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# Dinner with Mock Faustus: Multilingual Cuisine Cooks the Identity<sup>1</sup>

Mārtiņš Laizāns

**Abstract:** Phenomena related to gastronomy form an important part of both individual and collective identities. The gastronomical dimensions of literature can often be perceived as a commentary on the political, historical and societal, going beyond just the food. As cuisines are becoming more mixed globally, languages describing gastronomical scenes in literature are also becoming more multilingual.

The novel *Mock Faustus* (1973), by the Latvian writer Mārgers Zariņš, fuses the gastronomical and the multilingual to the extreme, producing a utopian linguistic hybrid of the Latvian language to which a mix of foreign languages and countless intertextual references are added. This is achieved by the gastronomical vocabulary and imagery omnipresent in the narrative of writing a fictional cookbook. The depiction of gastronomical phenomena allows Zariņš to indirectly comment on Latvian history from the 1930s to 1945 and the confused and fragmented identities of these times.

**Keywords:** gastropoetics, Faustus, gastronovel, multilingualism, identity, Mārgers Zariņš

## 1 Shopping List

Studying food in literature is an enjoyable experience. However, it is also a challenging one. In cooking, every ingredient and every step of a recipe are important. The same applies to food in literature – regardless of whether a gastronomical passage in a text is intentional or accidental, it can be of great

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significance for the reader, allowing them to interpret both the direct message of a text and the one contained between the bites.

The gastronomical dimension of literature, also called gastropoetics (Parama 2002), shows how food-related phenomena function in literary texts and cultures and what the depicted gastronomical phenomena reveal about individuals and society. A seminal starting point for gastropoetical research is an essay by Roland Barthes, *Pour une psycho-sociologie de l'alimentation contemporaine* (1961), in which the gastronomical realm of culture is characterised as a sign system that produces its own cultural meanings, and by this description, it is possible to draw conclusions about a particular society in more general terms. A counterpart to this essay is the *Mythologiques* (1964–1971), by Claude Lévi-Strauss, where the role of food as an essential component of any culture is established.

The term *culinary text* denotes any type of text that deals with gastronomy (e.g. cookbooks, restaurant reviews), whereas *gastronovel* (Radu 2011) refers to novels in which the gastronomical is of major significance. The term *recipistolary prose* (Witt 1999: 11) is applied to texts in which the narrative is interspersed with recipes, e.g. *Šampinjonu derība* (*The Champignon Testament*, 2002), by the Latvian writer Laima Muktupāvela – the migrant experience in an Irish champignon factory is also narrated through recipes at the end of every chapter. For the sake of the argument of this article, all literary texts that have a considerable amount of the gastronomical can be called gastroliterary texts.

The role of food varies in different literary texts – it can be central to the work (e.g. *Gargantua et Pantagruel* (1532–1564), by the French writer François Rabelais) or be only of marginal importance but still reveal important meanings for the whole text. Roland LeBlanc, in his article on Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* (1842), writes that 'indeed, it would be impossible to extract gastronomy from *Dead Souls* without destroying its meaning' (LeBlanc 1988: 77). Speaking about the ever-more-present mixing of cuisines and languages (also in gastroliterary texts), the semiotician Fabio Parasecoli adds that 'as the level of complexity grows, in order to be decoded, food codes must be interpreted in connection with wider cultural "texts"' (Parasecoli 2011: 655). For texts in which the gastronomical prevails, an interdisciplinary (and at times eclectic) approach must be adopted; this is indicated by the German literary scholar Gerhard Neumann both in a general article, *Jede Nahrung ist ein Symbol* (Neumann 1993b), and with a gastronomical analysis of the story *Babette's Feast* by Karen Blixen (Neumann 1993a). A narrower approach, although still widely applicable, is outlined in the article *Kulinaristik als Kultursemiotik* by Roland Posner and Nicole Wilk (Posner 2008).

The food writer Kyla Wazana Tompkins concludes about gastroliterary texts that

the meal is a cultural text in and of itself, which can be read formally – through the differential relationships between their separate parts – and in terms of the larger narratives of national/cultural identity that surround it. (Tompkins 2005: 252)

The close connection between food and (national) identity is also indicated by Annette Cozzi in the foreword to her monograph on food in nineteenth-century British literature: 'food is one of the most fundamental signifiers of national identity, and literary representations of food [...] reveal how that identity is culturally constructed' (Cozzi 2010: 5). Pina Palma also states that 'in literature as in the visual arts food by its very presence performs a complex, multilayered function' (Palma 2013: 17). The movie critic Anne Bower also notes the plenitude of the gastronomical as a sign, mentioning 'food's ability to serve as a *remarkably concentrated signifier* – a powerful semiotic system that effectively communicates ideas about cultural formation and identity' (Bower 2004: 10). She adds that 'when food appears in a film it is loaded with much more than calories' (Bower 2004: 12), an idea borrowed from the article *Edible Ecriture* by Terry Eagleton, where, speaking about food representation in literature, he states: 'If there is one sure thing about food, it is that it is never just food [...] Like the post-structuralist text, food is endlessly interpretable' (Eagleton 1997). The literary critic Gitanjali Shahani also points to the gastronomical as being both extra-textual and extra-gastronomical at the same time, in the virtue of condensing all of the realms of interpretation inescapably together: 'To study the gastronomic interjection is then to study the literary, material, and cultural contexts in which it was uttered' (Shahani 2018: 4). The volume *Essen und kulturelle Identität* (1997) also points out how food shapes identity and how it is in turn portrayed in various media.

## 2 To Each Language its Own Tongue

As the societies we live in are becoming increasingly multilingual, communities are also becoming more multiculinary than ever. Globalisation has made the ingredients or restaurants of various cuisines available in most parts of the world. Thus, it is not only cuisines that mix and create hybrids – the introduction of foreign cuisines brings with it linguistic changes, and menus, as a rule, are multilingual. One recent example of where the mix of both cuisines and languages is apparent is the 'Latvian' food *knapas* – small *entrées* made from traditional Latvian products. The name is a mix of the Spanish word *tapas* and

a widely used Latvian loanword from German, *knapp*, thus producing a novel Latvian bite-sized snack and a linguistic hybrid at the same time.

To illustrate the language use in the novel *Mock Faustus*, the Latvian translator of James Joyce's *Ulysses* Dzintars Sodums should be quoted: 'Man garšo valoda kā kūka' ('I enjoy language just as a cake'; LSM.lv 2017). The gastronomic *Mock Faustus* brings with it a mix of many languages, and the reading of it can be regarded as having a cake from a linguistic standpoint. But *Mock Faustus* is not only a dessert, but *tapas*, *entrée*, *Hauptgericht*, and *digestivo* all at the same time. Zariņš uses mealtimes and everything related to them – food, drink, preparation of the meal, recipes, mealtimes etc. (i.e. ekphrases on the dining room interior, *Tafelmusik*, kitchen utensils and pseudohistorical and pseudoliterary reminiscences related to food) – as the ultimate cultural experience. For this reason, the prevalence of gastronomical imagery and language related to it poses certain challenges for the comprehension of the text. To paraphrase a commonplace idea in (literary) food studies expressed by Mary Douglas (Douglas 1972), it should be argued that in Zariņš' case, it is a task of 'deciphering a literary meal'.

### 3 Getting Groceries

The Latvian composer and writer Mārgers Zariņš was born in 1910 (and died in 1993). In 1969, at the age of 59, he made his debut as a writer with the publication of the story *Elizejas lauku Mocarts* (*Mozart of Elysian Fields*). His first story collection, *Saulrietu violetās ērģeles* (*The Purple Organ of Sunset*), was published in the subsequent year, and his first novel, *Viltotais Fausts, jeb, Pārlabota un papildināta pavārgrāmata* (*Mock Faustus, or, The corrected complemented cookbook*),<sup>2</sup> appeared in print in 1973. The 30,000 copies of the book sold out within a few hours (Silova 2004: 48), and it was only republished in 2003 and 2015.

The first reactions to the novel indicated the utter incomprehensibility of the language used in the novel, with readers demanding explanations for a lot of words and expressions. Three years later, in 1976, a supplement (or, to play by the rules of *Mock Faustus*, a complement) to the novel was published that

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this article, for the sake of brevity, the shortened title *Mock Faustus* will be used; in some quotations, the abbreviation *P.P.P.* will be used in place of *Pārlabota un papildināta pavārgrāmata*. The *P.P.P.* is an imaginary cookbook in the novel that was published in 1880 by Jānis Vridriķis Trampedahs, one of the main characters of the novel.

contained about 1,350 entries, making this novel as postmodern (Silova 2003: 84–85) as possible, as well as *unintentionally* interactive.

The literary style of Zariņš was in strong opposition to the prevailing poetics of Latvian literature of the sixties and seventies. He remained true to his metafictional style, hybrid genres and interplay of languages throughout his literary career. Still, the most oversaturated of his works linguistically and in terms of cultural history is *Mock Faustus*, and this is still the prime example of Latvian postmodern prose (Berelis 1999: 231) – a work hardly comparable to any other piece of Soviet Latvian literature. The Slovak literary critic Jana Tesařová says that the novel is thoroughly *polystilistic* (Tesaržova 1984). *Mock Faustus* is a standalone and a standout novel in Latvian literature – from the perspective of language use it can be deemed a close relative to the hardly legible *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce. The gastronomical, linguistic and intertextual complexity of *Mock Faustus* is one reason why there is not a lot of research on this novel. Nevertheless, two dissertations on Zariņš' literary works in general are available (Silova 2003; Veide 2005), as well as one in-depth study on the transformation of Faustian motives in *Mock Faustus* (Leinerts 2007). Still, Wayne Booth's comment on Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* that these texts 'cannot be read; they can only be studied' (Booth 1961: 325) also applies to *Mock Faustus* by Zariņš.

A generic term that only partially does justice to the novel by Zariņš, drawing on the terms *gastronovel* and *recipistolary* prose, would be *recipistonovel* – a novel where recipes of food play a major role in the narrative. In addition, the play on *poiētikē* should be indicated in the context of *Mock Faustus*. Although *poiētikē* is a neutral term in Ancient Greek that can be applied to any field of practice or knowledge (it means literally 'making/creating'), most common contemporary associations are with literature in general, as poetics are concerned with poetry and literary theory and with the rhetorics of language use. Thus, in the context of *Mock Faustus*, the Greek term *opso-poiētikē* (it means literally 'cooking, preparation of food'), which denotes cooking and an interplay of the literary and the gastronomical, becomes apparent, thus rendering the novel an example of the *gastroliterary*. A few examples to illustrate this are as follows: 'Grāmata būs filozofiski gastronomisks traktāts, gandrīz kulinārijas un diētiskās medicīnas kandidāta disertācija, pasniegta laikmeta morāles un tikumu mērcē ar emociju salātiem' ('The book will be a philosophical-gastronomical tractatus, almost a dissertation of a candidate in culinary and dietary medicine, presented in the sauce of the morals and virtues of the times along with emotion salad'; Zariņš 1973: 9); 'Jaču mana P.P.P. jums būs ne tikai pavāra gudriba, bet aridzan rāmāna palasīšanās [...] solos, ka viss šis rosols jebšu, kā tautieši saka, – dārzeņu juceklis tiks ar stingru roku kopā satibēts' ('My P.P.P. will not only

be the cook's wisdom, but also a pleasant read [...] I promise that all this Olivier salad, or as my fellow compatriots say – vegetable mix, will be tied together with a strong hand'; Zariņš 1973: 113). The attention of the reader of *Mock Faustus* is drawn not only to the gastronomical, but also to the words used to denote the gastronomical, thus making the reader constantly have to shift between the *poiētikē* and *opso-poiētikē* levels.

In addition, an important peculiarity should be mentioned – the use of the expression *latviešu mēle* (Zariņš 1973: 7) to talk about the Latvian language throughout the novel instead of *latviešu valoda*. The first term indicates both the tongue (as a physical and as an abstract entity) and the language, but the latter term is only used in the context of language. This serves the fact that the novel confounds both the gastronomical (one that is experienced by the tongue) and the linguistic (where the tongue is also an important object, at least if the spoken part of the language is taken into account). The Latvian literary critic Jānis Čākurs sees these two phenomena as the ones contributing the most to the hybridity of the novel – he calls the novel a 'kulināri valodniecisk[s] eksperiment[s]' ('culinary linguistic experiment'; Čākurs 1973).

The protean multilingual poetics of *Mock Faustus* uses phrases from foreign languages, dialects, different historical phases of the Latvian language, neologisms and non-literary expressions to name just a few linguistic aspects of the novel. Mixing them all together was a daring approach in Soviet Latvian literature when even minor deviations from the official literary language in literary works were rarely considered acceptable. Although most of the words present in the novel are attested in (older) dictionaries and cookbooks, when indiscriminately put together, they give the impression of Jabberwocky. Furthermore, the notion of *neliterārs* (Latvian for 'non-literary') was considered almost a curse word during Soviet times with respect to literature (Zariņš even wrote an article in his defence called *Literārajā valodā pieļaujamais un nepieļaujamais* [*The acceptable and unacceptable in literary language*] in 1972). The multilingualism of *Mock Faustus* can be described as two separate multilingualisms that are mixed throughout the novel. The first is the *internal multilingualism* of the Latvian language itself – the different layers and epochs made into a hybrid Latvian. The second is the presence of expressions and dialogues in foreign languages.

If we take into account the ways in which multilingualism is used intratextually in novels according to Georg Kremnitz (Kremnitz 2004), then Zariņš mixes all three of the provided types: it portrays a certain realism (e.g. the presence of Latvian, German and Russian in everyday life, as well as Latin, Italian and French when there is reference to certain cuisines or arts); it achieves a

strong *Verfremdung* (estrangement) effect; and the author exhibits his linguistic and cultural erudition. Multilingualism in narrative literary texts can be made visible if there is a *Grundsprache* (main language) present in the text (Kremnitz 2004: 14). Similarly to *Finnegans Wake*, where English is at least nominally the main language, in *Mock Faustus*, the Latvian language is only the foundation nominally. One could also agree that the use of multilingualism in novels is a strategy that shows the fragmentation of identities, both on the individual and societal levels (Kremnitz 2004: 16). Regarding the *Verfremdung* aspect, another parallel with *Finnegans Wake* should be mentioned; as Daniel Ferrer speaks about the 'English' language in *Finnegans Wake*, 'Joyce va puissamment la transformer, y injecter de l'étrangeté, la rendre, en quelque sort, étrangère à elle-même' ('Joyce strongly changes it [i.e. the English language] by introducing strangeness to it, and in a way making it strange to itself'; Ferrer 2012: 110). This is exactly what Zariņš has done to Latvian according to almost all literary critics and scholars who have written on this novel. Thus, by estranging and defamiliarizing the language, the regime-torn individual is also shown as being in a state of confusion. This will be made clearer with some examples on the protagonist of the novel, Kristofers Mārlovs, further on in the article.

The hybrid linguistic and gastronomical jungle can be held together only by the plot. The novel depicts events in Latvia from 1933 to 1945, during which time the governing regime changed five times. The novel consists of three parts, which can be summarised thus: 1) early 1930s – independent Republic of Latvia; 2) First Soviet occupation (1940–1941) and German occupation of Latvia (1941–1945) with a lot of analepses to the second half of the 1930s, when Latvia was still independent but was under the authoritarian regime of Kārlis Ulmanis; 3) the end of the German occupation of Latvia and the beginning of the Second Soviet occupation of Latvia, which lasted for 45 years (from 1945 to 1991).

#### 4 Literary Menu à la carte

From one perspective, the most prominent references in the novel are the ones connected to many reworkings of the Faustiad. *Mock Faustus*, being a satirical novel of phantasmagorical expression, is regarded as a local version of *The Master and Margarita* (1966) by Mikhail Bulgakov (Silova 2003: 49; Gaižūns 1985). Also undeniable is the reference to Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* (1947), as the young composer in Zariņš' novel, Kristofers Mārlovs, is not understood, just as Adrian Leverkühn is misunderstood in Mann's novel. In addition to that, Mārlovs, who is complementing and correcting the *P.P.P.* in order to produce his *Mock Faustus*, is not understood as a writer, as cookbooks, even those containing

entertaining plots, are not considered real art in the world that the novel portrays. Here, Zariņš' own biography also comes into play: he is a composer who does not fit in (although Zariņš was not exactly an outcast, his extravagance at times was too exotic for Soviet Latvia, so the fictional autobiography also becomes a certain type of commentary on the relationship between the artist and the regime). Goethe's *Faust* is also an apparent reference – this is true of both parts of *Faust* (1808, 1832), of which the second could be interpreted as a complement to the first part; for Zariņš it is a replay of this situation, as his *Mock Faustus* is, in a way, *Der Tragödie zweiter Teil*, as the P.P.P. is being rewritten into the *Mock Faustus* in the narrative of the novel. Both versions of Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* are also of importance for Zariņš; the second version (1620) is a fuller version of the first (1604), and the same is played out in *Mock Faustus*: the first version of P.P.P. is not complete in Mārlovs' opinion, as he adds, 'Lai būtu jaukāka lasīšana, tad esmu to visu uz mākslīgu vīzi ar sarunāšanos starp Jāni Vridriķi, mani pašu [...] jaunajā grāmatā licis, arīdzan milestības asaras un priekus aprakstījis' ('For a more pleasant read, I have artfully presented the conversation between Jānis Vridriķis and myself [...] in the new book, also tears and joys of love I have described'; Zariņš 1973: 8).

The word 'mock' in the title points to several aspects of the novel. First is that the archetypal roles of Faustus and Mephistopheles are reversed during the events. Moreover, from the culinary perspective, cookbooks are a genre that undergoes the most changes over time, and they also signal a change of times, as the Latvian cookbook historian Astra Spalvēna argues (Spalvēna 2016). Kristofers Mārlovs is the narrator and protagonist of *Mock Faustus* – both the biographical events from the sixteenth century and the fictional ones from the twentieth century are mixed together. Third, in the manner of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* and André Gide's *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, Zariņš talks about a *different* book, one that is in fact the book one is already reading/writing – a completely unusual meta-fictional experience for the Soviet Latvian reader. In this way, the reader is mocked as to what he is actually reading. The Latvian literary critic Guntis Berelis classifies it as a metaliterary novel (Berelis 1989: 16).

Beyond these, there are uncountable other references and influences in this thoroughly intertextual work, including Shakespeare, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Rabelais and Dante, as well as Reinis and Matīss Kaudzīte, the writers of the first Latvian novel *Mērnīeku laiki* (*The Times of the Land Surveyors*, 1879). The importance of food in Latvian identity was already obvious in this first Latvian novel. One of its main plot lines and themes is the wait for the honorary feast.

Of special importance is the scene where the peasant imagination is brought to the extreme when the possible menu of the honorary feast is announced – a grotesque ridicule of the mid-nineteenth-century Latvian peasants' knowledge about the world (Kaudzīte 1964: 211–212)<sup>3</sup> – and the description deals with foods as phantastical as unicorn brain, thus producing a literary menu with Rabelaisian qualities. *Mock Faustus* can be understood as an expansion of this passage, showing that the Latvian worldview is strongly shaped by the palate and the stomach, and thereby the work comments on the Latvian way of life that eating well means a lot. This self-irony is also not a typical mark of Latvian Soviet literature. Moreover, the changes to the menu under the different regimes are the most prominent indicators of different circumstances that come with them.

Zariņš has frequently admitted that among his inspirations for his literary gastrosymphony, both linguistically and in the use of gastronomy as a narrative vehicle, were old dictionaries – *Latviešu valodas vārdnīca* by Kārlis Milēnbahs (which, ironically enough, was complemented later by Jānis Endzelīns and Edīte Hauzenberga-Šturma), Jacob Lange's *Vollständiges Deutsch-Lettisches und Lettisch-Deutsches Lexikon* (1777) and Georg Mancelius' *Lettus, das ist Wortbuch sampt angehengtem täglichem Gebrauch der Lettischen Sprache* (1638) – and sources of Livonian and Prussian languages (Silova 2004: 31), along with ancient cookbooks in the context of Latvian written language, such as Christoph Harder's *Ta pirma Pawaru Grahmata no Wahzes Grahmatahm pahrtulkota* (*The first [Latvian] cookbook, translated from the German books*, 1795). To this Zariņš owes the gastrolinguistical style of *Mock Faustus*; in many parts of the book, he recreates how a Baltic German from the seventeenth or eighteenth century would have written in Latvian to the best of his knowledge. Zariņš also reverts the situation of when Baltic Germans were writing in Latvian – himself being a Latvian, he adopts the style of how Baltic Germans wrote in Latvian, but not as a comicality or derision, which would usually be the case, but as a means of defamiliarizing the Latvian language.

## 5 The Words on the Table

The multilingualism of the novel is also a reflection on the different societies it portrays – the historical presence of peoples of both Baltic German and Russian origin has influenced everyday Latvian speech. By the variation of expressions from several languages, Zariņš illustrates the changes of the regimes, and the

<sup>3</sup> For more on the utopian gastronomical grotesque, see Laizāns 2020.

social and political changes are most vividly expressed by the gastronomical imagery.

An example of both the hybridity of language and the intertextual references made throughout the novel is the following. A popular food in Latvia, *viltotais zaķis* (meatloaf, *Hackbraten*, *falscher Hase*), is among the references in the title. Zariņš explains the title in one passage of the book to be understood in gastronomical terms. A food called Mock Faustus had been invented by Erasmus of Rotterdam – a Brabantian duck grilled in tar (Zariņš 1973: 317) – a dish that is made up. In a way, Zariņš tries to assert that the food is both imaginary and a literary reference, thus trying in a grotesque manner to make one think that nothing should be taken seriously. At the same time, as with all satire and grotesque, if one reads behind the imagery, one can see the political commentary and identity questions that Zariņš explores in his novel.

The references to other cultures and languages, particularly those to ancient literature, are also produced via gastronomical references. An important note on how the novel should be perceived can be inferred from both the mention of Erasmus who supposedly invented the dish Mock Faustus and Pseudo-Virgil's work *Moretum*, and Zariņš interprets the *moretum* to be a kind of vinaigrette. That is an example of localisation, as in Latvia vinaigrette (Latv. *vinegrets*) is a food that consists of beetroots, carrots and pickled cucumbers. Zariņš refers to this work by Pseudo-Virgil as *Ars optima ad faciēdo* [sic] *vinegretum divinum* (*The best way to prepare a divine vinaigrette*) (Zariņš 1973: 316). Erasmus, in his *Encomium Moriae*, refers to Pseudo-Virgil's *Moretum* when talking about composing literary works as an entertaining rather than serious endeavour (Erasmus 1648: 11). Therefore, Zariņš makes it obscure whether his novel should be taken seriously or not by referencing a satirical text of gastronomical content and does so by recalling how Erasmus treats it as a leisurely activity. Thus, this passage by Zariņš opposes the socialist realist assumptions that literature cannot be just a game (as Zariņš treats it) but must serve a serious ideological goal.

In the context of the gastronomical aspect, which plays a major role in the commentary on various facets of social and political life in the novel, the Faustian motif must be mentioned. In this novel, it has been reduced to a sort of comicality – the highest knowledge for Mārlovs is gastronomy and cookery. Also, the invented *gastronomical romanticism* (Zariņš 1973: 123) – the genre of the novel – shows the attitude towards the Latvian language. The attitude mainly consists of considering Latvian only as the *ķēķa valoda* (*the language of the kitchen*), i.e. not a serious one from the perspective of all foreign occupant regimes. Although Zariņš shows the richness of the Latvian language in his

novel, the extremes he linguistically conflates leave the readers perplexed, and this works as a trap for snobs, for who would ever consider a (literary) cookbook to be of any respectable and great worth as a piece of literature?

Jānis Vridriķis Trampedahs is the counterpart to Mārlovs and the author of *P.P.P.* Mārlovs wants to acquire the rights to this book from Trampedahs to update it once more. But it turns out that Trampedahs had only stolen from former cookbooks and had not complemented them with anything, only rearranged them – an exposure of the Baltic German hypocrisy from the perspective of Soviet ideology. Trampedahs is also a caricature of a Baltic German aristocrat (his real German name in the novel is given as Johann Friedrich Trampedach) who lives abundantly; all the pleasures of life are available to him, in contrast to the common people of Latvia, although this also points to the lavish lives of the bourgeoisie of the independent Latvia, which also brings excess. In contrast, for Mārlovs, cooking is a form of artful expression, a spiritual endeavour that can be transferred into his life's work, namely the gastronoel *P.P.P.* This contrast becomes apparent in the second and third parts of the novel, where Trampedahs corrupts Margarēta Šella (the Gretchen of *Mock Faustus*) with the new *Saldā dzīve* (*La dolce vita*). The first meal with her has to be something exceptional and extraordinary: 'Maltītei jāklūst par epigrāfu, par vadmotīvu visām turpmākajām maltītēm' ('The first meal must be an epigraph, a *Leitmotiv* for all the future meals'; Zariņš 1973: 190). Still, in time, Mārlovs wins over Šella's heart, and thus Zariņš shows that true love does not need a full belly, as her life with Mārlovs is the exact opposite of the abundance that Trampedahs offers to her.

The second part of the novel can, from a gastronomical perspective, be divided into two. Both the Soviet and German regimes bring with them shortages in food supply and changes to the menu. As the development and abundance of independent Latvia have ceased to exist, the narrator's attention to food diminishes, and he fails to update the *P.P.P.* for several years. Now everything is being prepared in the simplest way possible from the most basic ingredients available. Only in the flashbacks do recipes and extensive details of food and its consumption in the 'good old days' appear. These memories, which are mostly tied to food, function as a solace of a paradise lost. However, at the very end of this part, for the first time in the novel, something appears that is not delicious and enjoyable: 'No apakšstāva rien lētas eļļas un kāpostu dvaka' ('From the floor below comes a smell of cheap oil and cabbages'; Zariņš 1973: 310). This is also a signal of the changing times and is in contrast to the abundance during independence.

The third part is even less preoccupied with food than the second. The gastronomical, or rather the lack of it, shows disturbance and deficit, and the

linguistic and narrative style differs considerably from the first part. The only good alimentary items the people have must be handed over to the Nazi Germans (Zariņš 1973: 330), and in return, the people get *Bezugscheine* – called *cūkšēnes* in the novel (Zariņš 1973: 314–316). This is an example of a parody in tragedy. *Cūka* means 'pig' in Latvian, and in this context, it is used to denote both the attitude towards the Nazis (as pigs) and the attitude towards oneself – as if one is being treated as a pig, getting only what is suitable for pigs and, in more gastronomic terms, only getting rationed food. Mārlovs even hallucinates about food in good times and comes to the conclusion that 'Pārlasot P.P.P. lappuses, viss, kas tur rakstīts, sāk likties fantastisks un nereāls.' ('upon rereading the pages of "P.P.P." now, everything written there seems phantastical and unreal'; Zariņš 1973: 315).

It is also important to note the attitude to *P.P.P.* by different characters throughout the novel. In the first part, it is praised as a precious artefact by both Trampedahs and Mārlovs. In the second part, Šella, echoing her leftist and socialist past, criticises the book for being idiotic – 'Bet tas taču idiotiski! Noņemties ar pavārgrāmatu' ('But that is idiocy! To occupy oneself with a cookbook'; Zariņš 1973: 184) – as these books bring no real change for society. In the third part, the book is criticised by a 'war prisoner' who turns out to be a Soviet spy, and the criticism is done in the classic hyper-didactic manner of socialist realism:

Gribēdams izbēgt no atbildības par to, kas pasaulē notiek, jūs sacerat pavārgrāmatu. Nospriedāt laikam tā: valdības nāk un iet, bet pavārgrāmatas paliek. Tā dara strausu tuksnesī, iebāž galvu smiltīs. Vai tiešām jums nekad nav bijuši draugi un lieli mērķi? (Wanting to escape responsibility about the events in the world you compose a cookbook. You must have thought thus: the governments come and go, but cookbooks remain. An ostrich in a desert does so by putting his head in the sand. Haven't you ever had friends and great goals? Zariņš 1973: 330)

Thus, a cookbook, however entertaining, is not considered something one should occupy oneself much with. Again, with these assessments, Zariņš shows irony about his own work and anticipates the possible criticism towards his *Mock Faustus*.

The grand finale of the novel in both political and gastronomic terms is the Second Soviet occupation. The Nazi Germans have been just driven out, and a bowl of *kharcho* soup is offered to Mārlovs, who has been starved for ten days by Trampedahs. 'Kharcho' is the last word of the novel (Zariņš 1973: 355). It signals a new era in Latvian history as well as a new cuisine. Although known before Soviet times, *kharcho* became a well-known dish in Latvia only during Soviet times, along with other foods from the Caucasus region, such as

shashlik, which is now an undisputable part of Latvian cuisine. The offering of kharcho in the novel is a sign of the beginning of a beautiful friendship that is to be developed between the nations under the hammer and the sickle. It also recalls the Aristotelian golden mean; through food, the Republic of Latvia was portrayed as excessive and luxurious, and the First Soviet occupation and the German regime were portrayed as extremes of deficiency, but the Second Soviet occupation with the kharcho, whose ingredients are not too simple and not too exotic, should finally bring balance to the land and to the stomach, as well as intercultural and supranational mutual understanding.

Still, critics of the novel after the fall of the Soviet Union have reconsidered some of its qualities. For example, Rimands Ceplis says that a contemporary re-reading and re-evaluation clearly show that there were too many compromises made in the novel in political terms, and the author 'zaudē [...] kompromisos ar ideoloģiju' ('loses [...] when compromising with ideology'; Ceplis 2000).

## 6 *Satur venter* or Palatal Criticism of Words

The Latvian linguist Alberts Sarkanis mentioned that, although the language of the novel is 'raib[ais] dzeņa vēder[s]' ('the motley belly of a woodpecker'; Sarkanis 1986), it 'nevajadzētu analizēt tikai no valodnieciskā viedokļa' ('should not be analysed from the linguistic perspective alone'; Sarkanis 1986). This is understandable, as the linguistic incomprehensibility was the most criticised aspect of the novel. He adds that 'Leksiskā materiāla raibums kā groteskas elements M. Zariņam ir nepieciešams laikmeta, vides un varoņu raksturojumam' ('The lexical palette as a grotesque technique for M. Zariņš is necessary to characterise the epoch, environment and heroes'; Sarkanis 1986). A very precise and concise assessment of the novel is given by Čākurs, who says that *Mock Faustus* is 'uzrakstīts kā šķietami konglomerātiska pavārgrāmata par buržuāziskās sabiedrības sadzīvi, uzskatiem, tikumiem un mākslu' ('seemingly a compilatory cookbook about the life, opinions, virtues and art of the bourgeois society' (Čākurs 1973). He also refers to a mystical jester who has said that 'atzinis Viltoto Faustu par izdevušos daiļdarbu, tikai – to vajagot pārtulkot latviešu valodā' ('the *Mock Faustus* is a great novel, but it should be translated into Latvian'; Čākurs 1973) – a remark that found (and still finds) a lot of support among readers and critics, and, in fact, is one of the most acute remarks this novel could have ever obtained. The Latvian poet Gunars Saliņš, retelling the paper delivered by Jautrīte Saliņa at the *Northeast Modern Language Association* conference of 1974, mentions that it is a 'nesaderīgu valodas slāņu rasols' ('Olivier salad of incompatible linguistic layers'; Saliņš 1974). Although one

could agree on it being a salad and being incompatible, it is hard to agree with the unfavourable opinion in terms of how it is expressed if we take into consideration the opinions mentioned at the beginning of the subsection.

The novel is perceived as a grotesque by the Czech literary scholar Radegast Parolek, who says that the novel is 'īsts asprātību, kulturālas erudīcijas, fantāzijas un stilistiskas rotaļības koncerts' ('a real concerto of playfulness in terms of wit, cultural erudition, phantasy and style'; Paroleks 1980: 147). He also argues that it is one of the pinnacles of all Soviet grotesque and satirical literature. Latvian literary scholar Rimands Ceplis praises the novel for being a literary text that had dismantled traditional attitudes towards what could be considered a literary text – 'Izārdīta tradicionāli nopietnā attieksme pret tekstu, pasludinot pavārgrāmatu par literāru darbu' ('The traditionally serious attitude towards a text has been destroyed by claiming that a cookbook can be a literary text'; Ceplis 2000). In 2003, literary critic Eduards Silkalns said, 'Uz padomju laika stipri vienvēidīgās, proletariāta masām viegli izprotamās socreālistiskās daiļprozas pelēcīgā fona pēkšņi parādījās šis krāsainais plankums' ('Against the thoroughly homogeneous and grey socialist realist belles-lettres backdrop that was easily understood by the proletarian masses, suddenly a colourful splash appeared'; Silkalns 2003).

Both of these opinions echo the 1986 view of the Latvian linguist Ildze Kronta, who says that this novel is

valodas zemestrīce mūsu mierīgajos platuma grādos, un, lai arī te viss nepavisam nav latvietim saprotams, tas ir vajadzīgais impulss, grūdiens ārā no standartizētas vienvēidības, tā sakot, mazliet huligānisks iespēju atgādinājums.

(a linguistic earthquake in our tranquil meridian, and although there is not much for a Latvian to understand in this novel, it is a necessary impulse, a push outside the standardised homogeneity, so to speak, a somewhat hooliganic reminder of the possibilities; Kronta 1986: 170)

Mārgers Zariņš himself, after the first reactions to the publication of a fragment of the novel, said that 'Uzskaitītie vārdi nav paši par sevi miruši, bet gan tikai pārvietojušies. Vecākajai paaudzei – atmiņā, jaunākajai paaudzei – vārdnīcās' ('The provided words are not dead *per se*, but just have moved elsewhere. For the older generation – into memories, for the younger one – into dictionaries'; Zariņš 1972).

Zariņš forecasts the possible criticism already in the text of the novel, and in this way, he also intertwines the first full translation into Latvian of Goethe's *Faust* (1898), by the Latvian poet Rainis, into the text by forecasting the same reproaches that the Latvian linguist Kārlis Milenbahs made to Rainis – for

example, the use of incomprehensible words and dialects (Gaižūns 1985), which is one of the trademarks of *Mock Faustus*. The translation of Goethe's *Faust* into Latvian by Rainis was a seminal event in the history of the Latvian language – it was considered the foundation of the contemporary Latvian literary language (see Grīnuma 1999). So, along with other influences, this translation was an important source of inspiration for Zariņš in how he constructed the language of his novel, although it would be hard to argue that it marked a turning point in Latvian literature.<sup>4</sup>

As a follow-up to the previous passage, the Swedish-Latvian poet Juris Kronbergs says that *Mock Faustus* was 'pirmais spilgtākais literārās valodas identitātes problēmas pieteikums latviešu pēckara literatūrā' ('the first vivid example of the problem of identity of literary language in post-war Latvian literature'; Kronbergs 1994). The exiled Latvian literary critic Eduards Silkalns is one who also sees that the linguistic mannerisms of the novel not only express the possibilities of the Latvian language but also ridicule them:

Zariņa aizrautība ar senvārdiem un lokālismiem – un, ko var zināt, varbūt arī vienu otru pašdarinātu, it kā tautiski skanošu vārdu – arī uzskatāms par milzīgu, gardu smieklu par 1930.-iem gadiem raksturīgo latviešu valodas latviskošanu.

(The obsession of Zariņš with archaisms and localisms – and, what can one know, maybe even a few self-made, although folk-sounding words – is to be regarded as one big, delicious laugh about the 1930s when it was characteristic to Latvianise the Latvian language; Silkalns 2003)

Regarding the 'Latvianisation of the Latvian language', the fact that the gastronomical language and imagery is more ample and colourful in the parts of the novel that describe the events before WW2 is also an indirect evaluation of the times. The first part of the novel, which takes place in independent Latvia, a time when, according to myth, everything was idyllic, presents an abundance of talk about food, recipes, meals and both local and global cuisine. Though at times hyperbolic, this is in stark contrast to the chaos that follows in the subsequent two parts, in which the gastronomical reality is portrayed in bleak tones and is expressed less vividly. When Mārlovs rereads his version of the *P.P.P.*, everything in it seems to be phantastical and unreal to him. Thus, the image of a great past has been shattered, and the future does not seem bright. Although the politics, regimes and sudden changes in relationships are addressed directly, the gastronomical side of the novel tells another story. At

<sup>4</sup> For example, the conceptual poetry collection *Mīļākais tētis pasaulē (The Loveliest Dad in the World)* by Einārs Pelšs in 2016 was a threshold event in Latvian poetry; see Laizāns 2019 for a more elaborate discussion.

times, the story is quite different from the directly addressed one, which can even be opposing to the Soviet regime under which it was written, censored and published.

The aforementioned internal multilingualism, the hyperbolised mix of many varieties of Latvian and the omnipresent use of expressions from other languages reflect the constant changes to the political regimes and point to confusion in identity. However, the fact that both Mārlovs and Trampedahs are portrayed as 'eternal' figures (both are involved in sixteenth and early seventeenth century events as Christopher Marlowe and Ben Johnson, respectively) shows that living for several centuries brings with it an abundant thesaurus of linguistic and cultural references, which in turn confuse the reader, who has not spent so much time on this earth. The approach to poetics adapted by Zariņš also portrays that a homogeneous national Latvian language is a fiction, as is also proven by the aforementioned reactions of readers and critics: if you make something too Latvian, it does not make sense to any Latvian.

Silkalns also does not fail to identify the challenges a reader faces: 'Zariņš no sava lasītāja liekas sagaidām visu, proti – ka viņš būs talantīgs lingvists, vēsturnieks, literātūrvēsturnieks, orientēsies mūzikā, glezniecībā, teoloģijā...' ('Zariņš expects from his reader everything, namely that he will be a talented linguist, historian, literary scholar, and will be well acquainted with music, painting, theology...'; Silkalns 2003). Joyce had a similar requirement, expecting that an ideal reader would suffer from ideal insomnia (Joyce 1975: 120). Although Silkalns admires the qualities of Zariņš' novel, his sympathy is on the side of the reader: 'Lasītājs, ja viņš nav gluži superģēnijs, dabū ar šo romānu apieties kā ar mīklu, skatoties, ko tādu viņš sapratīs pilnīgi, ko tādu pa pusei un ko tādu nemaz' ('The reader, if he is not a supergenius, must handle this novel as an enigma, and see for himself, what he will understand, what he will understand partially, and what he will not understand'; Silkalns 2003).

## 7 Aftertaste

Although the novel is a mix of gastropian and linguopian qualities and is fairly incomprehensible to a native Latvian speaker, it was translated partially or fully into eight languages between 1979 and 1988 (into English by Raissa Bobrova in 1987). Just as in reality, the changes to political regimes in fictional narratives bring about the presence or absence of certain foods, and, with it, different influences on cuisine. These changes, in turn, influence language, particularly the aspects relating to gastronomy. As different regimes are inevitably tied to different nations, ethnicities and their respective languages, the

portrayal of changes to political regimes through the gastronomical, however phantasmagorical, point to a reality beyond just the food on the table. To paraphrase an expression from the German linguist Viktor Klemperer, *Mock Faustus* shows how the *Linguae Triorum Imperiorum* (Republic of Latvia, Soviet Union, *Imperium Tertium* – all the regimes portrayed in the novel) change the multilingual setup of Latvia, and as a fictional cookbook, these changes are shown most vividly by gastronomical imagery. Anyhow, the only real and significant conclusion one can ever make when researching food in literature and culture is *Mahlzeit!*

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