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"Supped well, and mighty merry, and our fears over": Food, Drink and Companionship as Escapism Philosophy in Samuel Pepys's Diary*

„Zjadłem dobrą kolację w niezmiernym weselu i wszystkie nasze strachy przeminęły": jedzenie, picie i towarzystwo jako filozofia eskapizmu w dzienniku Samuela Pepysa

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Abstract. The Diary of Samuel Pepys offers not only a firsthand account of the political and social life in the 17th-century England, but also a profound insight into the culinary habits of the diarist and his contemporaries. In circumstances of grief or jeopardy, Pepys appears to be searching for ways to obliterate and shun the peril by turning to his favourite pleasure which is food and drink enjoyed in a good company. The author clearly treats the activity as a form of escapism and a social emollient which mitigates feuds and conquers fears. The paper examines Pepys's life philosophy focusing on those aspects of the Diary where eating and drinking appear as the main sources of the author's merriness and a technique which helps to overcome the hardships and adversities of everyday life.

Keywords: Samuel Pepys, diary, food, drink, escapism

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Abstrakt. Dziennik Samuela Pepysa oferuje nie tylko relacje świadka politycznych i społecznych wydarzeń w siedemnastowiecznej Anglii, ale również cenny wgląd w kulinarne nawyki londyńczyków. W sytuacji zagrożenia życia lub w momentach smutku i żalu Pepys szuka sposobów na pocieszenie i zapomnienie, zwracając się często w stronę swojej ulubionej przyjemności: jedzenia i picia w towarzystwie przyjaciół i bliskich. Artykuł jest próbą analizy tych wątków dziennika Samuela Pepysa, w których autor traktuje tę aktywność jako formę eskapizmu w czasach zarazy i wielkiego pożaru w Londynie w roku 1666 oraz jako czynnik łagodzący społeczne napięcia, lęki i niepokoje.

Słowa kluczowe: Samuel Pepys, dziennik, jedzenie, picie, eskapizm

The Diary of Samuel Pepys, being a remarkable source of knowledge of the political and social life in the 17th-century England, can be also read as an enthralling story of a young Londoner who found pleasure in cherishing and sharing his meals in a company of friends or relatives. When such a reading filter and prism of interpretation is applied to the Diary, it emerges as an impressive compendium of the 17th-century English cuisine and, more importantly, a private testimony of a person in his early thirties who treats the custom of meeting at a table not only for a sheer physiological need of consumption to maintain his living functions, but also an immense source of joy and distraction from the surrounding reality. The paper looks at how the diarist develops his individual life philosophy by turning to food and drink as emolliate factors in times of sorrow, instability or a threat to life. According to John N. Longeway (1990, p. 1),

> "escapist" entertainment's essential purpose is to draw us away from our everyday troubles, and, sometimes, to help us to fantasize ourselves as better, more important and better off than we really are. Indulgence in such entertainment helps us avoid, temporarily, unpleasant truths that we must live with, and it is this escape from unpleasant reality that gives us the terms "escapist" and "escapism".

In such a sense Pepys is an escapist as his attitude toward and use of food and drink is not that of an unthinking hedonist, but a proven philosophical approach that served him well throughout his life, especially during such trials as the plague of 1665–1666 and the 1666 Great Fire of London.

"TO DINNER AND THERE MERRY"

Pepys's escapism philosophy stems from his undisputed "merry" personality. The word "merry" is, in fact, one of the most frequently occurring adjectives to describe the diarist's emotional state. According to www.pepysdiary.com, the word "merry" appears 630 times throughout the Diary, compared to 207 appearances of the word "sad" or 348 usages of "bad". When this data is juxtaposed with the occurrence of the adjective "good" (1,980 times), one might come to a conclusion

that Pepys's attitude towards life and the times that he described was rather optimistic, or at least optimistically balanced, but this is only a stylometric data which should, however, be supported with facts.

As Richard Ollard (1974, p. 85) rightly notices, Pepys's office hours were quite irregular and flexible when compared to the 21st-century realities, and hence "Pepys was surprisingly free from the servitude of the clock". Indeed, he does not seem to worry much about the fixed hours of his daily schedule and he treats his daily agenda rather carelessly, flexibly and is often sufficiently light-hearted to leave off work to dive into the pleasures of city life:[1] "Pepys's readiness to take the afternoon off to go to a theatre, or, should the weather prove irresistible, to embark with his wife and her maid on an expedition on the river, seems by the twentieth century standards irresponsible" (Ollard, 1974, p. 85). It does not, however, mean that Pepys is ready to neglect his business for the sake of a sheer pleasure. On the contrary, he is aware of the public function[2] he performs and the duties it entails, but he is prudent enough to keep a safe balance between work and enjoyment. John Drinkwater (1930, p. 41), in his *Pepys. His Life and Character*, attempts to understand this outstanding ability of the diarist: "He was now twenty-seven years of age, and on his first appearance in the Diary we find him in full exercise of the natural eagerness towards all the daily traffic and business of social life that was to be the secret of his fame". Indeed, he is full of vigour and zeal to live his social life thoroughly and with the highest engagement, yet he realizes the necessity to be resolute and responsible when it comes to business, as he knows that his rich social life greatly depends on his well-maintained and well-exercised professional duties. As Drinkwater (1930, p. 79) adds,

> it cannot be said that Pepys took life easily. He was an apprehensive, choleric little man, and the Diary is full of suspicions and misgivings. But although trouble of one sort or another was usually brewing in his mind, he had a remarkable faculty for not being demoralized by it when it came.

Such an attitude fits in Pepys's escapist philosophy which allowed him to overcome the problems resulting from his position or family life, and even when

[1] Life in Stuart London offered much to enjoy. As Christopher Driver (1984, p. 8) writes: "in the Diary we accompany Pepys into his food world: shop as well as kitchen, public tavern as well as domestic dining-room". Indeed, we can see Pepys shopping at numerous markets, especially at Cheapside where one could buy poultry but also have a pint of beer or ale in one of its taverns (Harvey, 2021). Pepys was a frequent and eager visitor to London's taverns and inns, which fits into the general inclination of the English at the time. Samuel Sorbiére, in his *A Voyage to England*, noticed that "there is scarce a day passes but a tradesman goes to the alehouse or tavern to smoke with his friends, and therefore public houses are numerous here" (Sorbiére, 1709, p. 62).

[2] Pepys became the Secretary to the Admiralty after the Restoration of Charles Stuart in 1660.

there seems no proper solution, he tries to keep his cool head and turns to the pleasures and enjoyments of life to redirect his thoughts. Drinkwater (1930, p. 80) confirms Pepys's spiritual stamina in dealing with everyday troubles: "And so Pepys, who was always seeing clouds in the sky no bigger than a man's hand, was never panic-stricken when the weather really came". The fact that he treats his daily schedule without much restriction and is able to exchange his office to a tavern within minutes does not suggest his general and inherent carefree approach to life, but an invaluable skill of leaving work problems behind and enjoying life as if he was deeply convinced about the superiority of little, everyday pleasures over minor, trivial troubles everybody had and has. This attempt to keep the balance between being engaged in public or business matters and being "merry" is best shown in Pepys's line: "To dinner, and there merry, yet vexed again at publique matters"[3] (24.10.1665). Again, it seems that Pepys does not neglect his business matters, but possesses a useful capability of putting them aside in order to enjoy the merriness of life moments. It is easily discernible in the Diary that "vexations were so plentiful" and Pepys must have been aware that "it would never do to brood on them. That way life could easily be made a misery, and life was far too full of enchantments for that" (Drinkwater, 1930, p. 79). The fact that he "found amusement at every turn" (Drinkwater, 1930, p. 80) in order to escape the dullness and threats of professional and family routine only confirms that Pepys developed an individual and well-thought life philosophy, which is termed by Arthur Bryant (1952, p. 355) as "philosophy of pleasure" and exemplified by Pepys's entry to his Diary: "the height of what we take pains for and can hope for in this world [...] and therefore to be enjoyed while we are young and capable of these joys" (26.03.1668). In every threat or menace to his career stability and in every misfortune or natural disaster, he looks for "the excuse for devoting more time to the joys of existence" (Bryant, 1952, p. 355) as if taking advantage of pleasures and excitements of life served as escapism technique in the moments of doubt, unfortunate coincidences or simply bad luck.

Undeniably, one of those joys of existence was, for Pepys, eating and drinking. As Ollard (1974, p. 90) says, "food and drink, as any casual reading of the Diary shows, were in the first place direct and primary pleasures like sunshine or starlight". Pepys himself proves this statement at every turn in the Diary when he instantly, and even a bit automatically, juxtaposes the joys of eating and drinking with the adjective "merry": "and there come into a room where there was infinite of new

[3] All extracts from the Diary come from the unabridged version available as an open access publication at www.pepysdiary.com. The quotes are provided with an exact date of an entry to show the appropriate chronology of events and indicate historical time frames. Pepys is quoted as he wrote and, as a result, there are many obsolete and variant spellings.

cakes placed that are made against Whitsuntide, and there we were very merry" (01.06.1661); "at a brave leg of veal roasted, and were very merry" (22.02.1660); "we had a loin of mutton fried, and were very merry" (24.02.1660); "and I had for them a barrel of oysters, a dish of neat's tongues, and a dish of anchovies, wine of all sorts, and Northdown ale. We were very merry till about eleven o'clock" (01.01.1661); "and did eat a barrel of oysters and two lobsters, which I did give them, and were very merry" (17.04.1661); "and there we had good wine and a gammon of bacon. My uncle Wight, Mr. Talbot, and others were with us, and we were pretty merry" (14.05.1661); "Here we had a venison pasty, brought hot from London, and were very merry" (01.08.1661); "Then to eat a dish of anchovies, and drink wine and syder, and very merry" (31.12.1661); "Very merry at, before, and after dinner, and the more for that my dinner was great" (04.04.1663); "By and by to my house, to a very good supper, and mighty merry" (06.01.1668); "and drank, and eat a lobster, and sang, and mighty merry" (23.04.1668).

It seems that no matter what kind of dish is served, Pepys finds a profound pleasure in sharing common moments in a company of friends. Pepys is a food lover, but either cake or a lobster or just a simple gammon of bacon are not the major reasons for his excitement. It is apparently the possibility of sitting at one table, enjoying the food and drink with those who are both good talkers and listeners. Pepys stresses the importance of a conversation as one of the factors contributing to his merriness: "About noon we dined[4] together, and were very merry at table telling of tales" (09.10.1660); "Here come also Mr. Howe to dine with me, and we had a good dinner and good merry discourse with much pleasure, I enjoying myself mightily to have friends at my table" (06.01.1667). It is worth noticing that all of the above entries from the Diary where Pepys pairs his merry state with the pleasures of the table, are expressed in first person plural "we". The consistent usage of "we were merry" instead of the singular "I was merry" clearly implies that Pepys's philosophy of pleasure does not only rely on consumption but, first and foremost, on enjoying food and drink convivially. It is, actually, a difficult task to highlight any fragment throughout the Diary where the author expresses his delight or enjoyment over a meal when dining alone. In fact, there is an entry which distinctly proves Pepys's philosophy of joy discussed above: "and so home to dinner, and dined alone upon some marrow bones, and had a fine

[4] The structure of meals in Stuart England departs from the contemporary one. Breakfast, which was usually a light meal composed of a selection of cold meats, bread and butter and very often accompanied with wine, beer or ale, was followed by the major meal of the day – dinner. Unlike today, it was taken at midday, although Pepys's business often forces him to enjoy his dinner later in the afternoon. Regular dinner included from two to three courses comprising a diversity of dishes giving the diners a variety of choice. Supper was the last meal of the day served early in the evening usually with a single course (Brears, 1985).

piece of rost beef, but being alone I eat none" (05.01.1662). This particular sentence embraces the crucial fundament of Pepys's well-thought philosophy of life: food and drink are vitally important sources of pleasure and delight, but they can only be fully cherished when one shares them at a table with others, especially those we love, admire or like. The picture in which Pepys is given one of his favourite dishes (the "marrow bones" and "a fine piece of rost beef") but refuses to eat it just because he "dined alone" depicts his high sociability and conviviality but, most importantly highlights the core of his life philosophy.

"SUPPED WELL, AND MIGHTY MERRY, AND OUR FEARS OVER"

Ollard (1974, p. 90) notices that, for Pepys, food and drink were not only the sources of a sheer, physiological pleasure, but played a much more important role in his life: "first as an indicator of social position [...], second as a social emollient". While the function of food as social cachet requires separate research, the latter function of a "social emollient" encourages a deeper analysis and stands in the centre of the present paper. Although the only noun definition of an "emollient" provided by *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* is that of a "preparation that softens the skin" (Pearsall, 2001, p. 604), Ollard certainly uses the word in its adjective meaning which is "attempting to avoid confrontation or anger; soothing or calming" (2001, p. 604). What the author means is obviously the commonly-known belief that sharing food over the same table can have smoothing properties which might prove to be useful in tense, awkward or troublesome human relationships. Pepys seems to confirm such an understanding of the function that common eating can generate as he reports in his Diary:

> At noon by water, to the King's Head at Deptford, where Captain Taylor invites Sir W: Batten, Sir John Robinson (who come in with a great deale of company from hunting, and brought in a hare alive and a great many silly stories they tell of their sport, which pleases them mightily, and me not at all, such is the different sense of pleasure in mankind), and others upon the score of a survey of his new ship; and strange to see how a good dinner and feasting reconciles everybody, Sir W. Batten and Sir J. Robinson being now as kind to him, and report well of his ship and proceedings, and promise money, and Sir W. Batten is a solicitor for him, but it is a strange thing to observe, they being the greatest enemys he had, and yet, I believe, hath in the world in their hearts (09.11.1665).

What Pepys conspicuously highlights in the above fragment is that although there is "different sense of pleasure in mankind" and people vary in personality as well as the relations between them are often socially complex or complicated, food and drink can serve as a "social emollient" mitigating the disputes or hostility

even between the staunchest enemies since a table offers a common space which reconciles people and always unites rather than divides. Pepys comprehends the importance of being merry over a good meal with a company of friends or relatives from yet another perspective. For him, food and drink might not only be an emollient mitigating strives or mellowing a potentially dense atmosphere over a table, but also, and perhaps more significantly, it can quench one's bad emotions in extreme situations such as sorrow or fear. In other words, food and drink can be treated as ways of escaping from a painful reality that one has to face. In such a sense, for Pepys, eating and drinking might be considered as escapism technique which is indispensably useful when one looks for consolation or wants to forget about the hardships of everyday, routine life, and life in the second half of the 17th century in England was particularly burdensome.

Encountering death became a daily routine for Pepys and other Londoners in 1665. After only a few deaths reported to be caused by plague in the autumn of 1664, the pestilence broke out again in spring 1665 "which, at that time of the year, was a more worrying development, as the disease commonly was at its most virulent from then until the late autumn" (Porter, 2012, p. 111). Even though the government introduced special bills imposing the necessity to be in quarantine on the people of London, "the disease spread, although not rapidly at first" (Porter, 2012, p. 111). Pepys expresses his first concerns connected with the plague in June: "This day, much against my will, I did in Drury Lane see two or three houses marked with a red cross upon the doors, and »Lord have mercy upon us« writ there; which was a sad sight to me, being the first of the kind that, to my remembrance, I ever saw" (07.06.1665). Then a few days later, he refers to some disturbing statistics: "The towne grows very sickly, and people to be afeard of it; there dying this last week of the plague 112, from 43 the week before […]" (15.06.1665). The peak of the plague was, however, yet to come:

> in the first week in August 86 parishes recorded plague deaths and during the week of 12–19 September the figure was 126, virtually the entire city. That was the worst week of the epidemic, with 8,297 deaths from all causes, 7,165 of the attributed to plague (Porter, 2012, p. 111).

Indeed, the sinister atmosphere of the abandoned streets of London must have been affecting the general well-being and mentality of its inhabitants. Although Pepys remains at his office, he sends his wife and her maid to Woolwich for safety. He also drafts his last will, knowing that the plague might infect anyone staying in London including himself. He gives a few saddening reports on the depopulation of his hometown and reports on the deaths of people he knew personally. Basically,

he becomes surrounded by death, takes it for granted, accepts it, and makes efforts to live alongside it.

Claire Tomalin (2003, p. 168) notices that "during the first five months, when it was no more than a threat, life in the Pepys family continued as usual". Even later, in June, when the reports on death rates become really threatening, Pepys tries to live a regular life, that is, the one which is absolutely not deprived of pleasures:

> Then to the Dolphin Taverne, where all we officers of the Navy met with the Commissioners of the Ordnance by agreement, and dined: where good musique at my direction. […] This day I informed myself that there died four or five at Westminster of the plague in one alley in several houses upon Sunday last, Bell Alley, over against the Palace-gate; yet people do think that the number will be fewer in the towne than it was the last weeke! (20.06.1665)

In keeping with his philosophy, Pepys is visibly trying to live beside and regardless of the epidemic, ignoring the quarantine rules and meeting all officers for dinner. He himself gives an account of the daily death toll of the plague and seems to be quite optimistic about its future development. It looks, however, as if by continuing life as it was, Pepys attempts to console himself and conjure the reality, which, already in June, was more serious than anyone expected, and Pepys must have been fully aware of the hazard. It is also very probable that he was consistently pursuing his philosophy of joy against all odds, using conviviality as a way of escaping the menacing reality and mitigating the fears triggered by the epidemic. Bryant (1952, p. 64) pinpoints the same concept behind Pepys's positive attitude: "Yet instead of dying he lived, and lived as even he had never lived before". Indeed, Pepys had been quite overworked in the past few months and was longing for an intensive pleasure time to relax and curb the business troubles. Bryant (1952, p. 264) puts it poetically as if Pepys's joyful time "was flowing in like a summer tide over the waiting sands of life". In fact, Pepys himself clearly reiterates his inner need of "refreshment" and rekindled joy in one of the passages of his Diary, at the very beginning of the summer in 1665: "to Fox Hall, where we spent two or three hours talking of several matters very soberly and contentfully to me, which, with the ayre and pleasure of the garden, was a great refreshment to me, and, 'methinks, that which we ought to joy ourselves in" (23.06.1665). This overwhelming feeling of the necessity to remain merry regardless of the ubiquitous danger and breathe the air of joy and refreshment might seem particularly improper when it is leaned against the epidemic background of the time. The plague is raging and the diarist is expressing his urge to lead an enjoyable life, which might be either interpreted as his complete lack of imagination, responsibility, prudence and sensibility or simply as a well-thought and consistent pursuit of his proven life philosophy to react against the omnipresent death and anguish. This latter interpretation of Pepys's

behaviour seems much more meaningful and justified, especially when another June entry is analysed:

> The plague encreases mightily, I this day seeing a house, at a bitt-maker's over against St. Clement's Church, in the open street, shut up; which is a sad sight. Up and to the office, where all the morning. At noon dined by chance at my Lady Batten's, and they sent for my wife, and there was my Lady Pen and Pegg. Very merry, and so I to my office again, where till 12 o'clock at night, and so home to supper and to bed (27.06.1665).

Again, the diarist does not hesitate to juxtapose two extremes in one short passage – death and joy. It perfectly fits in his escapist philosophy which clearly helps him overcome and soften the mortal impact of the outer world or also to "enjoy what remained of the pleasant evenings of summer" (Bryant, 1952, p. 264).

Bryant (1952, p. 264) also notices that the period of social isolation and London's depopulation was conducive for Pepys's joyful time: "the departure of all the great world from London made it easier". The diarist himself admits at the end of July that actually the plague time gave him an opportunity to appreciate life more than ever before: "I ended this month with the greatest joy that ever I did any in my life, because I have spent the greatest part of it with abundance of joy, and honour, and pleasant journeys, and brave entertainments, and without cost of money" (31.06.1665). What could certainly contribute to Pepys's great frame of mind is the fact that during the epidemic he was able to take advantage of all the pleasures of life because his wife was not at home. Such a view is shared by Tomalin (2003, p. 170): "For the rest of the year Pepys travelled up and down the Thames even more than usual, visiting his wife when he could, but effectively leading a bachelor life, which may have contributed to his unusually high spirits". Pepys is unusually excited as for the time when thousands of people are reported to be dying around him and it indeed may result from the opportunities that bachelor life offers as he does not only make himself merry by means of eating and drinking in a good company, but also by being unfaithful to his wife and pursuing numerous mistresses: "Thence home with my Lord Bruncker to dinner where very merry with him and his doxy" (05.09.1665). Therefore, feeling free to travel, feast and seduce and additionally being able to extend his "power and earning capacity" (Tomalin, 2003, p. 170), Pepys came to quite an awkward conclusion, remembering that it was uttered on the last day of 1665 when the epidemic reached its peak with the death toll of almost 70,000 people:

> I have never lived so merrily (besides that I never got so much) as I have done this plague time, by my Lord Bruncker's and Captain Cocke's good company, and the acquaintance of Mrs. Knipp,

Coleman and her husband, and Mr. Laneare, and great store of dancings we have had at my cost (which I was willing to indulge myself and wife) at my lodgings (31.12.1665).

As Bryant (1952, p. 268) rightly underlines, reading Pepys's reports from 1665 in his Diary, it is "hard to believe that plague and war were really raging". Pepys openly admits that the plague period was the time when he lived as "merrily" as never before because of the constant fun he had in a company of friends. However shocking the statement of being jubilant during mortal epidemic may seem, Pepys is again using his proven philosophy to conjure the reality with his optimism and an unremitting desire to draw the pleasures of life from various sources available, and that time was particularly abundant in those sources. He could build up and maintain his merriness by eating, drinking and dancing in a good company, but also lead a more sinful, bachelor life, which he clearly appreciated. Hence, it might be again stated that the pleasures and joys of life such as the above worked for Pepys as the emollients to the deadly threat lurking at every corner of the city and escapism technique purposefully exploited to obliterate and postpone the inevitable end of life.

The feeling of a lurking menace and jeopardy was reinforced and gained a new meaning in 1666 when the Great Fire of London haunted Pepys's hometown. Even though the fire proved to be salutary in terminating the still raging epidemic and it was perceived as the final stage of the plague bringing relief, it was outstandingly destructive to the already depopulated London. Although only six people were reported to have been killed in fire, the architectural and infrastructural damage was inexplicably vast:

Five-sixths of the city were thus consumed, the area of devastation encompassing a mile and a half in length and half a mile in breadth. Fifteen of the city's twenty-six wards were thoroughly destroyed and, in total, 460 streets containing 13,200 houses were razed. Eighty-nine churches had gone, and four of the seven city gates were reduced to ashes and powder (Ackroyd, 2001, p. 222).

On September 1st, a day before the fire broke out, Pepys was in Islington and as usual "ate and drank and mighty merry" (01.09.1666). At night he and his wife Elizabeth were woken up by their maid "to tell us of a great fire". Pepys went to assess the situation through a window, but because he "thought it far enough off", he went back to sleep. Having got up and heard of the scale and damage of the flames, he went to the Tower, climbed the top of it and finally had a chance to evaluate the actual range of the calamity: "I did see the houses at that end of the bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side the end of the bridge" (02.09.1666) and this clearly made his "heart full of trouble". Then, he was called by the King to report on what he saw and suggested both to Charles and

the Duke of York that "unless his Majesty did command houses to be pulled down nothing could stop the fire" (02.09.1666), which was quickly implemented. At noon Pepys returned home, surprisingly, not to evacuate his family and possessions but to receive guests at dinner:

> and so home, and there find my guests, which was Mr. Wood and his wife Barbary Sheldon, and also Mr. Moons: she mighty fine, and her husband; for aught I see, a likely man. But Mr. Moone's design and mine, which was to look over my closett and please him with the sight thereof, which he hath long desired, was wholly disappointed; for we were in great trouble and disturbance at this fire, not knowing what to think of it. However, we had an extraordinary good dinner, and as merry, as at this time we could be (02.09.1665).

Analysing the above fragment, Bryant (1952, p. 306) indicates at the failure of the dinner and implies that due to the spreading fire, the thoughts of the guests were redirected from admiring Pepys's new closet to anticipating the pending danger: "But this dinner-party was not a success, for the hearts of all those who sat down were elsewhere and Pepys's intention that they should please themselves with the sight of his fine new closet was not fulfilled". What Bryant does not underline, however, is the fact that even though Pepys's show-off does not work as he planned it, he achieves the primary goal of the meeting. In keeping with his philosophy, he does it for the sheer sake of uplifting his saddened heart and console his spirits with "extraordinary good dinner" and, as usual feel "as merry, as at this time we could be".

The next day (Monday) when Pepys realized that his own house is not a safe place any more as the conflagration was inevitably approaching, he accelerated the relocation of his valuables which he had started the previous day and the peak of that evacuation took place on Tuesday (04.09.1666) which "was the greatest day of the fire" (Bryant, 1952, p. 309). Having already transported his "bags of gold", "an iron chest" and "chief papers", he wonders where to hide his collection of wine and decides to take the example of Sir Batten and dig a pit in the garden with Mr. Pen and "and put our wine in it; and I my Parmazan[5] cheese, as well as my wine and some other things" (04.09.1666). Looking at all the examples of Pepys's affection to food and drink present throughout the Diary, it should come as no surprise that he values his wines so much that they require a special protection from the destructive flames. The fact that he also decides to hide his parmesan cheese could suggest that he either esteemed the cheese so highly for its unique taste or

[5] Apart from the original parmesan cheese from Italy, there was also an English substitute – the Huntingdonshire stilton cheese. Pepys does not specify which one he had to hide, but judging from how valuable it was for him, we assume it was the original one.

it was an exceptionally pricey delicacy at the time. What is distinctly visible at this point is the diarist's utmost care not only for his material possessions but also those edible ones and the fact that they are equally important for him defines his personal preferences. In the evening on the same day, the Pepyses dine in a company of a friendly couple: "This night Mrs. Turner (who, poor woman, was removing her goods all this day, good goods into the garden, and knows not how to dispose of them), and her husband supped with my wife and I at night, in the office; upon a shoulder of mutton from the cook's, without any napkin or any thing, in a sad manner, but were merry" (04.09.1666).

Tomalin (2003, p. 230) says that the fire was "threatening them […] and also advancing west along Fleet Street". Still, they do not resign from meeting other people, as if being in a group could hearten them and cheer them up or simply made them feel safer. They dine upon a "shoulder of mutton" and despite the fact that there are some tangible shortcomings of the supper resulting from dramatic circumstances such as the lack of any "napkin or any thing" and they are all overwhelmed with this "sad manner", they somehow "contrived to be a little merry" (Bryant, 1952, p. 310). Actually, even though Bryant adds the adverb "little" to Pepys's most favourite adjective, the above entry does not really show the level of their merriness. Regardless of that, Pepys again manages to follow his escapist philosophy and remain "merry" in an exceptionally hazardous situation by using his well-tested technique of eating and drinking convivially.

On Wednesday, "having good hopes that the worst was over" (Bryant, 1952, p. 310), Pepys reports that he went "to Sir W. Pen's, and there eat a piece of cold meat, having eaten nothing since Sunday, but the remains of Sunday's dinner"[6] (05.09.1666). Then he walked to Moorfields "risking scorched feet from the hot coals underfoot everywhere" (Tomalin, 2003, p. 231), "drank there, and paid twopence for a plain penny loaf" (05.09.1666). He then "set the dockyard men to guard the Office all night, giving them beer and bread and cheese" (Bryant, 1952, p. 311). The next day, Pepys went to his neighbour Mr. Ford, "who was giving an impromptu dinner" (Tomalin, 2003, p. 231) "and there dined in an earthen platter – a fried breast of mutton; a great many of us, but very merry, and indeed as good a meal, though as ugly a one, as ever I had in my life" (06.09.1666). Even though the earthenware platters seem ugly to Pepys and he uses them with disgust, he clearly enjoys the breast of mutton and the numerous company and, as a result, achieves his most favourite state of being merry again. What is more, the 6th of

[6] It is probably due to the chaos raging around that Pepys forgets at this point of his entry that he actually dined on "a shoulder of mutton" the day before so his complaint about "having eaten nothing since Sunday" is not well-grounded.

September was the day when the fire was finally smothered owing to the knocking of the houses commanded by the King, and this gave the diarist another, justifiable reason to rejoice:

> Thence down to Deptford, and there with great satisfaction landed all my goods at Sir G. Carteret's safe, and nothing missed I could see, or hurt. This being done to my great content, I home, and to Sir W. Batten's, and there with Sir R. Ford, Mr. Knightly, and one Withers, a professed lying rogue, supped well, and mighty merry, and our fears over (06.09.1666).

The last line of the above entry fully confirms that despite Pepys's rather sanguine attitude towards the risk, he feared the danger of dying or losing his possessions. In order to diminish the feeling, he yet again turns to his proven life philosophy, immersing himself in gregarious consumption and escaping the unfavourable reality.

CONCLUSION

What surfaces from the above deliberations is the picture of Samuel Pepys as a pleasure lover. He indeed loves being in a good company, sharing tasty food and drink over a common table. This activity, however, does not result from Pepys's sheer hedonistic desire to pursue any pleasures which life offers only for the pleasure's sake, but it is a more complex philosophical life attitude, which the diarist develops throughout his memoirs. This philosophy, which was defined by Bryant as the "joy of existence", is firmly settled on Pepys's belief that remaining "merry" and taking advantage of life pleasures is one of the primary goals of our existence and one of the major reasons for which people amass their fortunes and actually work:

> I paid the fiddlers 3l. among the four, and so away to bed, weary and mightily pleased, and have the happiness to reflect upon it as I do sometimes on other things, as going to a play or the like, to be the greatest real comfort that I am to expect in the world, and that it is that that we do really labour in the hopes of; and so I do really enjoy myself, and understand that if I do not do it now I shall not hereafter, it may be, be able to pay for it, or have health to take pleasure in it, and so fill myself with vain expectation of pleasure and go without it (06.01.1668).

The above confession is, in fact, Pepys's final reiteration of his philosophy and a peculiar testimony of a man who already went through a miscellany of misfortunes and natural disasters and still managed to maintain his overall good mood and high spirits. It is a panegyric on the *carpe diem* concept and an invocation of an author who comes to a conclusion that since the transience of time and inevitability of death are dimensions one is not able to halt or battle, the most reasonable

thing which a mortal human being can do is to remain positive and merry at all costs and against all odds. What seems to be in the centre of Pepys's sources of joy and pleasure is distinctively food and drink. Not only does it have, according to Pepys, reconciliation properties but also provides a person with an opportunity of a momentary oblivion, an essential detachment from reality, a way to escape the hardships of existence. As Pepys emphasizes in his Diary, this desired state of detachment can only be achieved when food and drink are enjoyed in a company of friends or relatives. Therefore, as it has been discussed, food and drink consumed convivially serve not only as a source of pure joy or a common social activity but most importantly as an emollient and escapism technique, indispensable to achieve the "joy of existence".

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