

Title: Soviet Gothic: Eating in Hell in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*
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Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (1929–1940, first published 1966–67) juxtaposes two events of revelry, ostentatious partying, drinking and eating. The first one takes place at the exclusive restaurant at Griboedov House and the second at Satan's Grand Ball, presumably in hell ("Margarita had only a vague idea of her surroundings" (223). In Moscow, during the early Stalinist regime which is not known for its abundance of food for the average citizen, a group of card-carrying Soviet writers enjoys the advantages of eating superbly. These privileged writers consume splendid pre-Soviet French-infused cuisine at the Griboedov: perch *au naturel*, eggs *en cocotte*, quail *à la genoise*, and soup *printanier* (47). At Woland's party, Margarita, in good gothic fashion, tastes blood, as she is washed in it, in preparation for her role as Queen-Hostess at the Grand Ball, and later drinks "pure spirits" as she eats supper with Woland and his retinue (236).

In my paper I will argue that the food and drink consumed in both locations is representative of two types of hell. The patrons of Griboedov, writers who are grown "like pineapples in a hothouse" (298), partake in nostalgic gluttony, trying to fill their emptiness that comes from composing state-authorized literature. Accordingly, the hell of Bulgakov's devil offers fullness for true artists; here, after drinking a mysterious concoction (244), the Master finds his "pure spirit" again. Both Margarita and the Master partake in the nourishment of Woland's hell, where "manuscripts don't burn," and the Master's manuscript, which he burned in a moment of loss of courage as a result of being hounded by the authorities, is indeed restored (245). Instead, the Griboedov, burns in a fiery soup in the end.

Bulgakov, Mikhail. *The Master and Margarita*. Reprint. Trans. Diana Burgin and Katherine Tiernan O'Connor. New York: Vintage, 1996, 1995.

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