). In another instance, Engelgardt writes: "No, in regard to paying back debts, the peasants are much more prompt than people of our class, and I have never had to worry as much about getting repayment from the peasants for grain I have sold them on loan as I formerly had to worry about getting money from various publishers for articles" (83). Such witty reflections on the upper classes were accompanied often by pseudo-anthropological analyses of peasant behaviour. One example can be found in a description of the milling of the first rye of the season, when most peasants drink their profit at the bar beside the mill. Engelgardt affirms that "barely one out of a hundred returns from the mill without having gotten drunk. And that is understandable: a man has gone hungry for a whole year, and now there is bread to one's heart's content —until the feast of the Holy Virgin at least" (77). As before, Engelgardt uses hunger here as a way of highlighting the failure of the upper classes to understand the peasant. At other times, his *Letters from the Country* refute, directly, stigmas attached to the peasant. To many of his readers, a peasant would be little more than "a drunkard, and a thief, and a fraud [...] he's lazy, works badly, ruins farm instruments, and so forth and so on." Yet, once he or she had read Engelgardt's descriptions, the reader would be

assured that "there is none of this; at least, soon I will have been farming three years and I have seen nothing of the kind" (83). In various ways, then, Engelgardt presents his reader with what could be considered a new concept of the peasant, having dispelled previous myths.

Yet, as Adorno and Horkheimer will tell us, with this sort of awakening, enlightenment is often very much a myth of its own. People have to be reminded continually of both the earlier myth and the present enlightenment. Ernest Gellner, discussing romanticism in *Language and Solitude*, writes that with many populist movements "the peasant culture did not merely need to be explored, it had to be advertised and glorified" (13). By challenging the preconceived image of the peasant, Engelgardt effectively opened up a vacuum for further representations. This is not to say that he was the only one involved in this; as mentioned earlier, the populists and the slavophiles built up this interest in the peasant and the rural to a fever pitch, the likes of which might seem ridiculous now. One should also not neglect to recognise that Engelgardt's many readers should have been able to acknowledge that the particularity of Engelgardt's own experience could not contain the truth for ninety percent of Russia's vast population, something he frequently reminded them of. Yet, at the same time, there are some significant examples of him moving beyond the acceptably general and into a description that could only be termed a creation of new peasant stereotypes, not all of them positive.

One of the clearest instances in which Engelgardt actively constructs a peasant stereotype is found in his discussion of the *baba*, the peasant woman whom he views as the epitome of individualism and greed. "The baba is always mercenary and greedy for money; she always values money, always tries to earn some," he tells his readers (118). In fact, during the course of the *Letters*, the innate corruption of the *baba* becomes a favourite theme, and one we can expect as having had a strong influence on the readership's concept of the peasantry. Of particular note is the rather limited representation of women in Engelgardt's letters: while he describes (if not creates) a number of male stereotypes, the *baba* is generally representative of all peasant women. This is especially the case when Engelgardt compares the *baba* to the *muzhik*, the male of the farming household, whom he has spent his letters redefining:

In fact, as far as I have been able to observe, individualism is more highly developed among babas than among muzhiks; babas are still more egotistical, even less capable of a joint task—unless this task is ganging up to curse someone—less humane, more heartless. The muzhik, on his own, if he is away from the house, away from the influence of babas, can still do something in common [... is] more capable of working for the general good of the household, artel, [or] commune. (166-67)

This poisonous account of peasant women is repeatedly presented to the reader: she is the reason for the disintegration of large effective households, she is the one who works outside of the starving household and keeps the profits for herself in her guarded chest of textile and ornament. In addition to the crafty, self-serving *baba*, Engelgardt was also influential in establishing the figure of the *kulak*, the character-type for a greedy, rich peasant who lived off the work of other peasants. Again, as with other descriptions of power relationships, he presents the *kulak* in relation to food and consumption: "This one prides himself on his fat gut, he prides himself on the fact that he himself does little work" (224). Frierson notes that, "in sum, Engelgardt's *kulak* was an early form of the fat capitalist who would later dominate Soviet political imagery" (1997, 62). Although the *kulak* was a social reality, one has to wonder whether he was not also the result of an ideology of consumption established by those in power, those whose fat gut he shared.

Indeed, a certain irony exists in the popularity of the populists in that they were such participants in the relatively new capitalist economy in Imperial Russia. Accounts of the country such as Engelgardt's were in high demand, and were quite influential in shaping public opinion. Frierson comments on this phenomenon:

Separated from the peasants by physical and cultural distance, men and women of position and education relied on the writings of such figures [...] who went to the countryside to address the question directly and send back their conclusions to be published by the editors of major journals, displayed at exhibitions, and devoured by the educated public (1992, 3; italics mine)

The usage of "devour" here by Frierson is appropriately consumptive. It suggests both the economic consuming of the *representations* of the peasantry, as well as a more grotesque consuming—or utilising—of the *people themselves*, often from a position of privilege. It is at this point that we can see, clearly, how closely linked the idea of consuming is to both economics and identity-politics. Indeed, very few could truly ignore the actual economics of this. Prior to Engelgardt's departure for Smolensk Province, his editor "astutely guessed that Engelgardt would be able to provide just the kind of fresh information from the countryside that readers were hungry for, while Engelgardt would need the added income that the journal would pay for his contributions" (1993, 4). Again, we find a reference to the hunger of the urban population, ready to consume what the countryside could offer. This is a power dynamic we shall encounter later, especially in the politics of the 1917 Revolution.

More immediately, what resulted from this interest in representing the folk by the populists and slavophiles was a period of what could only be properly termed "folk fashion." This fashion descended upon Russian society with remarkable speed, and included even the aristocracy in its range of influence. The oppressive situations of the folk were soon overwhelmingly present in fiction, poetry and the visual arts, theater, political treatises and popular journals, as well as (and perhaps most significantly) in the crafts of the day. Bruce Lincoln records that this fashion spread quickly, and was curiously linked with the popularity of Art Nouveau among the social elite. He writes:

With the help of Vera Polenova, a long-time student of Russian peasant art, Elizaveta Mamontova founded several workshops at Abramtsevo in which local peasants produced the crafts of their ancestors in stylized modern form [...] By 1889, the fame of these folk masterpieces had reached St. Petersburg [...] Caught up in a perpetual quest for anything that could set a new trend, St. Petersburg's bored courtiers flooded the Abramtsevo workshops with so many orders that Mamontova and Polenova decided to open a shop in Moscow that would cater to the new enthusiasm for folk crafts that was spreading among Russia's upper classes. (237)

This fashion grew and grew, with essays written about the impoverished peasant in every progressive journal, with novels and paintings depicting agrarian hardships and idealised social interaction within the commune, with political and revolutionary philosophies aimed at righting such social disparities and, even, with kitsch, 'rustic' adaptations of the aristocracy's furniture and décor.

Yet, the peasants did not live in these palaces or use these items made in their 'image'; they weren't really there. As Gellner has lucidly stated, populism in Russia was much like other romantic European notions of the peasantry at that time, that is, "badly hampered by the sheer absence of peasants" (1998, 9). Eager to *truly* experience these rural characters (or caricatures), dozens of young intellectuals took up Engelgardt on his invitation to live and work on his farm, to return to the land, and to 'learn' from the peasant. This was happening all over the country and was much encouraged by the populist leaders. However, as Dostoevsky warns us in his novel *The Idiot*, "writers for the most part try to take certain social types and present them vividly and skilfully—types who are very rarely encountered in real life precisely as they are drawn, but who are nevertheless almost more real than reality itself" (485). As with most fashions, Russian society soon became both bored and frustrated with the "peasant icons" that they had been consuming. As more and more people decided they too would venture out to learn from (or teach) the peasants, they found themselves increasingly confounded by the lack of replicable peasantry: "the folk"

did not quite fit their images, so rigorously catalogued by earlier writers and artists. Indeed, it could be said that the semblance of the peasant collective—at least the unified perception of who the peasants were—was undercut by this actual encounter with the heterogenous Russian folk. And so, "the audience turned away, the theater emptied, and by the late 1880s the directors of Russian intellectual life—the editors and critics of the major journals, newspapers, and publishing houses—called for an end to the show" (Frierson 1992, 16). Although this may have marked the cessation of a concentrated market-based consumption of the peasant image, this image was still produced and consumed in the arena of social debate and class politics, as the following chapter will show.

The Russian populists were neither a cohesive group of writers and reformers, nor members of a particular group sharing a consistent method or ideology. They did share certain democratic ideals and sought a just and equal society somewhere outside the limits of the newly industrialised city: "The first and greatest of their problems was their attitude towards the peasants in whose name all that they did was done" (Berlin 214). In this and other ways, they set the stage for the political sensibilities that would dominate the next forty years of Russian cultural life, particularly with other leftist political parties and philosophers who were more active at the time of the Revolution. Indeed, many of these revolutionaries, and those like Lenin who cut their political teeth on the populists' fare, based their own ideals upon those established in the late-nineteenth century.

Chapter Two

The French term *cuisine* possesses an extraordinary semantic plasticity: its meanings range from the place where food is prepared and cooked, to the people whose task it is to undertake this preparation and cooking.... The same relations that obtain between the word *cuisine* and its various meanings also animate every dimension of the object that this word signifies.

—Louis Marin, *Food for Thought*

Although the populist "fashion show" of the latter half of the nineteenth century had been called to a close, folk concerns remained of central importance in Russian academic, social, and political circles. This was due in part to a continued humanist concern for the oppressed, a growing leftist politicising of the working population, and a certain amount of self-identification on the part of "the folk," "the workers," or "the proletariat" themselves. This chapter will move my topic from food as a signifier of class, as described in my first chapter, towards a discussion of the role food played in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. That is, I will look at the 'bread politics' of the rising Left, and how this was linked with the creation of a revolutionary identity suitable to overthrow the Romanovs and radically recreate the systems of political and economic governance in Russia. It is my assertion that the class-consciousness of the socialist worker was *a posteriori* to the literature describing it. Much like the peasant icons of the populists' years, many of the worker-revolutionaries adopted a politicised identity that had been prepared and articulated for them by Marxist and socialist intellectuals through assembly-line agitators and their speeches, broadsheets, and pamphlets that descended on the factory grounds. "A working-class identity developed, not merely as a result of social-economic circumstances, central as those were, but also because of the efforts of revolutionary parties to cultivate a working-class identity among them" (Wade 7).

This is by no means to say that the situation of workers was not in need of some politicising, or that the possibility of a better world was not being presented to them in earnest. It is merely to suggest that the notion of the "proletariat" was a somewhat contrived identity, even for industrial workers in the early years of the 1900s. Like the folk of the populists, the worker of the leftists was both misleading and true—a frozen representation of class for political reasons, one which could not always measure up to the complexity of the actual people it was supposed to represent. As Michel de Certeau has written,

between representation and what is represented, a particular type of relation emerges: those who are represented are not juxtaposed to representation, but representation makes them present to themselves as a totality, without, however, any of them being identified with that common language. (26)

Those represented come to embody something articulated by others, yet there will always exist a certain divide between themselves and what they are said to be. As far as the Russian proletariat at the turn of the century is concerned, numerous historians refute the existence of what could properly be called a working class. Thus, it could be said that there was all the more need to create one, if this is where the Revolution was theoretically supposed to spring from.

This hesitation in describing pre-Revolutionary Russian labourers as "working class" lies in the demographics and legal classifications of the time. In the first place, agrarian society made up nearly nine-tenths of the Empire's population at the turn of the century, while the urban population grew by only three percentage points between 1860 and 1914 (Kochan 35). Secondly, and likely more significant, "the factory worker still looked on himself as a peasant" (40). This is where the complexity of the proletarian identity comes into play, as "the worker still remained legally classified as a peasant. Similarly, he also remained a member of his village commune, entitled to share in the periodical redistribution of land and also obliged to contribute his share towards the taxes levied by the commune"⁶ (37). By the start of the First World War in 1914, the industrial labour population was still comprised of a majority of young, first-generation worker-peasants, who had come to work at the factories because of land shortages, famine, and other problems. However, these workers retained a close identity to their farming community of origin, much reinforced by their legal status as peasants.

One of the questions worth asking here is why there was such a concern with creating —or at least reinforcing— a largely urban industrial worker identity when the peasants in the countryside already had the numbers and discontent to provide revolutionary fuel? One reason, simply, is that the immense expanse of the Russian countryside and the resulting isolation of agrarian communities made a coordinated effort of such breadth nearly impossible. Another lies in the lack of communication lines and audiences with the government, as well as the general distrust of outsiders that Engelgardt described in the small villages and farming communities of the Russian peasantry. Ultimately, the perennial agrarian discontent —the 'land question'— was destined to eat the leftovers of the urban revolution, which could boast the mobility, centrality and cohesion that the vast population of farmers could not claim. With revolution, visibility was key; and demonstrations, protests, riots, and strikes served to undercut the authority of the old regime more directly than any grumblings 'from the provinces' could. And so, finding themselves living and working

⁶The fallacy in Kochan's universal masculine is established, just prior to this, when he writes that "quite a high proportion [of industrial workers] were women—in 1904 no less than 27.5 per cent of those engaged in manufacturing industry" (26).

within a highly politicised milieu, urban workers began to adopt their leftist images. This was the case, and was likely necessarily so, whether they were leftist-agitators planted within the factories, second-generation workers whose links to the countryside were stretching thin, or groups motivated by the daily injustices of industrial labour conditions. Whatever the individual's motive, what seems clear is that a leftist worker identity had, quite literally, been carefully prepared and articulated for them. Moreover, it made sense to mobilise such a group: they were strategic and centralised and, as Marx foresaw, the urban industrial workers were directly involved in—even mediators of—the processes of consumption and production.⁷

This identity was never a totality, and most workers continued to shift their roles based on specific situations. After the Revolution, for example, innumerable sub-groups formed within the unions and collectives, based on ethnic and regional membership lines, which internationalist-socialist images could never have accounted for. In *Buddha's Little Finger*, Victor Pelevin presents the Red soldiers (of the civil war of 1918-20) as adopting regional or industrial identities, based on the locations of their previous homes or factories. The initial spread of the Revolution to provincial cities was partly due to the multiple associations of these groups and to their heightened mobility. Describing the failed 1905 Revolution in his novel *Petersburg*, Andrei Bely writes of a provincial darkness "on the Nevsky in the form of a Manchurian fur hat" (232). Here, the Manchurian hat is seen increasingly above the shoulders of the anonymous crowds gathering on St. Petersburg's prospects. It is the hat of a soldier, defected from the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, coming to the capital with his revolutionary discontents.

As Bely reflects in his novel, the revolutionaries were often *not* members of the proletariat or soldiering classes. Neither were they, as Engelgardt had described earlier, peasants seeking land-reform. "The large numbers of radicals, terrorists, populists and *révoltés* of all types who came from families where the father was perhaps a governor-general, merchant, estate-owner, senior bureaucrat, [or] respected member of the professions, was surprisingly large" (Kochan 153). The revolutionaries, then, are not easy to simply describe in terms of socio-economics: there is no clear class-divide just as there is no clear beginning and end of the movement towards revolution. The populists of the 1860s contributed along with the Bolshevik Red Guards of the October days of 1917.

Finally, it is interesting to note that what these varied movements shared was a look to the new, to an idealised and restructured future: to a new generation of Russians. As Kochan writes, many of the revolutionaries were the upper-class sons of the political and

⁷The third chapter explores issues of labour as they relate to food (or consumption), particularly in the theories of Bakhtin.

cultural elite. Thus, the Revolution was also the struggle between generations that Turgenev described in his 1861 novel, *Fathers and Sons*, and Bely represented in the 1916 publication of *Petersburg*. For Bely's protagonist, Nikolai, this generation gap carries with it an ontological quandary in which he begins to view himself as debased and somatic rather than removed and cerebral:

When [Nikolai Apollonovich] was called his father's spawn, he felt ashamed. The meaning of "spawn" was later revealed to him by his observations of the peculiarities of animal life. And Kolenka wept. He transferred the shame of his conception to his father.

And he understood that everything that exists is "spawn." People as such do not exist: they are all "things conceived." Apollon Apollonovich is a "thing conceived," an unpleasant sum of blood, skin, and meat—and meat sweats and goes bad at warm temperatures. (229)

I will spend the first half of this chapter on Bely's depiction of the failed Revolution of 1905, describing the divisive site of the domestic —where the food of revolution is first encountered. This discussion could be understood as continuing the critique of the 'one bowl' of the previous chapter, discussing the breakdown of the collective that many saw in the (urban) society at the turn of the century. Ironically, this breakdown was also the impetus for the renewed and expanded —indeed revolutionary— 'collective' of 1917 and beyond. In the second half of the chapter, I examine the ways in which such cohesive class identities (or "things conceived") were decisive factors in determining the outcome of the two successful Revolutions of 1917, and the role that food played —as an actual substance and symbol— in bringing these about.

Petersburg was written on the eve of the 1917 Revolution. Through it, Bely plots the days leading up to the 1905 rebellion through the life of his misguided and onanistic protagonist, Nikolai Apollonovich, the son of a senior bureaucrat. The action is situated, appropriately, in St. Petersburg, the site of both the 1905 and 1917 revolutions. One of the leading Symbolists and closely affiliated with the poet Aleksandr Blok, Bely used the novel to convey both his sincere doubts about the revolutionaries and what would come following their revolution as well as his disgust with the moral turpitude he saw in the upper classes around him. As Maguire and Malmstad note in their 1978 translation of the novel, Bely himself came from a prominent household. His embracing of the radical Symbolists' views helped to create an intergenerational divide of his own, as Boris Nikolaevich Bugaev became Andrei Bely, so as not to embarrass his prominent father (viii). Marshall Berman has written of *Petersburg* that it "has never been allowed to find its public in the U.S.S.R" (255). This

is only partly true, as it was published to immediate fanfare in 1916 and would have been readily available just following the Revolution. It was also revised in 1922, a version which was reprinted twice in the Soviet Union, although each time cut and censored a little more than the last. However, this in itself, and its eventual official labeling as "decadent," led to the book receiving very little attention, a fate that is perhaps only beginning to be reversed in academic circles.

The reasons for this rejection by the post-Revolutionary Communist Party are not difficult to understand. Indeed, it is more surprising that *Petersburg* was allowed such a window as it had under the Soviet censors. The writing is at times murky and heavy with symbols, at others it is jagged, broken in mid-speech, and left unresolved. The perspective of Apollon Apollonovich⁸ is used to present the industrial workers as shadows and dust, swarming and threatening crowds. There is very little that Bely provides, however, that refutes this perspective at all. He presents the corrupt oppressor's view, but does not fully undermine it. He presents the sordid situation of the oppressed, but does not actually champion their cause. Instead, he inscribes the city of St. Petersburg with a tangible energy and malaise that moves through it without direction or reason; it becomes a city haunted by the actual living character of the bronze horseman —the statue of Peter the Great, both anti-christ and founding father to modern Russians. In Bely's city there is no easy collectivity, even amidst the meetings of the politicised workers. The crowds of the city are often faceless, without direction: vague, soulless entities flowing through the streets. Such ambiguity was not popular with the Bolshevik view of the world. Furthermore, there were certain other qualities that did not endear Bely to his Soviet readers; for one, he was influenced by the Theosophist school, a form of "new age" international spiritualist symbolism, popular at the time. As Orlando Figes has suggested, Bely could also be included among a number of intellectual radicals of the day "who rejected the materialism of the Marxist intelligentsia and sought to reassert the primacy of moral and spiritual values" (208).

In the novel, Nikolai is a young scholar of privilege who spends his days locked in his room wearing a Japanese kimono and skull cap while he works out his analysis of Kant's philosophy. A year earlier, after being rejected by the wife of his boyhood friend, he had experienced a metaphysical crisis and had contemplated suicide. Throughout the course

⁸Apollon Apolonovich has the name and quality of Nietzsche's notion of Apollo: appearing calm and composed, official, he is nonetheless tenuously holding on to his sense of reality and structure. He is very much the opposite of the Nietzschean Dionysus, a figure of bacchanlian revelry, promethean excitement, and political chaos. Often shown in direct opposition to Apollon, Dudkin assures Nikolai that his disorientation and fear at discovering the bomb he is keeping (and which is intended to kill Apollon) is actually "a truly Dionysian experience" (181).

of the novel, the reader is led to learn that it was on this same night that Nikolai first met up with some of the nihilist revolutionaries and promised them his help in their cause, specifically that he would murder his own father, one of the Tsar's inner circle. Nikolai has been able to suppress this memory of a night spent miserable, drunk, and out of his mind. Dudkin, the cell leader and Nikolai's primary contact with the revolutionaries, rejects it for what it was: a momentary weakness, disgusting and reprehensible to even think of. Dudkin has no intention of taking up Nikolai on his specific promise, but trusts him with minor tasks that aid his group. One other, though, most commonly known as Lippanchenko, works behind the scenes to make real Nikolai's raving. Lippanchenko is modeled on a shady figure of the 1905 Revolution, Evno Azef (or Evny Azev). Maguire and Malmstad remark that "Azef was one of the masterminds of the Terrorist Organization of the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) Party and simultaneously an agent of the secret police. He helped plan the assassination of von Plehve [the head of the secret police] among others" (310). It is his ruminations on the sinister figure of Azef that leads Berman to state that "the nihilism of modern revolutionaries is a pale shadow of the nihilism of the forces of Order" (255). In Bely's novel, the manipulative Lippanchenko, this double, triple and quadruple agent, has a bomb sent to Nikolai—one which Nikolai later discovers is intended for the parricide he had promised months earlier. The most uncanny aspect of this bomb, though, is that it is encased within an ordinary sardine tin: "He glanced at the desk out of the corner of his eye. There lay a small tin containing oily sardines (on one occasion he had made himself sick on sardines, and ever since then he had not touched them). A sardine tin, an ordinary sardine tin [...] with horrible contents!" (163). The bomb, once started, reverberates throughout the last half of the novel in imagery, mood, and its ticking down of the final day.

Food, and this 'explosive food' in particular, is frequently associated with the revolutionaries of the novel. Many of their meetings take place in dim bars and restaurants, surrounded by the raucous noise and dull eyes of workers from the factories, drinking away their nights. Dudkin himself, the most authentic of all the novel's revolutionaries, "made a successful escape from the Yakutsk region [the location of his northeastern exile]. I was taken out in a sauerkraut barrel. And now I'm active in the underground" Dudkin tells Nikolai, seeming to link his nihilist tendencies with this absurd odyssey within a vessel of pickled cabbage (57). Perhaps this passage is to explain Dudkin's own pickled state, and the strange vodka-induced visions he has during his many sleepless nights. Also, there is something quite literally "fishy" about the bomb affair beyond the connotations of its container. Significantly, Lippanchenko and the bomb are introduced during the same scene at the beginning of the novel. Lippanchenko is described as having lips "resembling pieces of sliced salmon, not yellowish red, but oily and yellow" (24). As with his earlier experience

with sardines, the bomb makes Nikolai feel understandably queasy. In this passage, Nikolai tells Dudkin that he has started the bomb's mechanism:

"All sorts of rubbish came to mind, and—a feeling of disgust for it, an unaccountable feeling of disgust for the shape of the tin, for the idea that, maybe, before this, sardines... (I can't stand the sight of them). A feeling of disgust welled up in me such as you feel toward a hard-shelled insect chirring and chattering in your ears. It dared to chitter something at me."

"Hm!"

"You know, the taste you get when the tin plating's beginning to wear off dishes.... I was bursting, nauseated! Oh, as if I... had swallowed it...."

"Swallowed it? Ugh, how vile!"

"I became a bomb, with a ticking in my belly." (180)

By extension, Nikolai is not only a bomb, ready to blow apart the world of his father, but also a sardine, the food he most reviles. (One is reminded here of the self-destruction and consumption Dostoevsky saw in nihilism.) Like Lippanchenko, who is later described as "swelling nightmarishly" and bearing an "indecent gut" (258), Nikolai is "swelling up [...] walking around like a swollen monster" from figuratively eating the bomb and once more making himself sick on sardines (181).

Indeed, a number of similarities between Nikolai and Lippanchenko are drawn in *Petersburg*, most of them presented with either food- or body-related imagery. In one significant meeting, as they eat an order of fried kidneys in a bar, Lippanchenko cooks up a story for their relationship, saying that there are

"ties, the ties that bind us..."

"?"

"Ties of kinship"

"?"

"Blood ties"

The kidneys were served. [...]

"As it turns out, Nikolai Appollonovich, I happen to be your brother. [...] Illegitimate, naturally. I am the fruit of your father's affair... with a seamstress." (144)

Lippanchenko enjoys his joke for some time; having confused and preoccupied Nikolai, Lippanchenko finds him easier to manipulate. He finally admits, though, "that we are brothers... but by different fathers [...] Because of our convictions" (145). As this conversation is taking place, Bely frequently interrupts it with details of the kidneys being eaten by the two men, the mustard and pepper being used, the ordering of further drinks. The brotherhood of the two unlikely revolutionaries is sealed by their sharing of a meal of kidneys. It recalls with some clarity Bazarov's discussion of spleens, and the equalising of

all human society in Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*. In Bely's novel, Lippanchenko is the perfect brother — traitorous, malicious, and self-serving— for Nikolai's dismantled household.

The domestic scene is repeatedly shown as faulty and empty for Nikolai and his father (his mother, modeled on Tolstoy's character of Anna Karenina, is thought to be in Spain with her lover). Their dinner conversations are alternately peppered by Nikolai's pretense of school-boy chatter and a heavy silence. For Dudkin, his home is the site of strange visitations and visions, and a place in which he cannot sleep and has no comfort. Even for Lippanchenko, the home is a place where his carefully crafted identities and subplots are shown in their weakest light, where he is pressured to show emotion. Eventually, it is also where he is killed in great depicted detail, like "a cold suckling pig with horseradish sauce," such as those he is purported to export (263). As I mentioned earlier, the unsettling space of the domestic is featured throughout Bely's novel: all inner places are mere respites or reflections of the greater tension of the days leading up to the revolution outside. Thus, Bely does not present the domestic as the site of collectivity and cohesion but of moral division and erosion.

On the streets is the only collectivity of the novel, and a dark uncomfortable one at that. Having learnt of the treachery within the party (although he doesn't yet know the culprit) Dudkin enters the flowing crowd in order to find Lippanchenko. The double agent is his closest confidant and it is only later, once he has recognised his own suppression of Lippanchenko's treachery, that he returns and kills him. As he is leaving Nikolai to tell Lippanchenko of the bomb, Dudkin steps onto the Nevsky prospect and is sucked into the crowd:

All the shoulders formed a viscous and slowly flowing sediment. The shoulder of [Dudkin] stuck to the sediment, and was, so to speak, sucked in. In keeping with the laws of the organic wholeness of the body, he followed the shoulder and thus was cast out onto the Nevsky.

What is a grain of caviar?

There the body of each individual that streams onto the pavement becomes the organ of a general body, an individual grain of caviar, and the sidewalks of the Nevsky are the surface of an open-faced sandwich. Individual thought was sucked into the cerebation of the myriapod being that moved along the Nevsky. (178-79)

Again we are confronted with Bazarov's spleen: the organ as a mark of homogeneity, anonymity, and the logic of impulse. Dudkin becomes an organ of this vast, collective body, trudging towards its terrible birth place on the Nevsky. He is a minute part of the open

sandwich, a piece of caviar, the paucity of which drains away all claims to individual thought or direction. Bely uses images of food to communicate the shift from the individual into the collective. By stepping into the flow of this movement of a class, Dudkin is caught up and consumed by history. The street he walks on, the Nevsky Prospect, will soon become a symbol of the Revolution and "Bloody Sunday" as, on January 9th, 1905, marching crowds will fill this wide street and move towards the central city, with its seats of religious and secular power. Once there, some will be shot, and striking, rioting, and reform will spread outwards from the Nevsky until the crowd's force returns in 1917 to the same street where it would be, this time, successful.

. Writing *Petersburg* from 1913-16, Bely could sense the approaching outbreak of 1917 but clearly was frightened by what the working class, as a group pulled together by society and defined by politics, would become, once they had learned to speak for themselves. This is significant in that here we can see how the collectivity was perhaps beginning to have its own identity distinct from that which it had earlier adopted. Lincoln has written that Aleksandr Blok and Andrei Bely "needed barely more than a year after the Revolution of 1905 to replace the shining visions of their earlier poems with apocalyptic images" such as this (268). Indeed, near the end of the novel, Bely describes even the language and narrative of his novel as a count-down of hours that "have expanded and scattered" as the bomb soon will (265). Thus, language is seen as both explosive—reflecting the sardine tin bomb—and repulsive—much like Nikolai's response to sardines. This nauseous language is the mangled speech of the lower classes, it is the impending revolution of self and society promised and fostered for years by Russian artists, writers, and thinkers, yet impossible to control. In a certain sense, then, it is also the vocable of the future: of a carnival present transformed from the previous reality and yet to be understood. Louis Marin, writing on the culinary as sign has given to food this mutability:

Exactly like the elements belonging to the other systems of signification, the culinary sign will, in its own way, represent the economic transformation of a thing into a good, the erotic transformation of an object into a body, and the linguistic transformation of an entity into a sign. These transformations constantly play on the possibility of a shift in modalities: what is impossible becomes possible, that is to say, real; what is forbidden becomes permissible, indeed obligatory; and what is excluded becomes plausible, that is certain. (125)

Food is thus truly linked with change—to self and society—and with the grammar of revolution. As Mayakovsky saw it, "the unpolished speech of the masses, the slang of the

suburbs" had reached the streets and "trampled underfoot" the "emasculated words" of the intelligentsia (15).

As Adorno has written, "proletarian language is dictated by hunger. The poor chew words to fill their bellies. From the objective spirit of language they expect the sustenance refused them by society; those whose mouths are full of words have nothing else between their teeth" (102). The hunger of the disenfranchised is very much like Ippolit's hunger in *The Idiot*: it is a hunger for that which those in power already have. Bely's revolutionary character, Dudkin, is one of these hungry people. He is an alcoholic and a zealot, he is uncomfortable with language but compelled to speak.

Conversations with himself and with others always produced a feeling of guilt in him. A loathing for conversation would well up in him. He would transfer the loathing to himself. Outwardly these innocuous conversations enervated him horribly. The more he talked, the more grew his desire to talk, until he felt an astringent sensation in his throat. He could not stop and would exhaust himself. (58)

This passage describes speech as though it is an act of vomiting. Dudkin's speech-as-illness displays his own alienation from himself: he often speaks only with his visions and nightmares which, more often than not, even he does not understand. For Bely, this is a common aspect of the days leading to the Revolution, where one encounters in the streets "thoughts thinking themselves" (218). Here, we find the workers, whose individual thoughts have been sucked into the collective, into the "thoughts" of others, accepting their political identities (they are now "thinking themselves"). Yet these people on the street also become one large body, *thinking for itself*: the Petersburg proletariat now following its own impulses. Viewed as a dangerous and unpredictable development by Bely, the proletariat's uprising recalls Bakhtin's analysis of the relationship between author and hero, a relationship in which we could understand the proletariat as "the heroes created who break away from the process that created them and begin to lead a life of their own in the world" (*Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity* 8).

It is more than apparent that no one managed to realise the proletariat was beginning to 'lead a life of its own in the world' until the February 1917 Revolution was already under way.⁹ Somewhat appropriately, communications from St. Petersburg (aimed at reassuring

⁹In an interesting passage from *Author and Hero*, Bakhtin describes the way in which we only manage to understand our own place in society once others have acted within it. He writes: "Just as the plot or story of my own personal life is created by other people —the heroes of my life, so the aesthetic vision of the world, its image, is created only by the consummated or consummable lives of other people who are the heroes of this world" (111). As with the folk

the Tsar) initially called it a bread disorder. Figs writes that "Nicholas had been badly advised from the start. He had left the capital [...] on 22 February, after being assured by Protopopov that he had nothing to worry about" and that the marchers would disperse once fed (312). To a certain extent, bread was at the centre of the uprising. As many have noted, it did begin with bread. "The call for bread was a symbol of general grievances and could unite a broad spectrum of the population against the authorities," from industrial workers to middle-class sympathisers and soldiers (Wade 32). Such bread disorders as these had become particularly notorious for being instigated by women, most notably the *soldatki*, the wives and widows of soldiers on the front, who felt they had a particular entitlement to the bread supplies. This was only the most obvious link between food and the war Russia was in the midst of in 1917.

These February demonstrations had been precipitated by the twelfth anniversary of the 1905 rebellion, and striking had grown more serious as the month progressed. The strikes and bread riots that initiated the February conflicts were brought to the fore by an interesting set of circumstances. The fateful coinciding of poor supplies of flour for bread, a sudden warm front in the St. Petersburg weather, and the International Women's Day march on February 23rd (a socialist holiday), brought crowds of strikers and spectators onto the streets, followed by days of unrest and escalating confrontation with the authorities. As Bakunin predicted years earlier,

revolutions are not improvised. They are not made arbitrarily either by individuals or even by the most powerful associations. They occur independently of all volition and conspiracy and are always brought about by the force of circumstances. They can be foreseen and their approach can sometimes be sensed, but their outbreak can never be hastened.
(109)

This sudden Revolution surprised even the Bolshevik leadership, and soon resulted in the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the capitulation of the entire Romanov autocracy.

As the February Revolution of 1917 coalesced into something more than just a series of strikes, the political parties of the left began to position themselves within the political restructuring. Some chose to join the Provisional Government (this included most Mensheviks and the populist-influenced Socialist Revolutionary Party) while others focused their efforts on continued labour organising (such as the Bolsheviks). Again, however, political identities were nearly as varied as the individuals that held them. With the

adopting the images of themselves, presented by the ideologues, in this spontaneous Revolution Russians suddenly found their social world, its image, created by the consummated lives of the strikers.

cementing of the revolution's success came a surprising adoption of the proletarian image by the intelligentsia, the cultural and political elite, and petit-bourgeois. This group of new "workers" that Axelrod had earlier described as the quasi-revolutionary 'third element,' gives an idea of how fluid the identity of "the worker" was during this period. "The revolution and the strikes of spring had the effect not only of solidifying working-class identity, but also of broadening the circle of those who identified themselves as workers" (Wade 97). Thus, the worker "class consciousness," begun as an identity for industrial labourers, spread to include the revolutionary potential of artists, bureaucrats, soldiers, cab drivers, bath house workers, school teachers, waiters, and bakers. This fluidity of revolutionary identity recalls the many names and personalities of Bely's character, Lippanchenko. It is reasonable to suppose that many of these new proletarians were just as opportunistic as he, and that the word "proletariat" itself indicated little more than a collective agreement. It was, by definition, a strategic identity. This is something we will encounter in Petka, the central character of Victor Pelevin's novel *Buddha's Little Finger*.

As more people included themselves among the proletariat, appeals to workers' issues had an increasingly broad resonance. *Buddha's Little Finger* offers a somewhat cynical interpretation of this sort of identity-formation, and one which echoes Pelevin's criticism of utopian nationalism elsewhere. Discussing collective perceptions of reality, a character tells Petka that "the world in which we live is simply a collective visualization [...]. It is, in actual fact, the only thing that one generation hands on to the next" (235). One is reminded here of Nikolai's realisation that, like his father and all others, he is merely a "thing conceived" that does not fully exist. Through this lens, the Russian Revolution itself becomes a mixture of rejection (in the tradition of Bakhtin's carnival) for the established social reality that preceded it, a creation of a new collective identity (partly informed by the populist movement), and an attempted materialising of the new social future through a concerted effort of mass-visualisation, as seen quite soon in the official sanctioning of Socialist Realism.

Because the Russians had not yet achieved Communism and because Communist values did not yet shape their daily lives, it became the task of Soviet artists to depict life as it ought to be according to Bolshevik precepts, not as it really was. The focus of life and art thus became the collective—the organized mass of men and women functioning according to Communist principles—that derived its strength from its ability to achieve those common tasks that no one could hope to undertake individually. (Lincoln 331)

Similarly, the path to revolution depended upon such a harnessing of the collective, and a sense of cohesion across social, economic, and geographic groups. Following the perceived failure of the February Revolution (Prince Lvov and Kerensky's Provisional Government was becoming a liberal-socialist body with a very European style of limited representation), the Bolsheviks began to establish, in earnest, an impression of commonality between the strategic groups of peasants, workers, and soldiers. It was this vision of a social triumvirate that facilitated the October 1917 rising of the radical left against February's interim government.

The Bolsheviks achieved the distillation of ongoing public discontent into revolutionary momentum. In his essay "Socialist-Revolutionary Party Cheats the Peasants Once Again," written just prior to the October rising, Lenin preys upon the insecurity that the new government was betraying the people on the issue of land reform. Lenin writes, "the SR Party has deceived the peasants: it has crawled away from its own land bill and has adopted the plan of the landowners and Cadets for a 'fair assessment' and preservation of landed proprietorship" (228). Such frequent cries as this enabled Lenin to have a ground swell behind him when the Bolsheviks stormed the seat of government in October 1917, and served to reaffirm the dichotomy of "the people" versus "the landlords" that was at the root of the Civil War of 1918-20 between the "Red" and "White" Russians. In Lenin's strategic opposition we can hear an echo of the populists' linkages between agriculture, food, class identity, and a model based on collectivity for the new society to follow.

As with the February and earlier protests, one of the principle vehicles for the Bolshevik rising was found in an appeal for food. Only now, in October, this became a much more complex image of food—one which was linked quite clearly with a utopian future of peace and equality, land reform and prosperity. In a certain sense, through this, Lenin was initiating a carnival-like blending of traditional understandings. He was taking the material of food and uniting it with what he would likely argue were the natural relationships or matrices of this material and the political hierarchy of his society at this time. Lenin's short essay "For Bread and Peace" highlights the linkages that were being made. In this piece, Lenin states that the two issues of bread and peace "now take precedence over all other political questions," for they mark the route to "the complete victory of socialism" and a move away from the capitalist "slaughter of the peoples. [...] The war," he writes, "has brought hunger to the most civilised countries, to those most culturally developed" (386-87). By having the people simply call out three things they lacked, the October revolutionary slogan of "Bread, Land, Peace" allowed the Bolsheviks to represent the interests of the three most important groups in Russian society at this time: the workers, the peasants, and the

soldiers. Furthermore, I would contend that their rallying cry was such a powerful revolutionary force because it referred to food on all levels.

The October cry of "Bread, Land, Peace" brought together these people and their interests. As demonstrated by the *soldatki* and the frequent bread riots, the call for bread itself had a long history as a unifying cry for sustenance and the fair distribution of limited food. Always the source of agrarian discontent in Russia, land was seen by the peasants as the first principal in *any* revolution or restructuring of authority. The peasants' concern with land reform was frequently employed by Lenin to criticise and undermine the Provisional Government. Land was both a symbol for peasant autonomy and a guarantor of food and trade within the village. Land had also been the site of the most widespread political reform of the last hundred years, and thus land reform cut through all social strata, affecting both the peasants and the gentry.

Lastly, the call for peace was, in itself, a direct voicing of non-confidence in the government. The war was felt to be at the root of many of the problems relating to food: supply, distribution, and active labour in the countryside. In her book on the First World War, *Peace and Bread in Time of War*, Jane Addams writes that "in the Russian peasant's dread of war there has always been a passive resistance to the reduction of the food supply, because he well knows that when a man is fighting he ceases to produce food and that the world will at length be in danger of starvation" (94). Furthermore, Addams asserts that "this instinct of bread labor [is] the very antithesis of war" (97). On all levels, the cry for peace was a cry against hunger: in the bread disorders of the *soldatki* and urban workers, in the starvation of families in one of Russia's coldest winters in decades, and in the consuming of Russia's young men at the front. Strangely enough, the Bolshevik linkage between war and consumption had many parallels with that of the German writer Ernst Jünger, a proto-fascist who extolled the redemptive value of the First World War's extreme inhumanity.¹⁰ In "Total Mobilization" Jünger writes that

the image of war as armed combat merges into the more extended image of a gigantic labor process [*Arbeitsprozesses*]. In addition to the armies that meet on the battlefields, originate the modern armies of commerce and transport, foodstuffs, the manufacture of armaments —the army of labor in general. (126)

Jünger's army of foodstuffs —or the "battles of materiel" (127) as he refers to it elsewhere— recalls the absurd armies of sausages battling men that one encounters in the

¹⁰The difference between their two perspectives is that Jünger glorified in war's purifying production of a 'new Man', while Lenin saw in it the underlying capitalist-imperialist process of consumption.

medieval novels of François Rabelais. In their different ways, both Jünger and Lenin recognise the labour process that is inherent in the Great War, and the consumption that was characteristic of this war, equally applicable to the actual people fighting in the trenches as it was to the martial supplies required to participate in the conflict. Thus, as Addams suggests, to cry for peace was also to call for bread. It demanded an end to the government's consumption of its own people through war.

This revolutionary call for "Bread, Land, Peace," was thus about food and consumption on all levels. Marin suggests "all cookery involves a theological, ideological, political, and economic operation" (121). Such a concern with consumption could be called the primary ingredient of any class consciousness in Russia at the time of the Revolution, and remained the clearest distinction between people in society, as it was in Engelgardt's day. Through the Bolshevik politicising of "bread," food also became the clearest distinction between the people and their society. Food became the space dividing people from their rights, and the gap they filled with their language of class conflict and revolution. However, the victories against hunger that these February and October uprisings symbolised for the people were, unfortunately, short lived. With the irony that only time can supply, the Bolsheviks and their Communist Party of the Soviet Union were just as negligent and incompetent as their predecessors in rectifying the perpetual problems of land redistribution and the supply of food from country to city. Although they tried to radically shape the ways in which the population produced, moved, and consumed their food, the land and food 'questions' remained quite difficult to answer. Most immediately, these problems resulted in the Civil War between the Bolsheviks and the "Whites," a group of ousted generals and estate owners who were marginally loyal to the overthrown Provisional Government. More importantly, though, the Whites were fiercely loyal to the belief in their ownership of large tracts of farmland, a notion the "Reds" spent the next few years in war refuting. Because of this next war, general crop failure, and inefficient linkages between the town and country, to eat was once more a challenge. "The Bolshevik government inherited a food crisis that threatened its own survival, just as the same crisis had contributed to the downfall of the tsarist government in February 1917 and its successor, the Provisional Government, in October" (Borrero 162). In a loosely veiled attempt to ration the entire urban population during this crisis and civil war, the Bolsheviks initiated one of their earliest—and strangest—'social revolutions,' in the form of the State Cafeteria.

Following the victory of February 1917, the new postrevolutionary powers attempted to bring "the folk" to all Russian tables. Ironically, with this came the hunger and meagerness of peasant eating habits that Engelgardt had described 40 years earlier. "Repeated problems with crops, harvests, and shortages did not promote the development of

Russian cuisine, and the democratic spirit of the Revolution put an end to the often profligate luxury of old Russian cooking" (Visson 71). This was perhaps hyperbolised in the attempt by the Bolsheviks, particularly Alexandra Kollontai, to 'revolutionise' and communalise the act of dining in the years following 1917.

State cafeterias and communal kitchens were built on the sites of former restaurants, hotels, student dormitories, even private homes. By 1921, state dining facilities had become an integral part of a new urban landscape that included closed churches, new monuments, renamed urban places, and communalized mansions. (Borrero 163)

These worker dining halls were initially meant to feed all people at all times, as well as providing venues for idealist art to forward an appropriate vision of the proletarian future. Of note, especially in light of the role that women played in the original bread marches of February, "the attack on the private kitchen was first made in the name of women's emancipation" (164). The message sent out to the population was that these dining halls were to free women from the domestic sphere so that they could take up the hammer and sickle of their male counterparts. As mentioned in the first chapter, this philosophy of the streamlined and formalised kitchen can be traced back to Engeldardt's critique of peasant households, and particularly the women therein. Of course, it is more likely that the kitchens were an attempt to ration the entire population during years of famine and war. Soon, they were recognised (even by party officials) as disastrous in terms of morale as well as nutrition.

In his study of the linkages between the process of industrialisation and changes in diet, H.J. Teuteberg remarks that, though it may take some time, there is typically a steady movement towards better nutritional fare for the general population. Specifically, he writes, "for the economically weak classes, the improvement consisted at first mainly in the changeover from a rough rural diet of markedly local character to a diet that quantitatively imitated upper-class food but failed to measure up to it in quality" (71). Thanks to the State Cafeterias, the Russians did not follow this model, although they did continue with the earlier process of industrialisation. In a bizarre twist, a number of the dining halls began to practice a form of class-based nutri-centrism, for lack of a better term. A nationalist revival of *pre-Revolutionary* —and decidedly rural— dishes became prominent for some time (whether due to general food shortages or fashion itself is unclear, but likely a combination of the two). Dishes which had very little nutritional value whatsoever became the regular fare at many of these cafeterias (Visson 71). Indeed, this could be seen as a form of nationalist nostalgia tied to a typical Soviet message of what a 'true proletarian' should eat. As Barthes

remarks, "food permits a person [...] to partake each day of the national past." Furthermore, he says it "brings the memory of the soil into our very contemporary life" (55).

Ilya Zbarsky's memoirs of life within the closed community of the Soviet establishment provides a further example of this intersection of food and ideology. Recalling a rather absurd episode from the frequent battles between scientific specialists and Party dignitaries in the 1940s, Zbarsky tells the story of Professor Jacob Oscar Parnas, a biochemist who presented a theory of Russian superiority based on their traditional dark rye bread. However, it did not fit in with the official Party agenda of the day:

He noted in support of his theory that in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 the French, who ate bread made of wheat, were roundly defeated by the Prussians, who ate rye bread almost exclusively. He used the same argument to explain the superiority of the Soviets over the Nazis in the recent war.

The monograph, the publication of which coincided with the campaign against the "cosmopolitans", provoked the wrath of Party dignitaries. Victory over the Nazi invader, they believed, had been brought about by the superiority of the USSR's political system, not by the ingredients of its people's food. Nor did Parnas's Jewish origins help his cause, and an order went out that he be detained. When the secret police who called for him told him he was about to be arrested, however, the shock was so great that he suffered a heart attack and died on the spot. (159-60)

This example of food used to communicate nationalism is an ironic extension of the Bolshevik's connection of bread with worker identity. That Parnas, like many others, sought to please the propagandist Soviets is without doubt. That his theory would coincide with the Party's current truth was a gamble at best. Louis Marin, writing that "to speak is [...] to be eaten," could be speaking of the relationship between the intelligentsia and the Stalinist camp of this time as much as he is discussing semiology (111). Ernest Gellner, with his typical estimation of nationalism, writes that "when the community really existed, it did not preach itself" (24). If Parnas had published this monograph during the short lifespan of the State Cafeterias, particularly during the Civil War years, he might have been hailed as a visionary.

A discussion of Pelevin's *Buddha's Little Finger* will facilitate the further exploration of ideology as it relates to revolutionary-identity and to images of food. It will also lead to a discussion of Bakhtin's carnival. In the novel, Pelevin presents a heavily sarcastic rendition of the 'proper' role of the intelligentsia in the new Soviet political climate, in this instance through the poet, Pushkin. Reminiscent of the "bronze horseman" who

haunts Bely's *Petersburg*, Pelevin opens his novel with the cast bronze figure of the poet Pushkin standing in the middle of a Moscow square. Petka, the lead character, is walking through Moscow in February 1918 (one year after the first Revolution) and sees Pushkin's statue wearing a new red apron. Written across this apron is the slogan "Long Live the First Anniversary of the Revolution." Petka duly notes that the first anniversary could never last more than one day, yet is not surprised by seeing such a comment flying on a banner. Apart from this, though, the image of this cultural icon is still very incongruous. Pelevin's dressing of the statue suggests the role the cultural elite played as messengers of the Revolution. It suggests the reinterpretation of history that the Soviets' version of national events seemed based upon. As the link between Pushkin and the Revolution is negligible, Pelevin's apron-wearing statue suggests the appropriation of the images of influential people by the Bolsheviks. It is significant that Pushkin is presented as static, a dead statue, 'dressed up' in political costume that presents an ideology.¹¹ The ideology is communicated by the self-contradictory slogan written across the statue's apron. Not only is this phrase, "Long Live the First Anniversary of the Revolution," suggestive of revisionist Soviet histories, it is markedly absurd in its context on the red apron. After all, the apron is used in preparing food while guaranteeing that the stains associated with consuming do not show up on the individual. What is Pelevin suggesting by this?

Buddha's Little Finger provides an account of the Civil War while exploring many of the issues I've raised in this chapter. The novel is a complex satire that, through the split-personality of one character, critiques both post-Revolutionary and post-communist Russia. The protagonist, Petka Voyd, is modeled on a figure of the Civil War of 1918-20, or *someone who believes himself to be this person*. Half of the novel's action takes place in the camps of the infamous Red Russian commissar and folk-hero Chapaev, in which Petka is his second-in-command. The other half of the novel takes place in a psychiatric research facility in Russia in the 1990s, where Voyd is being treated for delusions in which he sees himself as an historical figure from the Civil War. Like Bely's character of Lippanchenko, Petka, although not so sinister, is shown as a central member of the revolutionary forces, yet one who does not have a clear notion of self. Furthermore, Pelevin does not favour the reality of either scenario, and the novel alternates between the two periods as the protagonist is either falling asleep or waking. In each world, Petka views the previous time and space as a troubling dream, slowly overlapping with his momentary 'reality.' Throughout, the novel is concerned with notions of Russian identity and the power relations between people and history. Food and drink are frequently employed, as we shall see, to query Russian identity,

¹¹This notion of the dead celebrity, used in granting an ideological authority to a political regime, is something I will explore in a later chapter with the figure of Lenin himself.

artistic culture, history, class, and the direction the country is "presently" following. Given the temporal shifts in the novel, Pelevin manages to critique both periods.

Central to his critique is an exploration of identity politics in Russia, with Pelevin insinuating that very little has changed over the last hundred years. In one important passage, Pelevin has Petka and Chapaev discuss their allegiances in the Civil War. This is done in a way that queries the distinction between the collective and the individual, the proletarian and the intellectual, and, most importantly, it once more draws a link between food and the self. This drunken conversation features a carnival-like mixing of food, identity, sex and laughter. Petka wants to know whether Chapaev, one of the folk-heroes of the Revolution, is truly a Red. Chapaev presents him with two onions (from a bunch they have been eating), a red and a white:

'There are two onions in front of you, one white and the other red.'

'Well,' I said [...]

'So which are you, red or white?'

'Me? How do you mean?'

'When you look at the red onion, do you turn red?'

'No.'

'And when you look at the white onion, do you turn white?'

'No,' I said, 'I do not.'

'Let's proceed then,' said Chapaev [...] 'There are the Reds. And there are the Whites. But just because we're aware of the Reds and Whites, do we take on any colours? And what is there in you that can take them on?' (138-39)

Before allowing Petka to discuss his allegiance, Chapaev challenges him to define his own self. In their discussion of onions, we can see that identity and allegiance (or the earlier "collective visualization") are often confused. Frustrated, Petka finally describes himself as a monad, an interesting reference to Leibnitz's universe for one so fiercely defensive of his own free will. In his characteristic way, implying Leibnitz's sense of the connectedness of all atoms (or "monads"), Chapaev misinterprets Petka as describing himself as *a gonad*.¹² This metaphor displays a carnivalising of Petka's own sense of self: he becomes a part of the male sexual organ, is thus a part of a fertile situation, while ironically only one gonad of what is necessarily dual in nature (Petka's own split-identity is significant here). Not only is the *doubleness* of Petka's identity and history important here, but so is the implicit *duality*, that is, the difference between "now" and "then," and "self" and "other." Bakhtin suggests

¹²Although it has been impossible to verify the original pun in Russian, what is central to this passage (and the word "gonad") is the implication of inherent duality which is, of course, necessary to an understanding of Petka himself. Additionally, it describes the interplay that Pelevin establishes between the social realities of Russia at the crux of the "unique" periods of the Revolution and the disintegration of communism.

that the history of "the 'idea of man' [...] is always monistic. It always strives to overcome the dualism of the *I* and the *other*, even if in doing so it advances one of these categories as fundamental" (*Author and Hero* 58). In a passage that speaks directly to Petka's own mixed time-as-identity, Bakhtin continues:

We shall also have to leave open the question of whether it is possible for me —as an *I* opposed to all other human beings, past, present, and future— to abstract myself from my unique place in being, in order to understand the world fully as an ongoing event and to orient myself in the world as in an open and once-occurrent event. (58-9)

Thus, Petka's own inherent duality opens him up to the "world as an ongoing event," moving between times and identities as others *do not allow themselves to do*. The entire conversation between Petka and Chapaev, with its onions of shifting political identity and the mixing of the body, sex, food, and drink in the articulation of self is suggestive of schizophrenia. However, this "schizophrenia" is not simply the historical delusions of Petka's "openness" but also one experienced by the "new Russian." Appropriately, Pelevin refrains from truly distinguishing between the new Russian of the Revolution and the new Russian of post-communist capitalism. In the true Bakhtinian sense, this person is still "unfinished-becoming."

Pelevin's *Buddha's Little Finger* also dedicates a significant amount of time to illustrating the power relationships and language shared between the revolutionary leaders (now Commissars of the Red Army) and the proletariat, and the way in which their identity is often as conditioned by their context as Petka's is. In the novel, Chapaev manages to elicit strong emotional reactions from the proletarian soldiers he addresses. About to address the crowd himself, Petka asks Chapaev how he knows what to say to the soldiers. Chapaev answers:

You know, Pyotr, when one has to address the masses, it is quite unimportant whether one understands the words that one speaks. What is important is that other people understand them. One has simply to reflect the expectations of the crowd. Some achieve this by studying the language in which the masses speak, but I prefer to act in a more direct fashion. In other words, if you wish to learn what [my words mean], then it is not me you should be asking, but the men standing back there on the square. (76)

What some may perceive as a form of visceral candor in Chapaev's speech —namely that somehow he can speak to the soldiers 'in their language' that he does not fully understand

but they do— is more likely a sign of the ongoing division between the classes. While listening to Chapaev earlier, Petka finds it

painful to look at these men and imagine the dark maze woven by the pathways of their fates. They had been deceived since childhood, and in essence nothing had changed for them because now they were simply being deceived in a different fashion [...] and they were even being seen off to their deaths with a stupid charade played out by people who were entirely unconnected to them. (74-5)

For Pelevin, Petka's metaphysical ignorance throughout the novel is merely an extension of this charade of class-consciousness, played out by the intelligentsia, the revolutionaries, and the worker-soldiers. Once more, we find the "thoughts thinking themselves" that Bely describes in the crowds of shadows on the streets of St. Petersburg. Pelevin's soldiers consume the identity Chapaev dictates to them while Petka questions his own metaphysical condition, having realised the tenuous link those around him have to their own identities. These are the aimless, consumable units of the revolutionary victory, just as much soldiers of the war as they are food for the political machine. In *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács writes, "thus the revolutionary victory of the proletariat does not imply, as with former classes, *the immediate realization of the socially given existence of the class*, but, as the young Marx already saw and defined, *its self-annihilation*" (239).

As Bely seems to warn his readers and Pelevin portrays as already having taken place, self-annihilation was very much a product of the October Revolution and the cementing of identities that the Bolsheviks fostered through the Civil War years, whether or not it was the "self-annihilation" that Marx and Lukács wrote of. One cannot assume that either thought of the future classless society in quite this manner. However, that the people of Russia remained consumable is evident in the labour camps and years of silence and terror that followed Stalin's rise to power. As M.M. Bakhtin wrote from his (internal) exile during Stalin's reign, labour was inextricably linked to food, and it is through food-related events, such as the feast and the carnival, that community is formed and classes defined and challenged. This next phase of Russia's history — Stalin's years and, more specifically, the social philosophy that Bakhtin developed during this time— will inform the last chapter, where the distinction between food and the individual will become increasingly blurred.

Chapter Three

In such a world, passion, be it happy or sad, is only a brief episode, leaving few traces in memory. Political despair and the necessity of silence complete the picture: In the end, all of one's waking hours are dedicated to the fever of work.

—George Bataille *The Accursed Share*

Following the Red victory over the Whites in the Civil War of 1918-20, the Bolshevik's Communist Party began a long process of centralising power and control over all aspects of Russian —and eventually Soviet Union— life. This chapter will discuss, in greater detail than previously, the theoretical underpinning of the act of political consumption as it relates to social individuals, their efforts and labours, and the role of the state in eating its people. This chapter marks a departure from the previous two. The first chapter discussed how populist ideologues developed an image of food based upon the actual hunger of the peasants. Articulating an idealist future, the populists established images of food and food practice as symbols of present class inequality and potential collectivity for Russian society. The second chapter explored some ways in which this symbol of inequality continued to be played out in the Revolution itself. Revolutionary parties sought to capitalise on the political hunger of the underprivileged classes, and thus food symbols as well as actual food crises contributed to the strategic identity-formation of the working class. This final section will expand on the issues raised by the previous chapters. Developing on the relationship Bakhtin sees between food and labour, this chapter will query how the Revolution can be related to the notion of the carnival and how the concerted effort at collective political identities correspond to the simultaneous forces of production and consumption. Therefore, this third chapter will be grounded less in historical and sociological accounts, and will entertain more of a philosophical inquiry into the relationships between state, individual, consumption, silence, and power. As I have throughout, I will explore both the symbolic and material aspects of food and consumption simultaneously. The chapter will conclude with an alignment of Stalin's Gulag with the State carnival of Bakhtin's philosophy, exploring how these labour camps of heightened production were the final culmination of the Revolution's practice of consumption.

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin lived in the febrile atmosphere of post-Revolutionary Petrograd¹³ during his philosophically formative years. "Russia in 1917 was a marketplace of competing ideas, competing explanations of reality, and of proposals for actions" (Wade 99). Art, philosophy, writing, and, without a doubt, economics and politics were

¹³St. Petersburg/Petrograd was soon renamed by the Bolsheviks as Leningrad, although later it returned to the slavic version of Petersburg —Petrograd. For the remainder of this section I will refer to the city as such.

experiencing a rebirth in Russia's own 'roaring twenties': a cultural "revolution that might have rivaled in importance the political revolution it accompanied" (Booker and Juraga 3). This plethora of cultural and theoretical stances gave rise to a number of artistic and philosophic circles, avant-garde schools, and a general interest in new ways of seeing. Moving out of the troubled pre-revolutionary vision of the Symbolists (eg. Andrei Bely), the Formalists adopted a rigid structuralism, extremely analytical and evaluative in terms of cultural and literary productions.

It was the Formalists who first began to query the role of oral speech in Russian literature, something which would later influence the direction thinkers such as Bakhtin would take towards the oral and the folkloric. Fredric Jameson writes,

the Formalists do not really seem to have been willing to go much further towards a sociology of literature than this. They tended to denounce as eclecticism more explicit attempts to connect literature with the systems farthest away from it, such as the economic. They were, of course, quite right to do so when the relationships and influences claimed were formulated as immediate rather than mediated and indirect. (94)

We can assume that Jameson would view Volosinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* as such an attempt. Regardless of this, I.R. Titunik, the translator into English of this work, feels "the Bakhtin group and the formalists shared a number of crucial concerns in common" (177). Although Bakhtin's circle "fundamentally reoriented the whole field of stylistic inquiry" to one which was concerned with the "disclosure of speech formations in the dynamic terms of 'speech within speech and speech about speech'" (199), Titunik asserts that the Bakhtin circle was more of a "development" or "evolution" of Formalist thought than a "demolishing" of it (177). Be that as it may, it seems this *development* in Formalism, perhaps better situated with Roman Jakobson than with Bakhtin or Volosinov, is a highly qualified position for Titunik to stake out. For our purposes, it is more important simply to notice the movement from the Symbolists, with their eschatological attraction to the Revolution; to the Formalists, with their taxonomic evaluation of thought coupled with a simultaneous reluctance to invest literature with ideological messaging; to some shift into the Bakhtin circle, which strove to explore the folk elements within speech, within the material world, and, eventually, even within the process of revolution itself. Unsurprisingly, all three of these groups were soon considered too threatening to the Bolshevik government, perhaps because all shared a hesitancy to view authoritative political messaging as a positive aspect of any new, revolutionary art. Many among these groups were silenced or killed, and Bakhtin himself "was one of the last survivors among the intelligentsia of the early decades of the twentieth century (both time and Stalinist purges having taken their toll)" (Coates 2).

In addition to what amounted to a daily encounter with Russian philosophical schools such as these, Bakhtin was also versed in the dominant philosophy of his time, specifically Kantian and Hegelian/Marxist thought. Of course, Bakhtin would have also been aware of and influenced in some way by the effort to build a new, cohesive society from the ideas articulated by Marx, the Russian populists, and the many revolutionary thinkers since. Although Bakhtin criticises historical materialism in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* for "a methodical indiscrimination of what is given and what is set as a task, of what *is* and what *ought* to be," he recognises its attraction in that it offers contemporary thinkers an "effort to build its world in such a way as to provide a place in it for the performance of determinate, concretely historical, actual deeds" (20). It is probable that Marx would disagree with Bakhtin over the 'is/ought' divide (he would also likely name it as 'real/actual'); yet it is, frankly, a divide between the Hegelian (young) Marx and the Kantian (young) Bakhtin. What they do share, though, is a conviction for responsibility, for social action. In the first of his *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx claims that "the chief defect of all previous materialism (including Feuerbach's) is that the object, actuality, sensuousness is conceived only in the form of the *object or perception* [*Anschauung*], but not as *sensuous human activity, practice* [*Praxis*], not subjectively" (400). Like his other criticisms of Feuerbach,¹⁴ Marx discounts his thinking for a lack of vision and *involvement*.

In a similar vein, Bakhtin proposes the notion of a person's non-alibi in being: a claim that all actions by an individual are inextricably linked to their ontology, that no one can find an 'alibi' in existence which 'places' them elsewhere when accounting for their actions (40). This is not merely a 'proof' of one's deeds, but is a fundamental grounding of being in what Bakhtin would term "answerability" —of being connected and responsive to

¹⁴For Marx, Feuerbach bases his philosophy on the material world, yet also sees in it a communication or reflection of the essential and ideal. Because of this, Marx finds Feuerbach's thought avoids social and political demands for change:

He never manages to view the sensuous world as the total living sensuous *activity* of the individuals composing it. When he sees, for example, a crowd of scrofulous, over-worked, and consumptive wretches instead of healthy men, he is compelled to take refuge in the "higher perception" and "ideal compensation in the species." Thus he relapses into idealism at the very point where the communistic materialist sees the necessity and at the same time the condition of transforming industry as well as the social structure. (*The German Ideology* 419)

Like Feuerbach, Marx sees the material world as involved in the production of the individual but, by seeing the reciprocal relationship in the individual's production of the world as well, Marx envisions the actual social change of historical materialism.

the life one lives. In *Art and Answerability*, Bakhtin links this accountability-in-being to the union of art and life (or the represented and the experienced, respectively). Seeing a tendency in individuals to separate their experience of life from the communication of similar experience (whether their own or others'), he writes,

I have to answer with my own life for what I have experienced and understood in art, so that everything I have experienced and understood would not remain ineffectual in my life. But answerability entails guilt, or liability to blame. It is not only mutual answerability that art and life must assume, but also mutual liability to blame. (1)

The similarity in appeals by Marx and Bakhtin to action—a *praxis* clearly situated within a sense of personal responsibility—offers an aporia for the rest of this chapter: as the communist revolution of the proletariat that Marx envisioned gathered force and became a reality, a concordant responsibility in action, life, and art became increasingly difficult for other such thinkers and creators, Bakhtin included. Now, this is an interesting position in light of the principal arguments of this paper for, implicit in Marx's call to action is precisely that goal of the "production" of social reality that I have described in the rhetoric of Russia's ideologues. Further, if Bakhtin is raising a similar notion of responsibility in his work, and yet like many others was silenced by the eventual revolutionary government, it is difficult to say how his "actions" are related to the production of the social.¹⁵ Indeed, most would say that Bakhtin did answer for his art with his life, or, in the very least, with his health. Even though his 'internal exile' and philosophical development took him away from the Kantian roots of his early thought, it is not unrealistic to assume that Bakhtin continued to provide an "answer" to his actual social position and living condition through his writing. As discussed below, the writing of *Rabelais and His World* is a case in point.

As I demonstrated in the second chapter, post-Revolutionary Russia still posed many of the challenges to daily wellbeing that those living before it had experienced. As early as the mid-nineteenth century, populists such as A.N. Engelgardt had come "to see food and patterns of consuming as the fulcrum of social and economic relations in Russia" (Frierson 1997, 63). With three major famines between 1890 and 1914, it is understated to suggest that food in Russia became even more politicised. This was not something the

¹⁵However, it should be noted that it is possible to argue that Bakhtin's discussion of folk "utterance" and folk carnival engages in a romanticising of the peasantry—a romanticising with decidedly political and ideological implications—that is very similar to that which the populists based their reformism upon. As the first chapter discussed, such humanist and romantic notions of the folk were at the root of the debate on populist intentions and actions.

Bolsheviks easily resolved, with another significant crop failure during the Civil War of 1918-20. Indeed, if Bakhtin's manuscript of *Rabelais and His World* (which deals frequently with food imagery) had been published when originally completed, it likely would have been in the midst of the 1933 famine. Although Bakhtin's notions of the carnival are heavily contextualised by an analysis of medieval literature and folk traditions, most notably the writings of Rabelais, one can assume that his thinking was still very much informed by the social and political reality of post-Revolutionary Russia. Like the period in Russian history that Bakhtin was writing from, "Rabelais's time was marked by the rapid disintegration of the feudal order. This vertically-organized and extratemporal world was being replaced by a new chronotope and value-system" (Gardiner 56). This disintegration of the feudal order in Europe, to which Rabelais was partly responding, does have a similarity to the crumbling of slavo-feudalism in nineteenth-century Russia, culminating, of course, in the events of 1917. Additionally, the period of social, intellectual, and artistic excitement that the revolution introduced into Russian society could be compared in part to the experience of the French Renaissance, in which Rabelais is included. However, the 1920s were a brief period of artistic and intellectual awakening, and Stalin's rise to power effectively halted any social renewal that might have grown from this volatile period.

As the first and second chapters discussed, the hunger of the disenfranchised classes in Russia was an important element in mobilising these groups into a revolutionary collective. Their hunger could be understood variously as a hunger for sustenance, a hunger for social reform, a hunger for what the privileged were seen as having, and a hunger that initiated a politicised speech. On many levels, hunger was still very much a reality of post-Revolutionary Russia. Writing of the State dining halls discussed in the second chapter, Alexander Berkman describes the continued prevalence of hunger and hardship years after the Bolshevik victory: "the stores are closed, their shutters on. The signs still hang in their accustomed places —painted fruit and vegetables advertising the wares no more to be found within. Doors and windows are locked and barred, and everything is silent about." Walking through the once busy market streets, Berkman finds that "it is all changed now. At the entrance of the Labour Temple flames the legend: 'Who does not work shall not eat'" (34). Thus was hunger proscribed by the State and promised by empty signs, as it had been in the years before 1917.

As V.N. Turbin¹⁶ has argued, a personal hunger of this sort was a primary influence on Bakhtin's own interest in feasting and the carnival tradition. It is only by reading the

¹⁶Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain an English translation of Turbin's article, so I must refer to second-hand, partial translations. Both Ruth Coates and David Shepherd, whom I contacted, could not provide me with any more passages from Turbin than those reproduced in their respective works. As he was quite close to M.M. Bakhtin towards the end of the latter's

biography of Bakhtin as a social context to his philosophy, that Turbin feels we can conceive of it within its proper breadth. By doing so we avoid recreating it as an example of "theoreticism," Bakhtin's term for philosophy that did not answer to life. As he wrote earlier, in *Author and Hero*, "there is no clear cut, essentially necessary dividing line between autobiography and biography, and this is a matter of fundamental importance" (150). Turbin associated the "hunger and pain in Bakhtin's life as an experience in microcosm of hunger and pain in post-revolutionary Russia, [...] This, Bakhtin's experience of universal suffering, is said to have given rise to his writings on carnival" (Coates 16). Specifically, Turbin writes that Bakhtin "was a person the greater part of whose conscious life was accompanied by hunger and pain," which greatly influenced "the specific outline of the scholar's circle of interests." Turbin sees Bakhtin's descriptions of what he rarely knew himself—freedom, plenty, laughter—as "manifestations of the life of our body, the voice of the body linking the present day with history, private life with the life of the people" (Shepherd xiv). Thus, images of the volatile political space of the carnival, with its feasting and laughter, could be seen to grow from the relative lack of these folk-based experiences of power in the Russia of Bakhtin's adult life. Furthermore, the links that Turbin draws here, between the present day and history, between private hunger and public life, also find a precedent in Volosinov's influential *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. A discussion of the social and political role played by this hunger is important if we are to understand how Bakhtin's theory of feast and carnival relates to production and consumption of identity in Revolutionary Russia.

As I mentioned earlier, the Bakhtin circle spent their early years refuting the work of the Formalists, the dominant school of the day, and expanding upon the sociological aspects of semiology, particularly within the folkloric and the speech genres represented within more formal, cultural works. In Volosinov's (and Bakhtin's) work, social action (and artistic representation) is predicated on the "utterance." Volosinov places speech quite firmly within the social, both in formation and expression. "Aside from the fact that word as sign is a borrowing on the speaker's part from the social stock of available signs, the very individual manipulation of this social sign in a concrete utterance is wholly determined by social relations" (86). Further, in his proof of this, Volosinov employs a rather surprising example—that of hunger—to define the manner in which the utterance is thoroughly a social act. "Not even the simplest, dimmest apprehension of a feeling," he writes, "—say, the feeling of

life, and as they traded many letters, I hope that soon some of Turbin's writing will reach an English audience. The passages I quote here are Turbin's own, from "Karnaval: religiia, politika, teosofiia" in *Bakhtinshii sbornik*. K.G. Isupov et al. (Eds.) Moscow: Prometei. 1990. 6-29. The translation is David Shepherd's, from his introduction to *Critical Studies* 3:2/4:1-2. 1993.

hunger— can dispense with some kind of ideological form. Any apprehension, after all, must have inner speech" (87). So, although this inner speech is a fundamentally personal event, it takes as its basis the ideological and meaning-invested signs already established by society. Furthermore,

Which way the intoning of the inner sensation of hunger will go depends upon the hungry person's general social standing as well as upon the immediate circumstances of the experience. [...] The immediate social context will determine possible addressees, friends or foes, toward whom the consciousness and the experience of hunger will be oriented: whether it will involve dissatisfaction with cruel Nature, with oneself, with society, with a specific group within society, with a specific person, and so on. [...] There is the possibility that the experience of hunger may take on political coloring, in which case its structure will be determined along the lines of a potential political appeal or a reason for political agitation. It may be apprehended as a form of protest, and so on. (87)

In the ensuing discussion, Volosinov looks at the utterance of hunger on three social levels (with an implied fourth). The first of these is the individual beggar, wholly defined by and reliant upon the social context of the uttered hunger and an appeal from commonly understood positions of humility and shame. The second is that of the peasant, or the collective hunger that is viewed as something shared by all, but experienced individually (thus, for Volosinov, leading to fatalism and apolitical suffering). The third is the hunger of a united collective, as with that found in soldier or labourer unions. In this example, the experience of hunger "will be marked predominantly by overtones of active and self-confident protest with no basis for humble and submissive intonation. These are the most favorable grounds for an experience to achieve ideological clarity and structuredness" (89). The fourth, of course, is a bourgeois or aristocratic hunger, much like that which A.N. Engelgardt challenges in his readers: the hunger from a leisurely walk taken before sitting down to dine on a prepared meal.

Apart from its reaffirmation of the role of the social context in the formation of the epistemological, Volosinov's discussion of hunger in relation to the sign and society echoes what one encounters elsewhere in Bakhtin's philosophy: namely, a heavy investment in the politics of the social, in the speech of the folk, and in the hunger that links these two together. Addressing the class-issues behind hunger, Bakhtin states quite clearly in *Rabelais and His World*, that "banquet images in the popular-festive tradition (and in Rabelais) differ sharply from the images of private eating or private gluttony and drunkenness in early bourgeois literature [...] Such imagery," he continues, "is torn away from the process of labor and struggle; it is removed from the marketplace and is confined to the house and the

private chamber [... it is] an intimate feast with hungry beggars at the door [...] it is a picture of gluttony, not an expression of social justice" (301-2). Passages such as this display Bakhtin's self-alignment with a socialist perspective, perhaps even a communist one, though he finds historical materialism lacking in ethics. Perhaps this is his own attempt to inculcate such values within the society he takes part in, or at least to come to terms with his own beliefs within that social context.

It is because of such judgements that some have viewed Bakhtin's work on Rabelais as a latent critique of Stalin's regime. Bataille has written, more generally, that such "romantic longing for the Middle Ages is in fact only an abandonment. It has the meaning of a protest against the rise of industry, versus the nonproductive use of resources" (133). Is Bakhtin's notion of carnival and banquet, then, a demonstration of the excesses and freedoms no longer allowed in the carefully resourced, newly-industrialised Russia? Along these lines, Sergei Averintsev has suggested that Bakhtin's interest in Rabelaisian laughter and carnival is "the longing glance towards that place where laughter *is* permissible, towards the West" (15). Is Bakhtin simply taking part in the age-old East/West divide,¹⁷ with its well-worn dichotomy of oppression and freedom? As Bakhtin states in *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel*, "Rabelais' task is to purge the spatial and temporal world of those remnants of a transcendent world view still present in it, to clean away symbolic and hierarchical interpretations still clinging to this vertical world" (168). Would such Rabelaisian chronotopes not be what the Russian Revolution was about? I will address this debate on the capacity and end-result of carnival shortly. It is significant, though, that in the closing to *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin himself states that the writing of Rabelais—both his satire of the old, oppressive regimes and his joyful celebration of the new—"sheds its light" on "other ages" (474). This comment is an affirmation of the shift in understanding and power that the Revolution enacted, but is also generally accepted as a criticism directed at the curtailing of the Revolution by the Stalinist government. Booker and Juraga state it thus: "Bakhtin's description of a sterile, monological society in *Rabelais and His World* [...] refers simultaneously to a medieval world of the distant past and to a Soviet world of his own Stalinist present" (2).

¹⁷The notion of an East/West divide has continued in modern scholarship surrounding Bakhtin. Caryl Emerson's essay "The Russians Reclaim Bakhtin (as of Winter 1992)" situates its documenting of the "reclaiming" of Bakhtin in the dismantling of the Soviet Union, claiming that "for many Russian scholars, serious work with Bakhtin's ideas has come to mean applying his philosophical humanism to recuperate, in Russia's stubbornly class-bound and collective society, the individual human being." Meanwhile, Emerson asserts, most Westerners are more enamoured with Bakhtin as "the object of a cult [of personality]," something the Russians are now understandably wary of (415-25).

Bakhtin's theory of the carnival, always, is about an interaction or dialogue between both the 'old' and 'official' and the 'new' and 'unofficial.' In *Forms of Time*, Bakhtin presents the notion of carnival within the sensuous and materialist language of his earlier Kantian ethics:

It is necessary to destroy and rebuild the entire false picture of the world, to sunder the false hierarchical links between objects and ideas, to abolish the divisive ideational strata. It is necessary to liberate all these objects and permit them to enter into the free unions that are organic to them, no matter how monstrous these unions might seem from the point of view of ordinary, traditional associations. These objects must be permitted to touch each other in their living corporeality, and in the manifold diversity of the values they bear. It is necessary to devise new matrices between objects and ideas that will answer to their real nature, to once again line up and join together those things that had been falsely disunified and distanced from one another—as well as to disunite those things that had been falsely brought into proximity. (169)

Here, Bakhtin presents a vision of change which encompasses the manifold of all human conception, including of the self and society —based not on a radical relativism as some have understood it, but on the "*necessary*" and "*real natures*" of objects and our ideas about them. In reading such notions of the rejuvenation of the material-conceptual world, one recalls both Volosinov's idea of a reified ideology and Marx's claim of the manifestation of production within the individual producer. Marshall Berman notes an oddly similar process —one which Marx describes as a tenet of capitalist society— namely, that "all that is solid' [... is] made to be broken tomorrow, smashed or shredded or pulverized or dissolved, so they can be recycled or replaced next week, and the whole process can go on again and again, hopefully forever, in ever more profitable forms" (99). Berman is paraphrasing Marx's description of capitalist innovation, one which could mirror Bakhtin's process whereby new "matrices" —the linkages of the material world with our understanding of it— are made from the old.¹⁸ It will serve us now, however, to discuss in more grounded terms the matrices and themes of Bakhtin's carnival, and how they incorporate food, consumption, and identity in the actualised historical event of the Russian Revolution.

¹⁸It is interesting to note how such change is at the heart of Bakhtin's carnival, in the creation of new unions and matrices of old 'materials.' These alternative semantic and political worlds can be compared in part to the radical restructuring of society and meaning found in Marx's form of communism, which is, by definition, a restructuring born of the earlier truths of capitalism itself.

Bakhtin typically presents carnival elements through a vivid discussion of popular festivities, particularly such aspects of folk carnival tradition as the grotesque body, drink and drunkenness, and, most importantly for our purposes, food and feast. To revisit Barthes, we are told that food, on a symbolic level, "has the constant tendency to transform itself into situation" (58). By "situation" we can understand food to communicate both the 'social environment' of the labourers, discussed earlier, as well as the process of labour itself: that which leads to food being consumed. As I discussed in the introduction to this paper, the material condition of food carries ideological 'weight' and contributes to the social definition of the labourer. It is both a product and producer of the social identity of those who consume it. In *The Grundrisse*, Marx writes: "It is clear that in taking in food, for example, which is a form of consumption, the human being produces his own body. But this is also true of every kind of consumption which in one way or another produces human beings in some particular aspect" (91). By this, Marx suggests that the dynamic of consumption and production at the material level mirrors that of the social, that is, one of the other principal places in which the human can be said to be produced. Thus, beyond the political rhetoric of the Bolsheviks or the mobilising of hungry workers, we find the "situation" of food continues to produce social individuals and to "transform" itself and them into a social collective.

Bakhtin echoes this in *Forms of Time*. He writes that eating and drinking bring together the material and the human through incorporation: the process of ingestion brings the vanquished world, the act of labour, and the human subject into a mutual, somatic space. Here, the materialism of food is aligned with the production of (a radically new) social and semantic space:

the eating and drinking series, through their grotesque development, perform the task of destroying archaic and false matrices between objects and phenomena, and create new matrices, fleshed-out ones, that materialize the world. At its positive pole this series ends in nothing less than ideological enlightenment, the culture of eating and drinking, which is an essential feature of the new human image, a man who is harmonious and whole. (187)

Thus, food situates the labourer within the social world while the process of eating materialises the labour, giving it meaning. As Volosinov writes, "any ideological product [...] is a sign" (9). As a representation of class and hunger (and thus as an "ideological product"), the consuming of food signifies the individual within a social and political space. Once hunger has been applied as a symbol of social disparity, eating automatically carries with it the carnival's duality: it is either an eating which resituates the subject and renews the

subject's world through its new frames of understanding, or it is an eating which reinscribes the social disparity that existed before. I will address these two tenets of the carnival shortly.

The Rabelaisian "series" which effect this carnival transformation are listed by Bakhtin as "(1) series of the human body, in its anatomical and physiological aspects; (2) human clothing series; (3) food series; (4) drink and drunkenness series; (5) sexual series (copulation); (6) death series; (7) defecation series" (170). These "series" are the sites or actions of intersection: they act as catalysts in the carnival for the incorporation and resituating of old matrices, old language, old hierarchy. An example of how these elements can be used to bring about revolutionary combinations in imagery and meaning is demonstrated by the character of Petka in Victor Pelevin's *Buddha's Little Finger*. Petka's lewd poetry readings frame the novel. Both are presented in situations of drunkenness and feasting. Each reading is also spontaneous —Petka either has nothing prepared or has modified his poem at the moment of performance. Furthermore, following his later reading, Petka feels that his "success had somewhat intoxicated [him]," and had been greeted with "a rumbling cannonade from the bristling forest of gun-barrels that had sprouted above the audience, followed by a roar of sheer delight" (280). In this situation, Petka's bawdy poem elicits a sudden, violent eruption from the mutinous Red soldiers listening, who do not —like Petka himself— understand much of what he says. Instead, they appear to react viscerally to the situation of his reading rather than to what he is saying. The poem is a nonsensical recounting of an aristocrat's efforts at a sexual liaison with a married woman. In the poem, the Baron is able to "wear a bagel" on his person, and Petka concludes his verse by suggesting that such an act is now also the right of the free proletariat:

This story will seem no more than a joke
 To little children who will never guess
 How bloodsuckers exploited common folk,
 Oppressed the peasants and the working class.
 But now each working man can wear a bagel
 As bold as any count was ever able. (280)

With this commingling of food and sex comes an eros-thanatos linkage, as Petka ponders the recent Bolshevik execution of the Tsar: "I remembered the death of the Emperor [...] and an almost pure anapaest threaded with interlinking rhymes flowed out as if of its own accord on to the paper. The form now seemed to me like some totally improbable echo of the past" (275). Thus, in true carnival fashion, Petka links death and the overthrowing of the old regime with food, sex, and therefore a new world for a 'new Russian.' Through such a process, "objects transcend their own 'natural' boundaries and become fused or linked with other things. From this," Gardiner writes, "is derived their pregnant and two-sided nature,

the quality of 'unfinished becoming' which is anathema to officialdom" (47). Petka uses food imagery, quite literally, to create a pregnant, revolutionary space within which the folk revel in the dismantling of preestablished meaning.

The carnival itself is described often as a chaotic and pregnant space,¹⁹ filled with the articulation of new symbols through the intersecting of the series. The mixing of food and the grotesque performs a "bringing-together of that which had traditionally been kept distant and disunified" (*Forms of Time* 170). For Bakhtin, the carnival-goer is also a non-participant in everyday, official life: the carnival is a temporary time apart from history, a crux, a momentary interstice. Significantly, in the incensed revolt of the soldiers following his poem, Petka escapes from the raging crowd and 'falls' into his other temporal reality, the post-communist psychiatric ward. This is not incongruous with the carnival. As Bakhtin declares in *Rabelais and His World*, the banquet and carnival of folk tradition

offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom, a world in which all medieval people participated more or less, in which they lived during a given time of the year. (6)

For Petka, history is broken at the time of the carnival feast that follows his poem: he barricades himself in his room and falls asleep as the soldiers begin their revolt, only to awaken in the entirely different world of post-communist Russia. "The feast," writes Bakhtin, "was a temporary suspension of the entire official system with all its prohibitions and hierarchic barriers. For a short time life came out of its usual, legalized and consecrated furrows and entered the sphere of utopian freedom" (89). In this example, Pelevin never truly indicates which temporal world is the official and which is the "utopian freedom." Both times, both "worlds," influence each other, trading 'sideways glances' through time.

It is because of such comments (i.e. of "utopias") that many scholars have chosen to view the carnival and its "excesses" as "constitut[ing] an alternative 'social space' of freedom, abundance and equality" (Gardiner 45). This is an unfortunate gloss of what Bakhtin intends the carnival to communicate. True, the term "utopian freedom" is used by Bakhtin, but that does not necessarily imply an egalitarianism. Gardiner's conclusion that the carnival's alternative social space offers participants some form of "equality" is a gross

¹⁹An interesting discussion of the "pregnancy" of the carnival can be found in Ruth Ginsburg's essay "The Pregnant Text. Bakhtin's Ur-Chronotope: the Womb," in which she argues that Bakhtin appropriates the female power of reproductive creation and subsequently erases the presence of women within his philosophy, having situated this power within the carnival itself. *Critical Studies* 3:2/4:1-2. 1993.

misinterpretation of what Bakhtin's carnival achieves. Distinctly and repeatedly, Bakhtin stresses the temporary nature of carnival. He does document the folk carnival as opposing official culture and even, at times, overthrowing or debasing it. And, at the same time, he does show that certain aspects of unofficial culture such as the "material body lower strata" and debaucherous behaviour become ritualised and revered, raising up the lower classes and the lower body through the carnival's process. This is very different, however, from the equalising that Gardiner claims for it. For, within the carnival, both new monarchs *and new slaves* are continually created. Additionally, Gardiner's account, notably the "ceaseless battle between the forces of stasis and [...] change," the "radically democratic basis" of carnival, and Bakhtin's "desire [...] to understand and indeed encourage [...] the 'popular deconstruction' of official discourses and ideologies," (34, 52, 2) neglect the *temporary* nature that Bakhtin is sure to stress when discussing the banquet and carnival. Averintsev feels the temporary is a central aspect of Bakhtin's philosophy, and one that is potentially damning for Bakhtin's ideas. He writes, "carnival is freedom and freedom only; yet if freedom regulates itself according to premonitions of the ecclesiastical calendar and seeks a place for itself within a conventional system, our judgment about its nature as freedom ought to be somewhat restricted and qualified" (14). Further to this, Booker and Juraga discount the liberation myth that the carnival often receives, particularly the implication that the carnival offers a return to the "true" Revolution that Stalin stole from the people. They write:

In the Soviet Union, the oppressive tsarist past was interrupted by the emancipatory excitement of the postrevolutionary 1920s, only to see oppression restored under the rule of Stalin. Bakhtin's treatment of the carnival thus becomes not a naively optimistic paean to the power of revolution, but a reminder of just how difficult revolutionary change can be. [...] But, if one reads this metaphor as double-voiced, then Stalin's carnivalism actually reinforces Bakhtin's complex use of the carnival as an image of both liberation and oppression. (7)

Although Booker and Juraga's interpretation offers a valuable qualification to the "cult" of Bakhtin as the oppressed victim of the Soviet regime 'writing back,' their reading, which is appropriately *dialogic*, is not sufficiently *dialectical* to recognise where the bridge between these two carnivals rests. For, any reading which views the carnival as an event, even as a process, will only be able to see self-contradictions within the historical play of carnival in the twentieth-century history of Russia. That is, it will only ever be understood as leading to Stalin, while we have already ascertained that Bakhtin makes certain to allow its application to "other ages." To view the Revolution as carnival, a temporary freeing and rebuilding of

the social and cultural world, followed by the State carnival of totalitarian rule, assumes that this is what the carnival is and will always end up being. This is paramount to a writing which suggests that Marx's notions of historical materialism, of communism, lead naturally and finally, always, to Stalin. Ernest Gellner presents this view in *Plough, Sword and Book*: "the Reign of Terror is not a corruption, a betrayal, a 'distortion' of the Revolution: it is its natural corollary" (147). Although it is quite true that communism will never take form in the way it was originally envisioned —again the aporia I mentioned above— such a view, even if allowing for the dialogic and ambivalent, is far too simplistic. By understanding carnival as a dialectic we can see both of these events as perfectly legitimate instances of carnival. To do otherwise is to attempt to place a favoured political reading onto the carnival by viewing it within the frame of the "success" or "failure" of something that simply describes the ways in which human society and symbology undergo change. Perhaps, now, it would be of some use to turn to the State carnival that *did* follow the Revolution —that is, to look at some ways in which the Soviet totalitarian state employed carnival forms. It will, in the very least, return my discussion to the role of consumption in power relationships.

The distinguishing characteristic between the two carnivals is not actually that easy to define. What we can say is that the so-called "dictatorship of the proletariat" was carried out a little too literally. As Berman puts it,

We can see, too, how communism, in order to hold itself together, might stifle the active, dynamic and developmental forces that have made it worth fighting for, might reproduce the inequities and contradictions of bourgeois society under a new name. Ironically, then, we can see Marx's dialectic of modernity re-enacting the fate of the society it describes, generating energies and ideas that melt it down into its own air. (105)

This is what Bataille passes off as "the paradox of a proletariat forced to impose its will inflexibly on itself, to renounce life in order to make life possible" (156). A paradox, indeed. The Revolution itself, a spontaneous mixing of hungry and politicised people, and the ensuing outpouring of ideas, art, political philosophy, and egalitarian reform is a case in point for the potential behind the folk carnival. However, as I have already alluded to, many have found that the subsequent return to autocracy with the rise of Stalin compromises the capacity of the carnival for change or true revolution. The cult of personality that became the basis of Stalin's rule over the people brought a return to the religious sanction of brief, adulatory feasts, which were followed by the prolonged fasts that so many Russians were previously acquainted with. Like all god-kings, one of Stalin's first goals in taking control

was to establish his link to the predetermined and necessary. "The historical inversion in philosophical structures is characterized by a corresponding assumption of 'beginnings' as the crystal-clear, pure sources of all being, of eternal values and modes of existence that are ideal and outside time" (Bakhtin *Forms of Time* 148). In addition to the deification of Lenin shortly before his death (which also served to alienate Trotsky), Stalin continued Lenin's mandate of interpreting the spontaneity of 1917 as an historical imperative of leftist progress. This argument comes across now as oddly deterministic, as such a view of constant progress towards the inevitable Revolution was one of the principal divides between Bolshevik and Menshevik philosophies. Of course, for Stalin to imbed such historicism into the Revolution served to both establish a sense of purpose to his own power, and to outlaw the spontaneous. From that point on, in the early 1930s, to be spontaneous was to counter the process which led to the Revolution, and thus to refute Stalin's own legitimacy and, by implication, to cast doubt on the fixity of the communist present and its officially-sanctioned meanings.

One significant revisioning of the past —reminiscent of the infamous Soviet altering of historic photographs— is documented in the wonderfully dark, anecdotal history of Ilya Zbarsky who, along with his father, was one of Lenin's official embalmers. *Lenin's Embalmers* documents the history of Lenin's death —and it is a death which is still happening— from 1924 to the present. Throughout the book, Zbarsky aligns such embalming with the political goal "to reinforce the legitimacy of [the] regime by preserving the body of [the] 'historic' leader" (178). Having won his first major backroom victory (Trotsky accused him of replacing the saints of Orthodoxy with the those of communism), Stalin and his supporters established that the Party would seek to do the unprecedented: to preserve Lenin's corpse indefinitely, with modern bio-chemistry and in such a way that his visage would remain proof to future generations of the monumental history of the Revolution (11). Zbarsky, recording the early history of this decision, writes that

At [a later] meeting, a discussion ensued between the scientists and the politicians about the best ways of preserving Lenin's body. Krasin, backed by Dzerzhinsky and Molotov, stuck to his idea of refrigeration. [...However] Vorobiov had no doubt that the only viable method of preserving Lenin's body was to immerse it in a liquid containing glycerine and potassium acetate.

The politicians thought little of this idea, however. Molotov declared that the refrigeration method —'the most realistic'— ought to be examined.... (24)

This history of the absurd proposal to refrigerate Lenin is perhaps one of the earliest examples of the State carnival: Lenin becomes the carnival king invested with the

symbology of the new world—he has been 'de-throned' from life yet raised up by, at least an historical, laughter. His refrigeration—which is not only of Lenin but of the image and legitimacy of the Revolution—ironically echoes the philosophy of the nineteenth century Russian thinker, Konstantin Leontiev "who advocated 'freezing' Russia, i.e. fixing its stage of development for all time at autocracy" (Maguire and Malmstad 301). Furthermore, through this process, Lenin becomes a foodstuff of sorts: first a refrigerated good, then something literally *marinated* with glycerine and a "'balsam' to prevent it from drying up and wrinkling," "injected," and even "constantly impregnated with the fluid" to give it a supple, unchanging, and life-like look (Zbarsky 78). In *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity*, Bakhtin posits that "any memory of the past will be somewhat aestheticized; [while] memory of the future is always ethical" (153). Written a year before Lenin's death, we can read this statement as anticipating such a tendency within the young Bolshevik government—the state legitimising of present power through the past. Thus, the embalmed corpse becomes Lenin cum food-sign cum history of the future, i.e. of Stalin. Truly, in this historical materialist *preserve*, we find "that Leninism and then Stalinist totalitarianism were able to constitute themselves, harden themselves monstrously into their cadaverous rigor" by defining themselves against the past (that is, the West) (Derrida 105).

Like many who had experienced the brunt of Soviet oppression, Bakhtin was aware of the potential for carnival to be manipulated so as to reinforce the power of state or church. He outlines some typical characteristics of the official's feast in his introduction to *Rabelais and His World*. "Actually," he writes,

the official feast looked back at the past and used the past to consecrate the present. Unlike the earlier and purer feast, the official feast asserted all that was stable, unchanging, perennial: the existing hierarchy, the existing religious, political, and moral values, norms and prohibitions. It was the triumph of a truth already established. (9)

The Truth of the Revolution was established somewhere between the mausoleum housing display windows of Lenin's packaged corpse and the high, secretive walls of the Kremlin. Behind these, the official feast was taking place. In the Kremlin, "while the people of Moscow went hungry [during the Second World War], we could order fine dishes, and afterwards take home rarities like butter, cheese, ham and marvellous white bread" (Zbarsky 122). Stalin, constantly rewriting the past to reflect his future, constantly silencing people to make his truth, seems the Narcissus that Bakhtin describes in *Author and Hero*: "grown accustomed to dreaming about himself in concrete terms," he is "a man who strives to visualize the external image of himself, who is morbidly sensitive about the outward

impression he produces and yet is insecure about that impression and easily wounded in his pride" (59). Silencing and killing, this gluttonous State carnival undercut what revolutionary force the Russian folk carnival of 1917 initially had, if it could be said to have been ever truly of the folk. As Derrida writes in *Specters of Marx*, revolutionaries must always revolutionise their sense of the past along with themselves. To be truly free of property, investment, memory, (including, we can assume, of the past) "they must cease to inherit. They must no longer even do that mourning work in the course of which the living maintain the dead, play dead, busy themselves with the dead, [...] speak *them* and speak *to them*, bear their name and hold forth in their language" (113). Instead, we find a government preoccupied with Lenin's corpse, with the recent past, with stasis and the dead. In the dictatorship of Stalin, we encounter the images of the ideologues not only producing the folk, but enforcing that production. It was through the few that managed to get through the Soviet borders that these dead have managed to speak, telling stories which still haunt the memory of communism.

From the censors came silence. From the rewriting of history came the reluctance to believe in what was happening or what had happened. Promised by the fickleness of the regime, Soviet revisions shed their light back through time. What had not yet happened (or had not yet been written to have happened) helped to erase what had been experienced: people policed themselves, lied to themselves, grew as silent as those the state enslaved or killed. Truth became a government dispatch, printed in newspapers, knocking on the door. "Nor is it surprising that one of the most important movements in postStalinist Russian literature (Solzhenitsyn is exemplary here) involved an attempt to recover the 'true' history of the Russian cultural identity that had begun to be established in the nineteenth century" (Booker and Juraga 20). As Solzhenitsyn's own search for history illustrates, the establishment of 'truth' was a consuming passion in postrevolutionary Russia—for both the Soviet government and those who survived it. This need was inherited by those who were silenced by the State's hunger and fear. It is in such writing that we encounter the maliciousness and inherent hegemony of the carnival feast.

Solzhenitsyn, himself a victim of Stalinist silencing from the same period as Bakhtin, uses vivid metaphors of consumption to reclaim Russian history from political erasure. In *The Gulag Archipelago*, the reader is presented with a documentary-like search for the "truth" through an anecdotal recounting of Stalin's purges. This is done from a variety of perspectives which serve to create a collective history. "Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions," Bakhtin writes in *Discourse in the Novel*, "it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and

accents, is a difficult and complicated process" (294). Instead, Solzhenitsyn writes of the Gulag through what Bakhtin would call a polyphonic voice: filtering the stories of many who did not survive the camps into his own, expressing their own experiences as they were told and trusted to him, as they were rumoured or forced from them by the authorities.

Solzhenitsyn writes of the power relations of post-Revolutionary Russia in very somatic terms. In these, we see clearly the link of the food series to those of body, defecation, and death. A collective of scattered islands (symbolising the remote Soviet concentration camps), Solzhenitsyn's "Archipelago" is only accessible through a system of intricate sewage lines whose cesspools carry the newly swallowed and digested folk of the Soviet state. He writes:

Through the sewer pipes the flow pulsed. Sometimes the pressure was higher than had been projected, sometimes lower. But the prison sewers were never empty. The blood, the sweat, and the urine into which we were pulped pulsed through them continuously. The history of this sewage system is the history of an endless swallow and flow.... (25)

This description becomes more ominous and appropriate when we find that, for Bakhtin, death and pain are easily a part of the carnival. He writes that "the word 'to die,' had [...] the meaning of 'being swallowed' or 'being eaten up'" (*Rabelais and His World* 301). Indeed, there are two complementary swallowings in Solzhenitsyn's Gulag. In the same passage as the above, he describes the secret police responsible for this prison sewer:

It is well known that any organ withers away if it is not used. Therefore, if we know that the Soviet Security organs, or Organs (and they christened themselves with this vile word), praised and exalted above all living things, have not died off even to the extent of one single tentacle, but, instead, have grown new ones and strengthened their muscles—it is easy to deduce that they have had constant exercise. (25)

Thus he describes both the ingestion performed by the "organs" of state control and the incorporation of various consumed citizens—the final collectivising of this communism—into the ebb and flow of the Soviet sewers' labour/penal system. Both swallowings are typical of the carnival. Writing on a passage from Rabelais which relates a trip to the underworld, Bakhtin describes the way in which these subterranean visions are an intricate part of the same carnival we know typically for its joy, laughter, and freedoms. It is also an added reason why a reading of the carnival as egalitarian seriously misrepresents it as an event rather than a dialectic:

The image of the underworld offered in this episode has sharply defined popular festive character. Hell is a banquet and a gay carnival. We find here all the familiar debasing ambivalent images of drenching in urine, beating, travesty, abuse. The downward thrust, inherent in all Rabelaisian images, brings us to the underworld, but the underworld also symbolizes this descent.

In the Rabelaisian system of images the underworld is the junction where the main lines of this system cross each other: carnivals, banquets, fights, beatings, abuses, and curses. (*Rabelais and His World* 386)

Thus, the Gulag is also the "downward thrust" of the Revolution in Russia: it is the debasing of the people as well as a consuming of them. Moreover, in the mixing of these people into a pulp of raw material, it is a carnivalising of their identities, for none left Stalin's carnival quite the same. "In the Stalin era, [the human promise] was scattered to the Gulag and left for dead; but its resonance proved deep enough to survive many murders and, indeed, to outlive its murderers as well" (Berman 283).

As the young Bakhtin could foresee in 1919 while writing *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, "no one, however, lives in a world in which all humans beings are —with respect to value— equally mortal" (48). The labour camps of the Gulag spoke of this reality with more clarity than any words could. Equality, once more, is not something the carnival —any carnival— provides for. Food, death, shit, and laughter are provided. Time is bent, meaning is twisted, traditions are obscured, and people are changed. This is what it is about; people, meaning, and the world are changed. By definition, the carnival is utterable, but always and fundamentally silent in its political intent. In her final letter to her husband, before he died while being interrogated by the "Organs," Nadezhda Mandelstam wrote: "In my last dream I was buying food for you in a filthy hotel restaurant. The people with me were total strangers. When I had bought it, I realised I did not know where to take it, because I do not know where you are. When I woke up [I knew you were] dead" (125-26). Osip Mandelstam, a poet killed by the Gulag, a poet who refused silence, lived in despair over the loss of meaning the carnival confusion had bred in Russia after 1917. The State carnival killed him, but it was the folk carnival that first threw the world on its head. This rising of the people, like a yeast, fermented everything around him, soured it, yet also made it potent and new: it was the destruction contained within creation, or the consumption which contains its own production. Both carnivals share this latency. It is, of course, one which is wholly relative in its application. For Mandelstam, this change and destruction (now manifested by the state) threatened him —threatened his life— with the loss of his words, because the government was willing to work him to death in exchange for his silence. He writes, among the final poems of his internal exile and his life,

Dear yeast of the world—
 sound, tears and work—
 rainy stresses
 of trouble brewing,
 and from what ore can one recover
 the sound losses? (63)

What material of the world, he asks, contains the past? Even the material world is changed and debased, made quiet and complacent. It is also, however, a world which is "brewing," it is dark and fermenting, "full of copper water," waiting. It is both the end of the world and its beginning, a place and time where the poet is "both the blind man and the guide," on "tracks, / unknown" (63).

In the Soviet underworld of urine and sweat, of toil and abuse, the scatological intersects with the eschatological as the State eats its own citizens. The scatological results from a combination of food and the body made grotesque. The people become a fuel for state labour, they become an arm of the "collective body," have their identities debased, go hungry, lay mortar on bricks, and return to their bunks again. This is the gist of Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*: he has given up worrying about "how to feed his family [since] the fellows at the top thought about everything for him" (47). The eschatological end of the world that the Gulag offers is both 'the end' as the conclusion of free thought, even life, and also 'the end' as the rectum and underworld of the State. Stories are silenced in the excretion of the folk now obsolete, whose revolution has turned to those who now hold power in their name. If nothing else, this is what Marx describes in *Capital* as *surplus value*: "It teaches at the same time how to throw the excrement of the processes of production and consumption back again into the circle of the process of reproduction, and thus, without any previous outlay of capital, creates new matter for capital" (663). As Marx writes, this is a tenet of capitalist production, and is closely linked to social labour and the drive for efficiency. Surplus is also the underlying idea of Bataille's *The Accursed Share*: a society must find an outlet for its excesses, "not a profitable use of the available labor, but rather its consumption, the destruction of its utility" (132). In Russia, that consumption and destruction happened to be of the population in whose name the Revolution had been started. This is the sinister meeting of the food and defecation series: the people have come full cycle—from the producers of the material world to the material of the underworld— food and defecation meet in the death series, in the hunger of the totalitarian State. As Bakhtin informs us, though, Rabelais reevaluated death so that it was found within the life series, so that it became, therefore, a part of life, not

waiting at the end to arrest it. It is for this reason that there are those still left to remember Stalin's purges, as well as those to justify them. Bataille's apologia for Stalin reads thus: "The Russian world had to make up for the backwardness of czarist society and this was necessarily so painful, it demanded an effort so great, that the hard way—in every way the most costly way— became its only solution" (164). For many people, it was the final solution.

For Bakhtin, too, silence was very nearly his final state: he very nearly ended his life without having been allowed his "apprehensions" of life, art, and society to become fully materialised "utterances." Those pieces of his thought that have survived, however, do not, as various theorists have contended, present a straightforward critique of the Soviet regime, nor do they champion a Western, democratic, or liberal individualism and freedom that some see reflected in their own readings of him. As in his earliest work, Bakhtin's later ideas are still concerned with what *is* and what *ought to be*. Considering the situation of the present he lived in and wrote from, he discussed the *ought* with great care. Bakhtin chose to do so through discussions of novels "associated with the eternal living element of unofficial language and unofficial thought" rather than ethics, with "heroes" and "authors" rather than metaphysics and theology, with carnival calendars and traditions rather than revolutions and totalitarianism (*Epic and Novel* 20).

In Bakhtin we find that the intersection of labour and labourer, the unifying of food and self, and the swallowing of a nation's people are all a part of the carnival. We encounter hunger as speech, and silence as a collective experience; we read Russia into Rabelais. Yet, although it can be viewed in the light of Bataille's writing as a necessary oppression, Bakhtin always allows for fear to be defeated in the carnival through laughter. Laughter is the dynamo behind the carnival effort: it is the force whose currents rush through history, and whose sound points to the silence of the State. Stricken with a material realism throughout much of the Soviet era, particularly from the 1930s to 60s, and aware of Solzhenitsyn's truth-seeking of the 1960s and 70s, the literature of contemporary Russia has largely turned to renewing ties with the past through such laughter, satire, allegory and metaphor. Contemporary writers are still thinking about the Revolution, and what it means today in their post-communist states of the former Union. However, these ties to the past do not attempt to place the present in a stable and favoured position. These are not liberation mythologies; nor are they moralistic readings of history. Rather, the symbols of the past become the food for thinking up Russia's present "direction." The two time periods, the two identities, are hopelessly mixed together. The conclusion to this paper will touch briefly on such contemporary laughter in post-Soviet literature as an element of the still-occurring

carnival, a dialectic, no more affected by the dismantling of the Soviet Union than were power politics, corruption, or base consumption.

Conclusion

This paper has explored a number of ways in which food, and the related themes of labour, hunger, and consumption, were experienced in Russia in the years surrounding the Revolution. The first chapter discussed the rise of populism in nineteenth-century Russia and how it took a humanist approach to uncover and criticise the gross social inequalities of the tsarist regime. Such public figures as A.N. Engelgardt highlighted the toil of the peasants, their perennial hunger and base survival, and the common misconceptions of this large, yet largely unknown sub-class of rural Russia. The influence of the populists was vast, and contributed to both the politicising of food in Russia and the ironic popularity of the "folk" and their social problems. To a large extent, this 'folk fashion' led to the creation of a folk image and folk identity, partly adopted by some peasants, often portrayed by artists, writers, and politicians, and largely reinforced by the commodifying and consuming of such representations.

These interplays between a consumable identity of the underprivileged and the increasingly political nature of food (and therefore class) was continued and focused following the turn of the century. My second chapter explored how the great new epoch the populists had been seeking arrived with the new century; and how the various leftists, revolutionaries, anarchists, and socialists sought to actualise their own visions of the future within it. Escalating food-supply crises, crop failures, and a century of war-time rationing and destruction led directly to the overthrow of the Romanov empire and a redefining of self and society, predominantly along the lines of the previous era: food, consumption, and labour.

With the establishment of the Bolshevik government in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union came a new focus on production and labour. The Soviet-era social and literary philosopher, M.M. Bakhtin, explored labour, food, and popular folk traditions in an effort to find a folk-based ethics of social renewal. The third chapter discussed some of his ideas, largely those of labour, the banquet tradition, authority and authorship, and the carnival. As Stalin centralised and defined his form of totalitarianism, and quickly killed off any dissent or free thought within the Union, Bakhtin and many of his peers were either exiled or killed. This quickly became the "State carnival," a way of adopting folk-like traditions to both reaffirm state power and resituate and radically change the meaning of everyday life. In many ways, food issues, particularly those of hunger and consumption, continued to play a central role in this process. As I have repeatedly affirmed, there is more than a tacit or

coincidental presence of food imagery in the Russian cultural tradition. Food as both metaphor and material has directly helped to define class, politicise identity, and kill and silence people across all levels of society. The consumption of citizenry by the centralised state, first seen in the "war of materials" of the Great War, continued to be played out, by the Bolsheviks in the Civil War and by Stalin in his labour camp Gulag.

Indeed, for decades, such a paper as this would end with the last chapter: touching on the efforts of such writers as Solzhenitsyn to reclaim the palimpsest of Russian identity, what bit had managed to show through the murderous regime and radical reinventing of self that had been in process since the 1850s. Such 'truth seeking' has only recently been replaced by a new generation of post-Soviet writers and thinkers who have returned to the Revolution only to laugh, to laugh at the pain and the banality of those years, to laugh at the present day's problems, many of them unchanged from the Soviet era, and to laugh at themselves laughing. Bakhtin wrote that satire in literature started when "the creating artist began to look at language from the outside, with another's eyes, from the point of view of a potentially different language and style" (*From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse* 60). It may be that the time and distance needed to look at the Revolution, at the absurdities and atrocities of the Gulag, with the eyes of "another" has only now come. Writers such as Victor Pelevin and Andrey Kurkov, as well as Nabakov, Bulgakov, and Bitov are all contributors to this relatively new self-reflection in Russian letters. It is not mired in the past or its brutality, nor does it champion any time, whether the past or the "new" present. The Russians have been made anew so many times that such transformations no longer hold much promise for the individual. Thus, it is significant to be able to conclude this paper with a quick survey of two contemporary writers of the present day still very much responding to the Revolution and Stalin's reign. For, after all, many people over many years could not break the silence of that time, let alone laugh at it.

As M.M. Bakhtin defined it, laughter was something that allowed a division to be crossed—whether this was the division of the classes, laughed away through carnival, or the division, as we now turn to, between the past and the present day. "Laughter had the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides [...] thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it" (*Epic and Novel* 23). Sergei Averintsev proposes that the Russians have a special, if not somewhat repressed, relationship with laughter. "In itself such demonology is far from exclusive to Russia; what is unique is the energy with which the language itself combines the words 'devil' and 'joke,' 'laughter' and 'sin'" (14). Again, we are reminded that there is an inherent link between the Russian carnival and the figurative underworld and, by implication, with death. Currently, Russian literature seems to be

occupied with examining these linkages, not so much to develop a theory of life, but to find a temporary respite from it, much like the popular holiday laughter of the carnival itself. Because of this, one has to ask whether Bakhtin's notion of carnival laughter is enough. Averintsev offers the caveat that "there are times when laughter has little to do with abundance, with 'food and drink,' but on the contrary, is closely related to fear" (15), even though Bakhtin sees "fear, weakness, humility, submission, falsehood, hypocrisy [... or] violence, intimidation, threats, prohibitions" as a part of "seriousness" (*Rabelais and His World* 94). But, because this carnival laughter, countering such seriousness, is framed within the official calendar, Averintsev finds it already undermined. He writes that this is merely a "permitted laughter," that "when by a sort of special, formal dispensation things impermissible are made and become permissible," then the carnival rings with laughter (14). This he views as Western in flavour, and therefore inappropriate for a true hardship-bearing Russian, who laughs only when things are impermissible.

There are, perhaps, flaws in both arguments. For Bakhtin's carnival to be limited to the "permissible" times of the year, establishes it as a model which provides a vent for political stress. It therefore becomes, more often than not, a programmatic and proscriptive release of built up quasi-revolutionary sentiment. However, for Averintsev to suggest that those who attend the carnival are laughing an undermined laughter, sapped of its political virility and veracity, is to suggest that those attending are incapable of memory. To suggest that a carnival laughter which undercuts all images of authority merely returns the next day, following the feast, to the fast of the status quo and the acceptance of all official meaning, is to limit the carnival as well as the person. Once more, this interpretation suffers from the perception of carnival-as-event, and is not, as I have suggested it should be, as a dialectic which is always, simultaneously occurring in past and present. It is therefore not event or even process, but development and echo. The carnival is movement, cumulation, and derivation. It is not limited in time, calendar, location, or person. It has, by definition, multiple personalities and multiple temporalities. Much like the figure of Petka in *Buddha's Little Finger*, it is of the Revolution, of the Gulag, and of glasnost. It is all of these and none, it is both interstice and ocean, it is both consumption and hunger, simultaneously.

The second and third chapters of this paper both touch on Pelevin's *Buddha's Little Finger*, although largely focusing on the Civil War period of the novel. The other half of the novel takes place within the closed walls of the asylum and the roaming minds of its patients, one of whom is Petka, the victim of frequent delusions that he is a soldier of the Civil War. What Pelevin does achieve in his quick-fire juxtaposing of these historical times—of post-Revolution and post-communism—is a blending of their distinction. Both become 'nothing new,' and characters who try to possess the age only become laughable

fools trying to direct time, history, and reality. Pelevin closes his novel with a clear statement to this end: "if history teaches us anything, then it is that everybody who has tried to sort things out in Russia has been sorted out by Russia instead" (326). Earlier in his career, Pelevin published a collection of closely interlinking stories, titled *The Life of Insects*.

Many of the same themes found in *Buddha's Little Finger* also appear in this novel. Hunger and consumption are understood through existential crises, the struggle for survival, or drug-induced perceptions of a greater reality than our own. Like the character of Petka in the novel, the dual-personalities moth (one named Dima and the other Mitya, both forms of Dmitry) is an idealist and poet, confused and 'in the dark' flying towards the unattainable light of the moon, what he knows as "Lenin's lightbulb" (78). Elsewhere a cicada struggles with his identity (at a number of times he becomes a cockroach with a Stalin-like mustache, working in a subterranean bureaucracy) until he finally can reach the sky, knowing he will soon die. An ant kills and eats others to guarantee she can live to breed. Her daughter shuns her by becoming a fly and running off with an American mosquito who has come to Russia to "sample" the blood for a potential overseas expansion of his company. Throughout, the reader finds the lines between people and insects, survival and exploitation, hunger and consumption, increasingly blurred. Existence is a dirty affair, and society and government are even more tawdry, corrupt, and misleading. Pelevin has no clear, light-filled vision other than that of the individual's transcendence. Everywhere else, in public places, "the rain [has] transformed the path to the resort into a torrent of mud, and the silvery Lenin rising up beside it looked like the figurehead of a ship that had been sucked down into the sticky red bog" (117). The past is a sad satire of the present's loss of meaning, and all one can do is not become obsessed with the perceived "newness" of it.

Similarly, Andrey Kurkov's recent genre-novel, *Death and the Penguin*, is a dark account of the banality of post-Soviet life in the Ukraine. Satirical and superficial, the novel follows the non-adventures of Viktor, a man employed by a local newspaper to write obituaries for luminaries of the state and the mob (and frequently both) *who have not yet died*. A failed writer, he views the creation of these pieces as fine foods he must carefully prepare, finding the "extra-C[urriculum] V[itae] details [of his subjects' misdealings] which, like fine Indian spices, transform an *obelisk* of sad, established fact into a gourmet dish" (8). Kurkov's novel, his first to be translated for an English market, figures food less than the work of Pelevin does. Hunger, however, is still very much a presence. His companion throughout the novel is Misha (who shares the name of the Soviet bear), a penguin whom he acquired "when the zoo was giving hungry animals away to anyone able to feed them" (1). Hunger and poverty are still, obviously, linked in *Death and the Penguin*, but it is a condition now adopted by the state in general. "Everyone was in a hurry, as if afraid of

finding their block on the verge of collapsing or shedding its balconies —both occurrences being no longer uncommon" (15-16). Those well-fed, driving their stately foreign cars, are, as always, those in power. As Zbarsky states at the close of *Lenin's Embalmers*, "now it is no longer political leaders who have themselves embalmed, but the masters of the economy" (202). As Viktor's obituaries begin to appear in the paper (ironically becoming "living," as he sees it), his excitement over being published fades to an awareness of how he writes for an unknown, mob-related employer, one who has carefully planned interests in Viktor's subjects.

Indeed, Viktor and his penguin soon become a symbolic presence at many of the funerals his obituaries predict. Understandably put off by such an experience, Viktor tries to avoid attending the funerals or the lavish feasts which follow them. He does not do so for long, however, as "a plate of fish in aspic, a clingfilm covered restaurant selection of traditional meats, fresh tomatoes, a chop, a bottle of Smirnoff vodka" appear one night on the kitchen table of his well-locked apartment (162). Accompanying this is a note which advises him not to miss another mobster's invitation to a funeral. Food, and food of such obvious quality and quantity, serve to threaten Viktor with the money and power of those he deals with. The new carnival banquet of the post-Soviet Union, these mobsters' feasts are also described in Zbarsky's history of embalming. They are feasts of display and feasts of power to prove the death of one is insignificant, yet honoured, by the gangs who fight for control of the new markets. "Finally, to return to murdered gangsters," he writes, "on every anniversary of the dead man's birthday and the day of his death, his relatives and friends stage a feast among the tombs" (202). As we can see, Bakhtin's carnival series of death and food are still mingling in the new underworld, the world of high crime. These crime rings run the economy of the new capitalist societies of the old Soviet Union. In the race for capitalism and so-called "Westernising," power and consumption ride together through landscapes of continuing poverty and hunger.

Overall, I have argued that Russian ideologues —understood to include both political philosophers and popular novelists— have employed a rhetoric and imagery which uses food to communicate social disparity. From this developed a tradition of food and consumption-based symbolism which was employed by the Bolsheviks at the turn of the century to politicise and mobilise what became the proletariat class. Their strategic collectivising of this group into a political class was complementary to the articulation of class identity by the ideologues. This enacted what could be called the "production" of the revolutionary class. Writing in the years just following the Revolution of 1917, M.M. Bakhtin presents a theory of social renewal in the notion of the carnival. Based in folk tradition and in food and feasting imagery, his philosophy shares in the tradition I have

plotted here, but offers a complex discussion of how the "production" of the "folk" and political "consumption" are connected. This paper has touched on both aspects of Bakhtin's carnival: how the consumption of the old leads into the construction of a radically new social and ideological reality, and how the carnival can also allow for a State consumption of the "new" citizenry it has produced, thus reinscribing old power structures. This dialectic of production and consumption, of food and ideology culminates in the enforced labour camps of the Soviet Gulag, and the terrible "rebirth" of its punishment. In recent years, writers have returned to the Revolution and Soviet years with more "laughter" when discussing the heavy history of this period. Their efforts can be seen to continue the tradition, perhaps even the carnival, of food and consumption in describing social disparity, class, and ideology. More than anything, it proves how the importance of food in the history of Russia has been inscribed upon the community's psyche. What is left, then, is to acknowledge in this what Bakhtin would describe in the Russian people as 'unconsummation': "For in order to live and act, I need to be unconsummated, I need to be open for myself—at least in all the essential moments constituting my life; I have to be, for myself, someone who is axiologically yet-to-be, someone who does not coincide with his already existing makeup" (*Author and Hero* 13). It is this call to life, and to a continuous production of self and society, which expresses the vitality of carnival laughter and represents the truest material of a folk's identity.

Postscript

As I wrote in the opening to this paper, food, today, is likely the most direct manner in which the political and public enters our personal lives. If one considers this, it is not so difficult to see the way in which food was related to the Russian Revolution. Issues of hunger, food, and consumption are not whimsical motifs, nor are they issues limited solely to Revolutionary Russia. Food, and more than ever, consumption, are political realities of our world and societies. Not to view them as such speaks of our own favoured position in the world: northern, moneyed, and politically sheltered. To view food as a mere substance and not one of the most original and significant sites of political, economical, and ideological positioning also denotes a certain modern complacency of ours, in which we do not need to be reminded of our own dependence on food, and even less so our dependence on the political and economic imbalances which allow our use and abuse of it. It also suggests our own acceptance of the power-laden identities that allow us to consume the way we do. Indeed, our present surfeit of consumables only makes such behaviour more indicative of hegemony and disparity in the world. Aligning himself with the tradition set

out by such Russian thinkers as Prince Kropotkin and Mikhail Bakunin, Murray Bookchin has written that food and culture, consumption and production, are tied to each other now more than ever before:

Inasmuch as agriculture is always a culture, the differences in the methods and intentions involved are no less cultural than a book on engineering. Yet in the first case, our intentions are informed by economic considerations at best and greed at worst; in the second, by an ecological sensibility. Society must recover the plasticity of the organic in the sense that every dimension of experience must be infused with an ecological, a *dialectical* sensibility. There is a profound ethical dimension to the attempt to bring soil, flora, and fauna (or what we neatly call the food chain) into our lives, not only as "wholesome" sources of food but as part of a broad movement in which consumption is no less a creative process than production.... (90-1)

To be able to consume, we must acknowledge our responsibility to produce. As in Bakhtin's carnival, we must be able to *incorporate* what *is* into what *ought to be*. In consuming the way we do, presently, we produce disparity and, in our trading of the most valuable of materials, food, we rely on it as though it is of the least worth. By consuming we produce our world. We must look at how we produce the consumable, and thus how we build ourselves and our worlds, before we may be living in the creative process which Bookchin speaks of. Russia's famines throughout the decades before and after the Revolution, the production of political identities and "utterances" of hunger, the linkages between labour, feast, carnival and death, all mirror our current practice. We consume identity and power as we consume food. We display our hunger to consume to the rest of the hungry world. And in our consumption is heard a silence regarding the hunger of others.

—M.H. *Victoria and Ottawa, 2002*

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