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**London in Crisis: The Representation of the Plague
Epidemic and the Great Fire of London in the Diaries of
Samuel Pepys**

Bakalářská práce

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Anotace

Bakalářská práce se věnuje vyobrazení dramatického období let 1665-1666 v Londýně v dobových denících Samuela Pepyse. Teoretická část má za úkol vyobrazit Velký požár Londýna a morovou epidemii. Tyto události jsou následně popsány a srovnány v praktické části. Součástí je také interpretační analýza primárního textu a jeho přístup k popisovaným událostem.

Klíčová slova: Londýn, morová epidemie, Velký požár Londýna, Samuel Pepys, deník

Abstract

This thesis is focused on the image of the crucial events in London in 1665-1666 and the way in which it is represented in the diary of Samuel Pepys. Theoretical part depicts the Great Fire and the Great Plague of London. These events are described and compared in practical part, including interpretation analysis of the primary text and its approach towards described events.

Key words: London, plague epidemic, Great Fire of London, Samuel Pepys, diary

Poděkování

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1 Introduction

This thesis is focused on the image of the crucial events in London in 1665 and 1666 and the way in which it is represented in the diary of Samuel Pepys. It shows how the citizens of London responded to the deadly plague, and subsequently to the devastating fire of the city. Was the plague inevitable or not? Where did the plague start and how did it spread? What did it look like, and what did people do to prevent the plague from spreading? I shall try to answer these questions in the theoretical section. Furthermore, the contemporary death toll data are included in the comparison with Pepys' diary. I also include the differences between the recent Covid-19 pandemic and the epidemic of 1665. Some misconceptions may be revealed. For example, whether the fire in 1666 prevented the plague from spreading.

I describe how badly inhabitants responded to the destructive fire. There had been a sequence of events which led to the catastrophic scenario. How did the fire spread in the centre of London? Was it true that people did not try to put out the fire? Consequently, what did they do? What was the role of the Dutch and the French in the alleged ignition of the fire? I elaborate on these questions more in the theoretical section.

This, and more, is represented in Samuel Pepys' personal diary which contains his daily notes. However, Pepys' diary was not supposed to be public. He wrote it for his personal purposes. That is the reason why his collection of daily notes may differ from the information given in the theoretical part. The Practical part compares Pepys' records with selected secondary sources such as Daniel Defoe, Peter Ackroyd or John Evelyn. It shows us how Pepys was affected by the plague and fire, how these disasters disrupted his daily life, and the pressure on the individual's mental state. I compare the death toll given by Pepys with the Bills of Mortality. The question is: Are there any inaccuracies in the number of deaths?

As I mentioned earlier, Pepys wrote his diary for his own benefit. This means that he did not know that his diary would become an important historical document. I include an analysis of his writing style and describe the structure of his writing. Ultimately, I sum up major events in 1665 and 1666 in Pepys' diary and reveal its significance as a historical document for today's readers.

Theoretical Part

2 Great Plague of 1665

2.1 Signs and symptoms of the plague

If you were in contact with someone who had the plague, it took about two or three days before the first signs of the plague appeared. The plague was characterized by noticeable blisters on the skin, they were called “blains”. The patient was considered lucky if no other symptoms followed. (Scott & Duncan, 2001, p. 217)

The plague is also called bubonic plague because of “buboes”. This symptom is like a tumour that could be found under arms or groin. They differ in number and size. They were often removed by surgeon if the growth did not stop. People with this symptom often suffer from horrible pain. Unfortunately, removing buboes was extremely painful as there were no anaesthetics and patients mostly passed out under it. People had a slight chance of surviving if the buboes did not appear again. (Scott & Duncan, 2001, p. 217)

There was another common symptom which was called carbuncle. It had to be removed as well. These were the most common symptoms of the plague which developed either to recovery or to death. There was one sign that most people were afraid of. People called them “the tokens”. Unfortunately, they meant nothing but death. Only a few people recovered from this symptom but mostly people died. Sometimes, the tokens appeared after death. The tokens were described by Bell as “spots upon the skin, breaking out in large numbers, varying in colour, figure, and size” (Bell qtd. in Scott & Duncan, 2001, p. 217).

2.2 The outbreak in London

The first official notice of the outbreak in London was a proclamation on 14 June cancelling Barnwell fair “for fear of spreading the plague” (Scott & Duncan, 2001, p.212). The plague started in the parish of St Giles-in-the-Fields and it went from western and northern suburbs towards the city. It spread progressively and ferociously. The intensity of the plague grew gradually. The plague was stronger and stronger as it moved to parish to parish.

The plague was weaker during the autumn and winter as the temperature was low. On the other hand, there was a slow start in March and April. The disease was on the peak of power during August and September where the deaths rate rose rapidly. The death rate at the beginning of June 1665 reached 45 deaths in a week. The following week it was twice as much as the previous one. (Scott & Duncan, 2001, p.212)

When the plague entered the city, the inhabitants could experience what a crisis looked like.

2.3 Crisis and problem in organisation

What is a crisis? It is a situation “when usual procedures are not able to handle the situation, experience is lacking, and resources are insufficient” (Knowles et al., 2019, p.641). It is usually “an extraordinary, unpredictable and disruptive” event. There is also “a failure of organisation, such as loss of reputation, financial loss or even loss of life.”

In other words, crisis is “a low-probability and high impact situation.” (Knowles et al., 2019, p.641). It is “personally and socially threatening and there is ambiguity in cause, effect, and means of resolution.” Was the Great Plague in 1665 inevitable? Not at all. There had been a lot of lethal plagues in the London throughout the previous 300 years. For example, the plague in the year of 1603

in London killed 25,000 people which was about 18 per cent of the population. In addition, the plague was not only in London but also in Amsterdam or Naples.

From the end of 1664 it was sure that the plague of 1665 was coming to London. Even though there had been many warnings, management of the plague was not trying to prevent the plague from spreading but the administration was rather more reactive. In general, it is presumed that those who are most appropriate “to deal with a crisis are the everyday civic or business leaders” (Knowles et al., 2019, p.642). The article *Crisis as a plague on organisation: Defoe and A Journal of the Plague Year* explains how the crisis was managed unsuccessfully. The work is focused on the difference between the year 1665 and how a similar disaster would be managed in modern-day crises. During the plague catastrophe there were two options that Defoe could do either stay in London “or shut up [their] house and flee” (Defoe, 1995, no p.).

People considered the Great Plague of 1665 as a God’s punishment. The disease came to London early. The first occurrence of plague in London is from the seventh century. London was never a city of happy citizens as it was a centre of “full of pits and sloughs, very perilous and noisy” (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.). No one was able to prepare London’s society for the terrible moments between the years of 1664 and 1666.

2.4 How it started and the dead bodies in dead pits carried by death carts

At the beginning of the 1664 the plague started in the parish of St. Giles. The infection was carried to London by the black rat, which is known as *rattus rattus*. The rat is often called the ship rat, or the house rat. Probably, they arrived from South Asia in Roman ships. Fortunately, the cold weather at the beginning of the 1665 stopped the disease from spreading but as I said, the numbers were

rising during May, June, July and August and the plague reached the peak of power in September. The difference in numbers between the whole of May and a single week in June is incredible. According to Company (1665, p. 22-27), there were 26 deaths in May and in the middle of June there were 112 deaths in a single week, which is four times as much. In July the plague attacked the western suburbs. When the plague was raging the weather contributed to the disease. It was a dry and hot summer all long. In London, there is a place that is called Mount Mill. These days it is “an open area, used as a car park” (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.) Here, according to Daniel Defoe “a piece of ground beyond Goswell Street, near Mount Mill abundance were buried promiscuously from the parishes of Aldersgate, Clerkenwell, and even out of the city” (Defoe, 1995, no p.). This place is called a plague pit, where thousands of people were brought or carried to in the so-called dead carts. Then they were thrown in and buried in the ground.

According to Ackroyd, the pit was about forty feet length, sixteen feet broad and twenty feet in depth. It could contain over a thousand corpses. Those bodies that were carried to the pits were either naked or they had a cover over them. They were using rags or sheets, but it often fell off them during the transportation. It was said that some people were so depressed that they were jumping into the pits by themselves. People were so rude that they were able to scream and jeer at anyone who mourned for the newly dead bodies. They were screaming words like “There is no God, God is a devil” (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

London was like a graveyard. No one was in the streets and the silence was disturbing. The only thing that was on the road were dead carts. Most of the shops were closed. People either fled or they were inside their houses and locked. People who were willing to risk and go to the streets avoided each other. They walked in the middle of the streets trying to keep distance from the houses. The city was so quiet that the water that was flowing through London could be heard.

It looked like the life in London stopped. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

John Allin, who was a clergyman, stayed in the town and was in touch with people who were away from the town. He was trying to keep them up to date. For example, on 11 August (the death rate that week was 2817) he wrote: “I am troubled at the approach of the sicknesse neerer every weeke and at a new burying place which they have made neer us” (Allin, quoted in Ackroyd, 2000, no p.). Allin was able to see the death pit through his window.

Defoe mentions infected and confused people who ran into the pits and “wrapt in blankets or rugs, and throw themselves in, and, as they said, bury themselves” (Defoe, 1995, no p.). According to Knowles et al. (2019, p.642), there is some similarity with those people who jumped out of the World Trade Tower in the 9/11 attack.

There was only one noise that could break the silence in London and that was the ringing of bells. That is what Allin described at the beginning of September. It made him anxious. Fortunately, there was a slight rain in the middle of September which soften the unpleasant heat, but after that the plague regained its strength. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

There were six physicians who believed that they had found a cure. They cut open an infected body and all of them died. In September 1665, more than eight thousand people died each week. Then the rates began to fall. There is no exact number of deaths because many records were destroyed in the Great Fire of London the following year. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

2.5 The plague at the beginning of its strength (November 1664 to April 1665)

There is a turnover in terms of the plague where during the cold months no one died of the plague in the year of 1664-65. The first victims were recorded

at the end of April in St. Giles. There were 2 deaths. However, there might have been other people died of the plague, but they were not recorded in Bills of Mortality. There were relatively low numbers of deaths even though there were some warnings. Knowles et al. (2019, p.643) compare the situation with people who believed that AIDS pandemic that affected only gay community is the same as the plague. They seemed to believe that only a particular part of people was in danger. They believed that they were not the type of people who would die of the plague. People were convinced that the plague occurred only in other parts of the city than their own because they could see the deaths far away from them. They were sure that the plague was on the outskirts of the town and would not go further. According to Knowles et al. (2019, p.643), there was not any kind of sign of leadership that would help the citizens overcome this hard situation. There was no guidance despite the rising number of deaths. The actual account was in the possession of the Government. People were not informed about the situation concerning the plague. (Knowles et al., 2019, p.643-644)

2.6 The plague at the peak of its power (May to end of September 1665)

The rate of deaths began to rise during May. People thought that the high rate of deaths would stay outside of the town, and it would not go further. In the end, they realised that the plague was spreading to all parts of the city and that there was no way to avoid it. (Knowles et al., 2019, p.644)

Defoe describes “the richer sort of people, especially the nobility and gentry from the west part of the city” (Defoe, 1995, no p.) that were leaving the town. There were many people on the streets with waggons, carts and men on horseback that were ready to leave London. It was said that the best way to avoid the plague was to run away from it. This attitude towards the plague continued all through

May and June and even after that. (Knowles et al., 2019, p.644)

At this point, the despaired people were finally heard, and the stage of crisis management was finally reached. The priority was to keep people and property safe. The most important thing was personal safety and for those who were wealthier there was in addition evacuation and security. (Knowles et al., 2019, p.644)

2.7 Crisis management and the impact on the population

As with any other disease, the most important thing to do is to lower the progress of the plague. Although the first mention of the plague was in November, the formal orders were effective from 1 July. Burying dead people became a leitmotif as it was one of the most important things to do. (Knowles et al., 2019, p.644-645)

Not only burying people was important but also “strategic assessment and decision making” (Knowles et al., 2019, p.645) which includes dealing with the lack of resources. A new job was created to help to keep the plague under control. When the wealthier group of people fled away from the city there was a huge unemployment crisis among the poor. However, this created new workforce and people could work as “Examiners”. Their job was to monitor and report the whereabouts of the sick people in parishes. They had to work on day and night shifts and work as buriers as well. (Knowles et al., 2019, p.645)

It was similar to today’s coronavirus pandemic. Everyone must be in a quarantine when they have symptoms. Then they are monitored.

Rumours about the London’s crisis spread overseas. There was a lack of positive information so the rumour about the plague spread freely. There was one clearest document that made sure that rumours would stop spreading. The Bills of Mortality recorded the true number of burials of deaths of the plague, yet Defoe is unsure whether it was true. Knowles et al. (2019, p.645) show, for example,

that “in May, 9 out of 53 burials in one parish are recorded as plague victims but further enquiry reveals 20 more”. Similarly, “at the beginning of September, during the ‘worst days’ of the plague, *A Journal of the Plague Year* claimed that over thousand a week were buried, yet the Bills reported fewer” (Knowles et al., 2019, p.645).

According to Defoe “we had no such things as printed newspapers in those days to spread rumours and reports of things” (Defoe, 1995, no p.). They were only informed by their neighbours and dependent what they told them. It was hard to separate the fact and evidence. (Knowles et al., 2019, p.645).

Many people that were devastated by the plague such as families, those who were afraid of the disease, doctors or those who feared the next “outbreak” and those who were unable to enter the city or business. The poor benefited the most because they got new posts for jobs. (Knowles et al., 2019, p.646).

Crime began to grow as the plague appeared. People became thieves. They were robbing other people’s properties and stocks. They were able to wear their clothes. At the beginning of the plague “quacks and astrologers flourish with remedies and promising predictions” (Knowles et al., 2019, p.646). However, it was dangerous to uncover themselves because they soon rapidly disappeared.

The so-called “Flemings” and the Dutch were another group of people who benefited from the plague. They found weak points in trade. They managed to take charge of the overseas trade. They were buying stock in England and selling them in Italy and Spain. (Knowles et al., 2019, p.646).

2.8 London as a prison and mad people

Defoe's melancholy image shows a city where there "were so many prisons in the town as there were houses shut up" (Defoe, 1995, no p.). The city itself was considered to be "all in tears" (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.). According to Ackroyd, London and "its conditions were responsible for much death". Unfortunately, people in the city of London were forced to go out because of provisions. They happened to die while they were shopping before they managed to pay for the goods. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

Defoe knew London very well and said that "the strange temper of the people of London at that time contributed extremely to their own destruction" (Defoe, 1995, no p.).

Citizens of London were imprisoned inside their houses. People were not satisfied so they were trying to escape from London by for example: climbing over the walls or running along the roofs. They were also able to murder watchmen just to make sure they stay safe. London and its streets became a cell. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

There was a regulation which remained in function for three centuries that "all the graves shall be at least six feet deep" (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.). It was not allowed to be in groups on the streets. Those people who begged had to be expelled. People did not agree with the mass imprisonment, and they found it rather meaningless. It was important for London to authorize someone who would take care of these people.

According to Defoe (1995, no p.), the city seemed to be "quite abandoned to despair" and "the streets seemed to be desolated". The streets were full of strange people such as fortune-tellers or astrologers. They were terrifying "the people to the last degree" (Defoe, 1995, no p.). Because of that, people fled the city because they had realized that they feared dying. On the other hand, many

people accepted their faith and confessed themselves on the streets by running and screaming “I have been a murderer” or “I have been a thief” (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.). Defoe said that “good people began to think that God was resolved to make a full end of the people of this miserable city” (Defoe, 1995, no p.). Those citizens who were desperate and did not have a choice were able to accept advice from conjurors, witches, quacks, or mountebanks. These strange people handed out their products such as dispensed pills, cordials, or plague waters. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

2.9 Plague at the end of its strength

At the end of September, the plague began to grow weaker. The death toll was at the end of this month significantly lower. However, this was not the end of the plague. The disease was still dangerous even though there was a significant decrease of the deaths. Yet, people started behaving carelessly. Inhabitants started socializing again. This behaviour drove physicians mad. Physicians were frustrated by the people’s recklessness. It seemed that people had had enough of plague and started opening shops, going into streets, and doing their usual business. Things began to return into the old tracks. (Knowles et al., 2019, p.646)

There were rules set up in London during the plague to prevent the plague from spreading. When London began to recover the plague spread somewhere else. This means that these rules were effective neither at the peak nor at the end of the plague's power. As the plague hit economics hard, people became less generous, and poverty became one of the main issues. All they cared about was themselves and their family's welfare. As always, donations during crisis dwindled as soon as the crisis was over. The rate of burial pits was at the end of the plague quite high. These places were later rebuilt into gardens, cemeteries and in general put into day-to-day use. Those people who had left such as doctors or clergy were put into a bad position where everyone hated them. (Knowles et al., 2019, p.647)

2.10 London's reputation

Ackroyd (2000, no p.) claims that "London is a city perpetually doomed". Many things have been written about the city full of fear. The Earl of Shaftesbury (qtd. in Ackroyd, 2000, no p.) described London as the "City of the Plague". Another opinion is from George Orwell (qtd. in Ackroyd, 2000, no p.) who claims in one of his books that London is "a city of the dead". James Boswell came to the city in 1762 and he was quite concerned "I began to be apprehensive that I was taking a nervous fever, a supposition not improbable, as I had one after such an illness when I was last in London. I was quite sunk." (Boswell, 2018, p. 106). The writers focused on the behaviour of citizens during pandemics, and they emphasized their numb faces and scared eyes. Danie Defoe (qtd. in Ackroyd, 2000, no p.) described the city as "torn by fever and nervous fear".

In London there had always been stimuli which evoke anxiety. For example, the noise, crowded streets, or violence on the streets. According to Ackroyd (2000, no p.), London's reputation can be described by two words "prison and grave". The fear of citizens has reportedly never disappeared. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

According to Ackroyd (2000, no p.), death has always been used to describe this city. There was an inscription “The Dance of Death” written on St. Paul’s Churchyard. This writing was to remind people of humanity in London. Memento mori writings had labelled London’s churchyards even before the plague and fire of 1665 and 1666.

London was always a centre of pandemic’ waves. For example, in 1348 there was a black death that killed around 40% people in London. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

Ackroyd explains (2000, no p.) that there had been some signs that the plague would strike London. In 1658, the Puritan preacher Costello wrote that “if fire make not ashes of the city, and thy bones also, conclude me a liar for ever. Oh London! London!” (Great Fire of London, 1932, p.2). In addition to that, Astrologer William Lilly pictured hieroglyphical plates in 1651. The first one shows a person digging graves and the second one depicts a big city in flames. Also, the painter Wenceslaus Hollar left London in 1647 and, 5 years later he came back and noticed a massive change in people’s behaviour. They did not act as they used to do. For example, there was a fair in London where a man walked naked with a pan of fire and brimstone on his head. Another man predicted many people to be buried in the local churchyard. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

2.11 Plague & Covid-19

Covid is a disease that appeared in 2019. It has unpredictable symptoms, and the course of the disease can differ. The patient can suffer from headache, loss of taste or smell, cough, fever and breathing difficulties. On the other hand, bubonic plague was more straightforward. According to Scott & Duncan (2001, p. 217), there were either symptoms that “developed towards recovery or death”. Even though the plague was very dangerous, people had not been as careful

as people during the first phase of covid. Unfortunately, the level of medical care was not that high at that time. When the first signs of Covid appeared, there was a massive closure of schools and companies. Everyone had to work either from home or people had exceptions. People were not allowed to go out. Everything was controlled by the government. During the plague, people had to isolate themselves, but nothing was ordered. There was no vaccination at that time that could prevent people from dying. (Scott & Duncan, 2001, p. 217)

There were also some similarities between the plague and Covid-19. There was no cure and even though there is a vaccination for covid it is only used as prevention against severe disease. The treatment of the plague was only supportive, and focus was placed on reducing the spread of the disease. Only a fragment of people had access to physicians in the 17th century, in comparison to today. (Mosli-Lynch & O'Shaughnessy, 2020, p. 7)

In the 17th century, there was a discussion of how the plague could be prevented and treated. There was a theory called the Paracelsian theory that treated symptoms using chemicals and metals that normally occur in nature. This cure of the plague appeared for the first time in 1665 and it was aimed for the poorer sort of people. It spread quickly.

On November 20th 1666, 18 months after the first outbreak, the church bells were rung to celebrate the end of this terrible disease. (Mosli-Lynch & O'Shaughnessy, 2020, p. 6)

2.12 The Bills of Mortality

The Bills of Mortality were documents that kept track of deaths in London. They helped people in modern times to understand the tragical event during the hardest times in the 17th century. (Slauter, 2011, p. 1)

The first weekly bills were printed in July 1603. They were not as sophisticated

as the bills in the middle of 1665. Even though they were using as reliable statistics as possible, not much had been written about them and if so, they could not be trusted. These bills were produced for a long 23 weeks steadily. They were made by the official printer of the City of London. (Greenberg, 2004, p. 512)

Bills of Mortality were released at the beginning of the 17th century and the production ended in the middle of the 19th century. It showed how people died and what type of disease they had. Citizens were allowed to buy bills of mortality even though they were mainly used to observe the plague. Those who wanted to read the bills regularly could take up a subscription for four shillings a year, or they could buy them for a penny. The bills were produced weekly and distributed by peddlers (these days' traffickers) or parish clerks. This was not the only way how the bills were spread. People talked to each other and discussed them with friends, they were copied into diaries or sent by mail. People were dependent on the bills. (Slauter, 2011, p. 1)

According to Defoe, people's decision was made according to the number of deaths. Defoe said that "great numbers of those that were able and had retreats in the country fled to those retreats" (Defoe, 1995, no p.). On the other hand, when the numbers were low, people lost caution and let the plague spread freely. In addition, "those that had money always fled farthest, because they were able to subsist themselves" (Defoe, 1995, no p.). (Slauter, 2011, p. 2)

Most people used the bills to see how many unusual deaths there were. In addition to that, they wanted to see the number of deaths compared to the previous week. Bills were important to people who lived in parishes. According to the number of burials they were able to obtain health certificates to travel. If the number was zero, they were allowed to travel. If the number was more than 1, it was forbidden. (Slauter, 2011, p. 2)

2.12.1 Creating of Bills of Mortality

Bills of Mortality were made on the basis of what “the so-called searchers” found. Their duty was to examine dead bodies and state cause of death. Mostly, the searchers were old women. In some parishes, they had to do quite dangerous work and because of that people avoided them and abandoned as well. On the other hand, in other parishes they were respected and had additional duties like nursing or raising orphan children. If a widow did not want to work as a “searcher”, her pension would be denied. The threat of punishment discouraged them from doing their job properly. They had to do the job because of economic reasons. According to Brett-James (1930, p. 296), “the Searchers received a fee of 2p for every body observed, which would be covered by the parish if the deceased family could not afford to pay”. There were also some people who disagreed with the bills. They claimed that the bills could not be trusted because the searchers were careless, and they could be bribed. Because of love or money, they could have misreported many deaths. The searchers “felt pressure from all sides” (Slauter, 2011, p. 9). If a woman became a searcher, she could not break the vow. If there was a death body in the parish, people begged searchers not to report the sickness in order to avoid compulsory quarantine. The searchers were not real physicians. The more dead bodies, the less time the searchers had to examine the body and the more mistakes they made. The bigger number of bodies, the bigger fear of death. (Slauter, 2011, p. 9)

At the beginning the bills were made for the government but sooner the public started using them to monitor the plague as well. Slauter (2011 p. 12) says, that “if the authorities had not permitted publication, they would have cut individual parishes out of process that had social, political and economic stakes for them” The bills were published every week and most of the pages have been found. However, some have been unknown.

One of the most popular Bills of Mortality published is called London's Dreadful Visitation. It was printed for the Company of Parish Clerks of London. London's Dreadful Visitation contain weekly bills from December 1664 to December 1665. (Greenberg, 2004, p. 512)

2.13 Did the fire prevent the plague from spreading?

It is believed that the fire prevented the plague from spreading, that it eliminated the disease for ever. The view is that it did not only wipe out the disease in London but also in the whole of Britain by killing the rats who were spreading the plague in their burrows. Nevertheless, this opinion is incorrect. Both the fire and the plague were two completely different disasters in terms of place. The fire was always in the centre of London. On the other hand, the plague was spreading in the wider surroundings of the metropolis and in the outskirts of the city. (Scott & Duncan, 2001, p. 222)

It might seem that the plague was wiped out during the Great Fire, which is not true. The plague had been continually disappearing, there were still some casualties but not at pandemic level. There were a few deaths for further 13 years until 1679. One of the biggest plague epidemics after the Great Plague of 1665 was the outbreak in Nottingham in 1667. (Scott & Duncan, 2001, p. 222)

The disease returned to England several times in the 20th century. Nevertheless, an animal is needed to establish perfect ground for the plague to spread. According to that no epidemic has ever developed since the plague in Nottingham in 1667. (Scott & Duncan, 2001, p. 222)

3 The Great Fire of 1666

3.1 The beginning of the fire

The Great Fire erupted in the hot summer of 1666. The aftermath was disastrous, many houses were destroyed, and 89 churches were burned down. Almost 80% of the built-up area was erased. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

The fire started in the street called Pudding Lane. The fire flared up in Thomas Farriner's bakery. Apparently, someone had left some embers still burning near his ovens. London's buildings at that time were made of wooden so the fire absorbed the house quite easily. Londoners did not believe that it was just an accident, they thought it must have been something more. It has never been found out who caused the Great Fire of London. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

Londoners believed right from the beginning that it must have been an attack on purpose. Obviously, they wanted to know who did it. The first who were to blame were foreigners. People became incredibly violent. There were mobs in the streets beating and arresting all foreigners until it was not safe for them to be in London. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

The fire started between 1:00 and 2:00 in the morning on Sunday, 2 September 1666. Thomas Farriner was woken up by a maid servant, whilst smoke was already coming from the ground floor. They tried to get downstairs, but they realized that they could not. Thomas, his daughter Hannah, his son, and the maid servant were forced to climb out onto a windowsill. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

The streets were narrow and combined with overhanging houses it created perfect environment for fire. No one was in the streets at that time. According to Meer (2017, no p.) the fire started "by a stray of ember that ignited a pile of twigs stored in a bake house". No one noticed that something had happened. It spread so quickly. In a few minutes the fire ignited another house.

The inferno spread so rapidly that soon it was obvious that it was not just a regular fire. Unfortunately, Farriner's maid servant was the first victim of the Great Fire of London as she was afraid of heights, and did not climb out onto the windowsill. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

The poor weather was during the month of August one of the crucial things that helped to spread the fire. It was hot and there was an extraordinary drought. In addition to that, there was a strong south-east wind. According to Ackroyd, the fire was carried "from Pudding Lane towards Fish Street and London Bridge, then down through Thames Street into Old Swan Lane, St. Lawrence Lane, and Dowgate" (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.).

On same day at night, the fire got out of control and started spreading towards the north and west. The fire went down to "Thames, along Cornhill, Tower Street, Frenchurch Street, Gracechurch Street and to Baynard's Castle" (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.). The fire engulfed St. Paul's cathedral, which was under reconstruction as there was still wooden scaffolding. Evelyn wrote in his diary that the fire "was now taking hold of St. Pauls-Church, to which the Scaffolds contributed exceedingly" (Evelyn, 2013, p. 20). The building was completely destroyed. Evelyn described the fire and confused citizens in his diary "the noise and cracking and thunder of the impetuous flames, the shrieking of women and children, the hurry of people, the fall of towers, houses, and churches, was like a hideous storm" (Evelyn, 2013, no p. 21)

Citizens were not prepared for the fire and were confused. They panicked and instead of trying to put out the fire they just escaped from the town. The poor people of the lower sort were left alone so they became thieves and were stealing everything they could from the burning houses. There was an opportunity for people to find a safe place on the river Thames. Those who did find a safe place were surrounded by smoke and fire drops. According to Ackroyd they went "into

the surrounding fields of Islington, Finsbury and Highgate, watched and wept” (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.).

3.1.1 The cause of fire: Enemy action or just an accident?

People were suspicious because everything looked like it was planned because the fire broke out in the wrong time and place. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

The bakery was next to a huge store of materials that could easily caught fire. The fire destroyed the great waterwheel which was placed in Thames. It pumped up the water. Everything looked like a terrorist attack even the weather was unfavourable. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

Pudding lane was a perfect location to start the fire as there were many buildings built right next to each other, so the fire spread easily. Every building was dry and built up on a hill which provided a natural draft that helped increase the power of the fire. The fire did not just spread along the Thames, but it also spread into the city. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

People deliberately trusted that the situation could not be just a coincidence even though it looked like it was. The waterwheel was destroyed, the water house had its door locked and the water was cut off. Everything indicated that it was a terrorist attack. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

The fire was getting stronger and citizens instead of putting out the fire they rather spent time looking for someone who was to blame. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

3.2 Day two of the Great Fire

It was Monday 3rd September 1666, and the fire was raging in Fleet Street and destroyed Old Bailey. Also, both Newgate and Billingsgate were taken down by the fire. The smoke that was coming from the fire stretched for fifty miles. There was a massive cloud of smoke coming from the fire. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

During the day two of the Great Fire there were several fires which united into one. One was coming from Cornhill and the other one from Threadneedle. These two fires united with the other two fires coming from Walbrook and Bucklersbury. That means that the fires in the east united with the ones in the south. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

The numbers of burned-down houses were above thousands per square mile. Ports were closed. An investigation began to state who started the fire. Surprisingly, no one blamed the Baker as he probably accidentally started the fire. Many people were blindfolded and thought that who caused the fire must have been foreigners, in this case: the Dutch. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

3.3 England and the Dutch

In the 17th century, the Dutch were considered to be one of the biggest nations in the world. Amsterdam was well known city, and their language was like today's English. English language was inconsiderable in comparison to the Dutch language. In the 17th century Amsterdam was well-known city, considered to be the capital of the world. The Dutch economic situation was far better than England's economy. England and the Netherlands were in constant disagreement because of trade routes and colonial trade. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

In summer before the fire of 1666, the Dutch and England started a war. In August 1666, England attacked the Dutch coast under the command of Sir Robert Holmes and his naval force. There were about 50 to 100 ships in the harbour. They destroyed most of their ships, raided warehouses on the coast and burned down houses as well as killed many people. People back home considered it to be an enormous victory even though it was a horrible thing to do. When England had won, people in London lit bonfires to celebrate their victory. When a few weeks later the fire started in Pudding Lane people obviously thought the Dutch were to blame. It looked like revenge on the English when the fire broke out. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

In two dark days of the fire people were able to change their behaviour. Most of citizens became homeless. Instead of helping each other they turned on each other. The fire was getting stronger, and Londoners were desperate not knowing who did it. They became deeply paranoid. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

This was a bad situation for foreigners because they did not hear the rumours and were completely uninformed. They were trying to put out the fire and save their goods while other citizens were looking for them. The fanatical citizens turned on the foreigners. They were even able to kill them just to know the truth. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

3.4 Third Day of the fire and France as a new enemy

On Tuesday 4th September 1666, the wind became weaker. The fire stopped at the end of Fetter Lane in Holborn. However, the fire was still burning in the north at Cripplegate and in the east by the Tower. The authorities gave some advice to Charles II that in order to stop the fire people should blow up houses in the fire's path. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

Citizens occupied the streets, but no Dutch fire starter was caught. However, this did not discourage them from looking for another suspect. England's traditional enemy used to be the French. France was the longest England's enemy than anybody else. In addition, the French were the strongest and most powerful of all their enemies. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

One of the most suspicious Frenchman was Mr. Belland. He worked as a fireworks maker for the king. For this reason, people blamed him for starting the fire in Pudding Lane. In the same week as the fire started, he was supposed to make a firework display. That was the time when the French were in danger because of violent mobs raging in the streets again. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

Robert Huber was a watchmaker from Rouen, France. He tried to escape from the country but got caught in Essex. He confessed that he was the one who had started the fire, even though it was not true. What he said had to be investigated but that did not change anything about the Londoners' relief. This is what they wanted to know since the beginning. Hubert died because he had been sentenced to death for starting the Great Fire of London. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

3.5 Fourth day – the final day

Londoners were completely lost in their own city as they did not recognize the melted buildings. The temperature in London must have been extremely high that even water in fountains was boiling. Smoke was coming from underground facilities. One-sixths of the city remained untouched. The devastated area was a mile and a half in length and half a mile in breadth. A total of 460 streets was consumed and 13,200 houses were completely destroyed. There were 26 wards in London and 15 of them were destroyed. There was a loss of gates, four out of seven of which were destroyed. Churches were not avoided by the fire either. Eighty-nine of them were destroyed. Surprisingly, there were not many victims.

Only six people were killed by the fire. According to Fitter “The city fire of December 1666 did at one moment look like Pepys’ famous description of the fire of 1666” (Fitter qtd. in Ackroyd, 2000, no p.).

The so-called Monument was built that commemorates the Great Fire of London. It stands 62 meters from the place where the fire started. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

On Thursday, five days after the fire had gone out, John Evelyn (2013, p. 23) walked around London with “extraordinary difficulty, clambering over heaps of yet smoking rubbish, frequently mistaking where I was”. Evelyn described the situation in his diary: “the ground under my feet so hot, that it even burnt the soles of my shoes”.

3.6 Tower of London

The Tower of London was in danger because of winds. They were changing their direction from westwards to eastwards. The fire was coming to the Tower where vast amounts of gunpowder and explosives were stored. If the Tower of London had exploded with all the explosives, it would have been a total disaster similar to an atomic bomb explosion. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

When the fire was in the Vine Street, people were doing their best to prevent it from spreading further to the Tower. People started using hooks to tear down their houses when they could not be saved. It stopped the fire from spreading further down the street. People did that to save other people’s properties. Those people were heroes because it was selfless act. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

The fire did not reach the Tower of London thanks to the personal sacrifices that people made during the fight in Vine Street. The fire stopped but violence in the streets did not end. London did not have enough money to rebuild what had been destroyed so the right to rebuild their homes was denied. Many people

wanted their houses so badly that they took their fight to the courts. On the other hand, there were some rich immigrants that were willing to help reconstruct London. (Hardy, 2010, no p.)

3.7 Why the fire spread so quickly?

Because of the narrow streets, the buildings were dangerously close together. In London all streets were built with a place good enough for a cart or a wagon. The top of the buildings, however, was closer to each other than the bottom parts. That is why the fire could spread easily from roof to roof. (Meer, 2017, no p.)

In the 17th century, buildings were made using a technique called wattle and daub. Buildings were put together with panels that were made of woven wood known as wattle and then filled with a mud mixture called daub. This kind of material was efficient. Unfortunately, most buildings were not in a good condition. There were holes in the panels. This made them vulnerable and that is why they caught fire so rapidly. (Meer, 2017, no p.)

Mayor Thomas Bloodworth was the man in charge of the whole city. He was considered incompetent by people because they thought he had a chance to stop the fire from spreading. He could have created a fire break by tearing down houses. Unfortunately, these buildings belonged to rich merchants. They were the one who put Bloodworth in charge, but he did not want to betray them. (Meer, 2017, no p.)

The Great Fire of London was also devastating because of the warm wind. Everything would have been different if there had not been the strong warm wind. According to firefighters, 452 °F is the usual temperature for fire. The wind brought oxygen to the fire, and it acted as fuel. The temperature of the Great Fire was over 1000 °F. Even firefighters in modern times would have trouble to put out such an inferno. (Meer, 2017, no p.)

3.8 The aftermath

The Great Fire of London was a disaster that had a great impact on the country. A year before there was the plague which had disastrous impact as well. Therefore, the city had already been devastated by the plague when the fire came. In result, the economy of London was disrupted which affected its citizens who were forced flee. Not only physical destruction of the city and human suffering were important in terms of the fire. King Charles II was already facing many problems, most of which he inherited from previous disagreements with the parliament, religious tensions, or others - especially those of the economical kind – which were only deepened due to his incompetence in handling the matters of economics, and the aforementioned poor cooperation with the parliament. The Great Fire of London had a serious impact on society and politics. According to List the fire affected “political dissent, religious, it exacerbated the King’s financial troubles, and led to English defeat in the Second Anglo-Dutch War” (List, 2020, no p.). The destruction of London was not the only thing that the fire caused. The whole city was unstable after the fire, and it proved that Charles II was struggling with economics both before and after the fire. (List, 2020, no p.)

Both the fire and the war between England and the Dutch affected the economy. There was also problem with financing the government. London was the heart of business and manufactures in England. It resulted in rise in taxes and London’s expenses were considerably higher than before. The situation was so bad that even some councillors advised Charles II to send an army to collect taxes in the city of London without any agreement with Parliament. It did not happen because of rumours of the plan that spread so quickly that Parliament disagreed with it and so did the public. Charles II did not agree with controversial taxation, and it did not happen. Instead of taking taxes from people the King managed to secure taxes on imported wine and spirits which secured the funds. (List, 2020, no p.)

Not only securing the funds for government or the war were important. There were also many buildings that were damaged by the fire. Even though London did not have to finance homeowners or tenants, the city had to rebuild public buildings including many destroyed churches. According to Tinniswood (2004, p. 211), after the fire “the government had to enforce new building regulations such as wider streets and a ban on timber frames”. Many of the people who did not have homes started leaving London in a few weeks after the fire. That was the time when government realized the importance of reconstruction. They were scared by the loss of people in the city. In February 1667, Parliament passed the *Act of Rebuilding the City of London*. The law included new building regulations and also a new tax on coal that was supposed to solve the problem of reconstruction. There were several proposals in terms of the new city’s layout. Christopher Wren was the author of one of them and reportedly had a “deeply thought-out sense of how a modern city should function” (Tinniswood, 2004, p. 208). Nevertheless, all the plans were rejected and the whole city was rebuilt with a little adjustment. (List, 2020, no p.)

There were two major proposals to rebuild London after the Great Fire of 1666. One of them was by Christopher Wren and the other one was by John Evelyn. However, their hypothetical city did not stand a chance against the tradition of London. However, Wren managed to design 51 new churches and he also designed the new St Paul’s Cathedral. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

3.8.1 Politics and Religion in the aftermath

The fire made the situation worse in both politics and religion. The fire restarted violence especially anti-Catholic. In 1681 a plaque was placed on the spot where the fire had started in Pudding Lane. It served as a reminder of the fire in the year of 1666. It contained an inscription that the fire had been started deliberately

by Catholic terrorists. This made the situation between religious nonconformists and the Anglican establishment much worse. During the plague and the fire many Londoners respected and admired nonconformist ministers for staying in the city. On the other hand, many of the Anglican Clergy left the town. This act of selfishness increased Londoner's respect for the rebels. According to List (2020, no p.), many dissenting ministers started blaming Catholics for the fire in order to avoid being accused themselves. Charles II tried to pass a religious comprehension bill to resolve the disputes. In the end, the law was not passed because of Parliament's intolerance towards dissenters. The religious tensions kept going until the end of Charles II's reign and into future decades. (List, 2020, no p.)

There was one crucial problem for Charles II. Many people after the fire were homeless, and a lot of people were wandering around the streets, which might have led to social unrest. Charles II wanted to prevent such behaviour and called General George Monck, Duke of Albemarle, to the city to establish order in the capital. General Monck was popular because he had been the commander of the English fleet helping to restore the monarchy. There were no major revolts against the government, so Monck's presence was unnecessary even though it did help. Most Londoners as we now know, placed the blame for the fire on foreigners, not Charles II, and many of them were too scared to blame the King directly. (List, 2020, no p.)

3.9 The Great Fire Represented in Paintings

There have been many representations of London in fire such as poems or paintings. Most of the paintings are ostentatious, although some of them depict the disastrous experience that the citizens went through. The style of artists was similar, although some of them captured many small scenes and episodes. They

showed, for example, “a woman running with wild face and arms outstretched from the fire, the man carrying a bunch of silver plates upon his head, the carts and horses were driven in a great crowd towards the open fields, a man carrying a child on his shoulders” (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.). The latter scene was repainted by Blake, Doré, and other artists as a portrayal of the pain during the hard time. The Great Fire of London was more than an inspiration to artists. It was the most impressive and fascinating image of the seventeenth century for more than two hundred years. (Ackroyd, 2000, no p.)

Practical Part

4 Samuel Pepys and His Diary

Samuel Pepys was born in London on 23 February 1633 in Salisbury Court. He was well known as an excellent naval administrator. He was also known as the owner of an extraordinary library. His diary was first published in 1825 but only in a shortened form. He wrote the diary for himself without any intention to make it public. The diary had never been suitable for printing press as it was full of Pepys' private insights. The manuscript of Pepys diary is preserved in the Pepys Library at Magdalene College in Cambridge. His diary is made up of six leather-bound volumes and are written in ink on unruled paper. Pepys wrote his diary in style of shorthand also called as "tachygraphy". The first publication date of Pepys' diary was in 1825 which was a collection of his fifty-four notepads. It was published by Lord Braybrook and after immediate success he decided to reprint it in 1828. (Pepys, 1985, p. 23-24)

Pepys worked hard in his office every day where he wrote many letters. As a navy administrator of England, he organized fleet so most of his notes are about the Anglo-Dutch war.

In the following analysis, I use the following edition of The Diary of Samuel Pepys as my primary source: Pepys, S. (2009a). *The Diary of Samuel Pepys M.A. F.R.S., 1665 N.S.* by Samuel Pepys. Project Gutenberg. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4162/4162-h/4162-h.htm#2H_4_0068 (Original text published 1893), available at www.gutenberg.org, no page numbers provided. Unless otherwise stated, all information attributed to Pepys comes from this source.

5 The Diary of Samuel Pepys: 1665

In the first five months of 1665, Pepys was not significantly affected by the plague. The first mention about the disease in his diary comes from 30 April 1665. He says that people were greatly concerned about the sickness. Samuel also mentions “that two or three houses are already shut up. God Preserve as all!”.

According to Bills of Mortality from 25 April to 23 May, there were another 12 people buried because of the plague since Pepys’ first record and yet, Pepys does not mention anything about the plague in his diary. The next note comes from 24 May when Pepys went to coffee-house with person called Creed. In this place, Pepys heard the news about both the plague and the Second Anglo-Dutch war: “the Dutch being gone out, and of the plague growing upon us in this towne”. According to Pepys, people were uninformed as “some saying one thing, some another”. This statement proves that at the beginning of the plague people did not pay attention to how the plague was spreading. In addition, Knowles et al. and Defoe were right that inhabitants were dependent on what others heard.

Pepys encountered the plague for the first time on 7 June where he saw two or three houses marked with a red cross upon the doors with an inscription “Lord have mercy upon us”. The houses were in Drury Lane in the St. Giles parish in the western part of London. According to Knowles et al. (2019, p.643), in this parish the first 2 victims of the plague were recorded in Bills of Mortality. The next day, Pepys gave his wife warnings about where the plague was so that she could avoid it.

Knowles et al. (2019, p.644) say that in May the number of deaths began to rise in the suburbs. This corresponds with Pepys hearing on 10 June that the plague broke through to the city. According to Pepys, the disease was already “in my good friend and neighbour’s Dr. Burnett, in Franchurch Street” which was in the middle of London. This information put Pepys into worries. Not only the

disease but also his business was a cause of concern for him. He was not sure how to take care of these burdens “in case it should please God to call me away”. Later, Pepys saw Dr. Burnett’s doors shut. The act of shutting up the doors and separating people from civilization was according to Pepys “very handsome”.

Even though the disease was raging, Pepys was still socializing. One day he was in company both at noon and in the evening. It made him forget the burdensome circumstances and it put him “in great present ease”.

From the 13 June to the 20 June the Bills of Mortality recorded 112 citizens that died of the plague, yet Pepys heard only about 4 or 5 inhabitants dying at Westminster in one alley on 20 June. According to Pepys, people thought that there would be a smaller number of infected residents than it had been the week before.

Pepys writes that the King Charles II was already struggling with economic issues as Pepys once went to the Excise Office where, according to him, “I find our tallies will not be money in less than sixteen months, which is a sad thing for the King to pay all that interest for every penny he spends”.

Pepys struggled to decide whether to send his wife to the countryside or not because of the sickness. She wanted to stay as long as she could but eventually Pepys and his wife agreed that it was time, so on 22 June she left.

Pepys moved around the town a lot but mostly because of business matters. On 26 June Pepys mentions that “the plague increases mightily”. He happened to pass a bitt-maker’s house which was in front of the St. Clement’s Church located in the western part of London. According to Bills of Mortality the number of deaths in the last week in June was as high as 168 (Company, 1665, p. 29)

The influence of the plague on Pepys was bigger day by day. Soon after the sad sight of the bitt-maker's house Pepys saw "the Court full of waggons and people ready to go out of towne". Citizens leaving the town described Defoe and Knowles earlier.

According to Pepys, the number of dead bodies in the Bills of Mortality showed 267 deaths which was about 90 more than previous week. Pepys felt a pleasant relief that only 4 of them were in the city, the rest was from the suburbs.

On 30 June Pepys' day was chaotic. Pepys had to do his usual business with lots of travelling. He had burdensome care of the Treasury of Tangier where "greats sums drawn upon me, and nothing to pay them with". On top of that he had trouble with sickness. According to Pepys his family felt "a great loss what was become of me". His wife was in Woolwich located in the eastern part of London where she was safe from the plague. However, Pepys did think about taking her back from Woolwich. Perhaps Pepys felt lonely after such busy day.

The beginning of July started with concerning news. Pepys heard in Westminster that the plague began to spread greatly. According to Pepys "seven or eight houses in Bazing Hall street, are shut up of the plague". This put Pepys in unease because the street was in the middle of London.

On 13 July Pepys says that "700 died of the plague this week". However, according to Bills of Mortality, the previous week from 4 July to 11 July 470 victims died of the plague. In addition, from 11 July to 18 July there were 725 deaths of the plague. The number of dead bodies according to Pepys' diary do not correspond with the number in the Bills of Mortality (Company, 1665, p. 31, 32). It is possible that Pepys wrote some of his notes retrospectively. On the other hand, it would be demanding as his diary consists of daily notes.

On 18 July Pepys went to visit his wife. They had dinner and enjoyed time together. Pepys felt great not thinking about the burdensome events. Pepys

had difficulties with officers. They buried the dead in the open Tuttle-Fields and according to Pepys, they were “pretending want of room elsewhere”.

Two days later Pepys heard that the plague was everywhere. Pepys claims on 20 July that 1089 citizens died of the plague that week. The same number of deaths is in the Bills of Mortality from 18 June to 25 July (Company, 1665, p. 33). Pepys was given a bottle of plague water from someone who was called Lady Carteret. According to Nicosia (2020, no p.), plague water was used for its antibacterial effect because of the alcohol included. The plague water was made of fresh and dried herbs, but it was not possible that it would stop the plague from spreading. On this day Pepys says: “But Lord, to see how the plague spreads” and mentioned that the disease was raging in Kings Street and in other places right in the middle of the town.

In the upcoming days Pepys received freshly printed Bills of Mortality from his Lord Bruncker. From 25 July to 1 August the number of deaths was almost two times higher than the previous week (Company, 1665, p. 34). On 25 July Pepys could feel that the city was changing. He was travelling by coach, and he did not see any other coach on his way home. In Pepys’ words the situation is described as “very strange”. The next day Pepys discovered that the plague was already in his parish. This piece of information put Pepys into uncertainty, and he began to think how to organize his life.

On 27 June Pepys looked into the Bills of Mortality “where above 1000 encreased in the Bill” in all. Once again Pepys notes that it made him think about his life. At the end of the month Pepys visited Dagenham with Lady Elizabeth Carteret. Dagenham was a parish located about 12 miles east of London. It brought joy to Pepys but suddenly he realized that “in what fear all the people here do live would make one mad”. Pepys described the people as “afeard of us”. They were scared that Pepys and his Lady brought the sickness to Dagenham.

This situation put Pepys into consideration, and he wished he had never entered this parish.

On 3 August Pepys rode again to Dagenham by horse. On his way to the parish, citizens desired to know how the plague was spreading in the city that week. By chance, Pepys heard the news about the sickness at Greenwich. According to Pepys, the number of deaths was 2020 and 3000 dead bodies of all recorded diseases. In the Bills of Mortality, the numbers were almost the same. From 1 August to 8 August out of 3014 deaths 2010 died of the plague (Company, 1665, p. 35). Pepys proves that people were informed by what others said. The lack of information is what Knowles et al. and Defoe previously mentioned.

The numbers were getting higher every day and yet Pepys hadn't limited encounters with people. On 8 August Pepys enjoyed company with his Lord Bruncker, Sir G. Smith, G. Cocke and others. They were drinking and talking as if no disease existed. On his way to do some business Pepys realized that "streets [were] mighty empty all the way, now even in London, which is a sad sight". Two days later Pepys was having breakfast all the morning looking at the Bills where the number of plague deaths was above 3000. According to the Bills of Mortality, the number from 8 August to 15 August was below 3000, more precisely 2817 (Company, 1665, p. 36)

On 15 August Pepys did his usual business with lots of travelling. On his way home at night, he encountered for the first time a dead corpse that died of the plague. However, it did not disturb him at all. The next day Pepys delivered his last will to his wife in case he would die. Nevertheless, this means that the dead corpse did disturb him or at least it reminded him that the plague was real and dangerous. Then he went to the exchange office. On his way there he saw a sad sight of the streets empty of people and "very few upon the 'Change". According to Pepys there were "two shops in three, if not more, generally shut

up". On this day Pepys heard disturbing news from Dagenham. The illness of lord of Hinchinbroke turned to be the smallpox. Pepys felt sorry for him.

On 22 August he saw a coffin with a dead body inside on his way to Greenwich. The body was dead of the plague and "was carried out last night". The area where it lay belonged to Coome farm. They hadn't assigned anyone to bury it. Nevertheless, they did appoint a watch to make sure no one stood close to the dead body. According to Pepys this act "is a most cruel thing: this disease making us more cruel to one another than if we are dogs" Pepys was getting affected by the plague more frequently. Once, he could not travel along Thames because "I could not get my waterman to go elsewhere for fear of the plague". A few days later on 25 August Pepys was told that his physician Dr. Burnett died of the plague.

On 30 August Pepys went out of the town. Pepys found out that that the plague "increases much, and much in our parish". Pepys was on his way to Moorefields to see whether he "could see any dead corps going to the grave". A similar sentence is mentioned by Defoe (1995, no p.) that people were able to bury themselves in the plague pit. Before he went to Moorefields, Pepys said: "God forbid my presumption". Pepys was desperate as he saw the death in everyone's faces. According to Pepys the streets were sorrowful and abandoned. The death toll in the last week of August (from 22 August to 29 August) was as high as 4237. Pepys says that every day is "sadder and sadder news of its increase". The next day on 31 August Pepys noted that the Bills showed above 6000 deaths of the plague that week. It was said that the true number of deaths was higher. Pepys noted that the number could have been near 10000. According to Pepys the reason for that was "the poor that cannot be taken notice of" and "the Quakers and others that will not have any bell ring for them". This is exactly what Defoe and Knowles stated earlier. The number in the Bills of Mortality cannot be trusted.

On 4 September Pepys heard that 21 people had died in Coome Farm. He had troubles to pass by. It was not long ago when he saw the unburied coffin lying there. Pepys noticed that the guards kept the people inside the building day and night. Pepys said again: “the plague making us cruel, as doggs, one to another”.

On 7 September Pepys went to the Tower where he was sent for the Weekly Bills. He found out that 6878 people had died of the plague. This was according to Pepys “a most dreadful number”. The Bills of Mortality showed from 5 September to 12 September the exact number as Pepys noted (Company, 1665, p. 40).

Even though the number of deaths was high, Pepys did not avoid social contact. On 10 September Pepys spent time with Lord Bruncker and his wife, Sir J. Minnes, Sir W. Doyly and Mr. Evelyn. They enjoyed time full of humour. According to Pepys this was one of the best times of his life “wherein I was fullest of true sense of joy”.

On 14 of September Pepys noted that no one kept track of closing infected houses. He went to the exchange office where he saw about 200 people. Pepys described them as ordinary men. He was afraid that he would get sick as there were no observations of infected houses. According to his words: “I did endeavour all I could to talk with as few as I could”. Pepys recorded a small decrease in number of deaths. According to Bills of Mortality, from 12 September to 19 September the number was 6544, while the previous week it had been 6988 (Company, 1665, p. 41). It was the first significant decrease in numbers since it all started. On 16 September Pepys noted: “only that the discourse of the likelihood of the increase of the plague this weeke makes us a little sad”. This statement does not correspond with what Pepys previously said. Either he meant the week from 5 September to 12 September with the death toll 6988 or the week after 19 September.

On 20 September Pepys expected a smaller number of deaths in the Bills due to the coldness. However, the number was the highest ever recorded. 8297 people died of all diseases and 7165 of them died of the plague (Company, 1665, p. 42)

On 27 September Pepys felt a great relief, nothing that “there is above 1800 decrease, being the first considerable decrease, we have had”. Because of the low temperatures the plague began to subdue. September was the worst month of all in terms of the number of deaths, yet Pepys ended this month with a remark that “with the greatest content, and may say that these last three months, for joy, health, and profit, have been much greatest that ever I received in all my life”.

According to Pepys, the plague was decreasing yet the sickness was still raging near the Tower in the middle of the town. Throughout October Pepys noted the decrease of deaths every week. Even though the numbers were getting lower, Pepys mentions that “many poor sick people in the streets full of sores”. At the end of October, the Bills showed only 1031 deaths (Company, 1665, p. 48). According to Pepys, the frost gave citizens “hope for a perfect cure of the plague”. In December, Pepys mentioned that the streets “do thicken so much with people” that he was worried that the plague might spread again.

As I mentioned previously, during the Covid pandemic people began to behave carelessly as the numbers of infected people subdued. Their attention “was drawn away from the immediate health impact of the virus to the economic implications of the lockdown” (Mosli-Lynch & O’Shaughnessy, 2020, p. 6). Pepys’s feelings towards the plague and its effect on citizens changed during the year 1664 to 1666. Like our reaction to the outbreak of Coronavirus in the late 2019. (Mosli-Lynch & O’Shaughnessy, 2020, p. 6)

In the following analysis, I use the following edition of The Diary of Samuel Pepys as my primary source: Pepys, S. (2009b). *The Diary of Samuel Pepys M.A. F.R.S., 1666 N.S.* by Samuel Pepys. Project Gutenberg.https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4171/4171-h/4171-h.htm#2H_4_0083 (Original text published 1893), available at www.gutenberg.org, no page numbers provided. Unless otherwise stated, all information attributed to Pepys comes from this source.

6 The Diary of Samuel Pepys: 1666

On 2 September Pepys was woken up by his maid because of a great fire. The maids had stayed up late in the night due to feast to-day preparations. According to Pepys, it was about three in the morning when he saw the fire out of his window. To the contrary, according to Hardy the fire started between one or two o'clock. Pepys "thought it was far enough" so he went to bed again and woke up at seven o'clock. Pepys realized that the fire spread a lot during the night and according to his maid "300 houses have been burned down to-night by the fire we saw". The blaze was now consuming the Fish Street by London Bridge. Pepys went onto the top of the Tower where he saw "the houses at that end of bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side the end of the bridge". After this horrible sight he went down to the Lieutenant of the Tower from whom he learned that the fire had started "in the King's baker's house in Pudding-Lane" and that the inferno "hath burned St. Magnus's Church and most part of Fish-street already".

Pepys described citizens "endeavouring to remove their goods and flinging into the river or bringing them into lighters that layoff". In addition, some inhabitants "staying in their houses as long as till very fire touched them, and then running into boats". Pepys depicted poor pigeons "were loth to leave their houses, but hovered about windows and balconys till they were, some of them burned, their

wings, and fell down". Pepys could see how the inferno spread every way but to his sight no one tried to put out the fire. As Ackroyd (2000, no p.) says, people in London were not prepared for the fire and instead of putting the fire out they rather panicked and escaped from the town. Furthermore, Pepys could feel "the wind mighty high and driving in into the City". According to Pepys, the weather had been dry for a long time and everything seemed to be flammable, "even the very stone churches". When the news got to the King, Pepys had to inform the King and the Duke of York about everything he had seen. On top of that, he advised them that there was nothing that could be done to stop the fire "unless his Majesty did command houses to be pulled". Pepys was instructed by the King to go to his Lord Mayor, Sir Thomas Bloodworth, and tell him to "spare no houses, but to pull down before the fire every way". Bloodworth was not happy about the message Pepys brought as "he cried, like a fainting woman". It was said that Bloodworth could not tear down the houses of rich inhabitants, yet he said to Pepys that "people will not obey me. I have been pulling down houses; but the fire overtakes us faster than we can do it".

People were moving from house to house as the fire was consuming everything. As reported by Pepys, a man's brother had to move his things twice and soon "they must be in a little time removed from his house also, which was a sad consideration". Pepys saw "the churches all filling with goods by people who themselves should have been quietly there at this time". The river Thames was full of boats with goods. Some of the baggage was swimming in the water. Pepys was on a boat and sailed against the great wind. Pepys could feel that "you were almost burned with the shower of firedrops". Pepys explained that these drops were falling onto other houses which caught fire. Tom Hater was one of the inhabitants that had lived in Fish Street and Pepys offered him to stay at his house. Pepys was forced to prepare his own goods for their removal. He carried

his bags to the garden. He hid his money and an iron chest in the cellar as he thought this would be the safest place.

On 3 September Pepys got up at 4 o'clock. A woman named Lady Batten sent Pepys a cart so that he could move his things to Sir W. Rider's at Bendall-Greene. Pepys rode the cart at night and saw "the streets and the highways are crowded with people running and riding". Pepys expressed his relief saying: "I am eased at my heart to have my treasure so well secured". This day Pepys did not mention anything about the fire and how it spread. He was concerned about his belongings all day.

On 4 September the fire was now taking hold of Tower Street. People were desperate not knowing where to put their stuff. According to Pepys, people were digging holes in the ground and putting their possessions there. Even Pepys buried his papers from his office and wine. At night, Pepys went to Tower Street and saw "it all on fire". According to Pepys on 4 September "the practice of blowing up of houses in Tower-streete" began. This act scared people but it stopped the fire where houses had been blown up.

On 5 September Pepys noted his exhaustion "being mighty weary, and sore in my feet". He slept in the office of W. Hewer but again he got up early at 2 o'clock in the morning. He heard the news about the fire from his wife. The inferno had reached Barkeing Church. Here comes the first mention from Pepys that the French had started the fire. Pepys went to see whether his office was on fire or not. On his way there he saw "the great helpe given by the workmen out of King's yards, sent up by Sir. W. Pen, there is a good stop given to it". It was a relief for Pepys to see his office not on fire. According to Pepys, he found Franchurch Street, Gracious Street and Lumbarb Street all in dust. He also walked through Moorefields with his "feet ready to burn, walking through the towne among the hot coles". This is also what Evelyn (2013, p. 23) mentioned in his diary. This

night Pepys heard “a great alarme of French and Dutch being risen, which proved, nothing”.

As previously mentioned, it was difficult for strangers to be in London after the fire broke out. Even Pepys noted in his diary on 6 September that “it hath been dangerous for any stranger to walk in the streets”. However, Pepys have not seen any raging groups of people as reported by Ackroyd. According to Pepys, citizens who had lost their home were offered a place in all churches or in Tower Hill.

7 Pepys' writing style

When I was reading through Pepys' diary, it was unexceptionally demanding. His writing is in my opinion, unemotional and therefore monotonous. For example, Pepys does not include his personal feelings. Sometimes, it does not feel like reading a diary at all because of the amount of description. However, there were parts where I could feel how desperate Pepys was. If he was concerned, he usually used words such as “it troubles me well” or just word “trouble” in different ways. His days usually consist of his business trips, writing letters, being in town or visiting his wife. Occasionally, he spends time in company of other people. In addition, there were some interesting notes about how Pepys organized his fleet against the Dutch.

He writes in abbreviations and as avoids the pronoun “I”, which can be sometimes confusing. An example of this sentence is the following sentence: “And to see the churches all filling with goods by people who themselves should have been quietly there at this time”. What is also typical for Pepys' writing is that it is common to see a sentence starting with a conjunction, which can be seen in the previous sentence. In addition, verbs are also part of speech that he often avoids. For instance, “I away to White Hall by appointment.” or “The church mighty full;

but few of fashion, and most strangers.”. As we can see it can be sometimes hard to even read such texts.

Mostly, he uses long coordinate sentences separated only by a comma. For example, “So he left me, and I him, and walked home, seeing people all almost distracted, and no manner of means used to quench the fire”. This adds to the confusion. We can also find quite a lot of archaic words such as “betimes, abroad, periwig”. In addition, there are many words using archaic spelling forms ending with “e”. For example, when Pepys was describing the plague, he used words like “sickness” or “towne”.

The diary is divided into paragraphs. Each paragraph starts with a date. At the end of the week, on Sunday, there is a note “Lord’s Day” representing Christianity as Pepys was a Catholic. That is why Pepys occasionally addresses God himself in his writing. It is possible that Pepys wrote his diary at night. It might be the reason why he always ends his day with the note “to bed”. Occasionally, he does not mention “to bed” so it is possible that he wrote his insights retrospectively as I have mentioned previously. That might be the reason why his numbers of deaths do always not correspond with the numbers in Bills of Mortality. Occasionally, we can see that he starts his day with the word “Up”. It is possible that he was writing his diary during his whole day when he had some time.

Pepys did not write his diary with the assumption that it would be published one day. Today we see Pepys’ diary as a historical document. However, Pepys wrote it to himself and not for any journalistic purposes. If he had known that the diary would be published one day, I think, we would be seeing a different work from Pepys now. For example, Pepys wrote about things that he was interested in and that is why the note from 2nd September 1666 is by far the longest one. It was the beginning of the fire and perhaps Pepys’ curiosity was the reason why the record was so long.

8 Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis, I have described what the plague looks like, and that death is inevitable if symptoms appear. For the most part, I have paid attention to how the plague spread throughout the crucial months. As I have discovered, there were some signs before the year of 1665 that the plague would appear, but it was not inevitable. Furthermore, both in the theoretical and practical part I explain the way in which the plague spread. In addition, we now know that at the beginning, people were uninformed, and it was hard for them to keep track of plague casualties. Some secondary sources (Defoe, 1995; Knowles et al., 2019) say that the Bills of Mortality cannot be trusted and that is also what Pepys mentioned in his diary. However, this was only Pepys' assumption. I have shown throughout the practical part that Pepys did not avoid social contact. Even though the plague was at the peak of its power, Pepys spent time in company of people to cheer himself up in difficult times. Last but not least, there is an assumption that there have been some similarities between the plague and Covid-19. This part may be a reminder of how hard it must have been for people to face such a challenge in the 17th century.

It used to be said that the fire prevented the plague from spreading which others proved to be wrong. Upon analysing the fact that Thomas Bloodworth was to blame for the extensive damage in the centre of London, Pepys' records do not confirm this accusation. Moreover, Pepys proves that when the fire started, citizens panicked. They did not try to put out the fire. Furthermore, Pepys mentions the reality of foreigners being present in London in 1666 when the fire broke out. Nevertheless, he never mentions any single violent group.

Pepys' diary is personal and that is the reason why it is written in informal language. It corresponds with the nature of a private diary.

It is unfortunate that Pepys kept his diary for his own benefit. If he had

known that his diary would be published one day, he could have made many more notes concerning the major events, which means that we would have much more substantial information. Although the diary contains many important details concerning the plague and the fire, there are also some inaccuracies in comparison with the secondary sources.

By analysing Pepys' texts, this thesis shows us their importance as a historical document. What is then the significance of Pepys' diary for today's readers? I think that there is a lot to learn from Pepys' notes. It gives a valuable view of the life and events in London in the 17th century. We are able to see through Pepys' eyes what was happening during these disasters, and we can gain a deeper understanding of the mental state of individuals experiencing these harsh times. According to how Pepys depicts the threat of the plague, we can understand why he made his wife move away from the centre of London and why he was forced to move his belonging during the fire. It is often said that historical documents are kept and studied to make sure that history is not repeated. This could also apply to Pepys' work in terms of both the plague and fire.

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