

## EDITORIAL

# A literary dessert

MJAJM Hoes. A literary dessert.

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Why should we be worried about food? Food is intriguing because it causes several kinds of behavior, such as appetite, enjoyment and other purely psychic aspects. Eating, the intake of food, is essential for our total psychic functioning, including enjoying ourselves. That is why we have arrived here at a metaphorical level. The German author Roth (1) expresses it as follows:

*Seelische Gesundheit (Psychic Health)*

Ein Mensch frisst viel in sich hinein  
Missachtung, Ärger, Liebespein.  
Und jeder fragt mit stillem Graus:  
Was kommt da wohl einmal heraus?  
Doch sieh! Nur Güte und Erbauung.  
Der Mensch hat prächtige Verdauung.

We, as Board or Editors, have cultivated this transformation at our meetings with dinners of the Board of the Interdisciplinary Society of Biological Psychiatry, the Editorial Board and annual Board meetings of the sections. For the promotion of creativity and inspiration, for well-grounded policy, we had several types of drinks at our disposal. For, as the XVIth-century French poet Jean Godart (2) remarked:

Jamais aucun boi-l'eau  
Ne ferait vers bon ni beau.

Some of us liked to begin with a beer, but this can change, like many things in life. The German

author Berthold Brecht (3) expresses it as follows in his *Liedchen aus alter Zeit (Song of the old times)*:

Eins. Zwei. Drei. Vier.  
Vater braucht ein Bier  
Vier. Drei. Zwei. Eins.  
Mutter braucht keins.

Our eating was ‘dining’; it served the subtle, the bright, the high-spirited, the inspiring, not the manner of obtaining food as described by the Roman satirical poet Martial (4):

Weet je wat Philo zweert? [You know what Philo swears?]  
Dat hij nooit thuis dineert. [That he never dines at home.]  
Maar wat hij hiermee zegt [But what he says herewith]  
Is heel gauw uitgelegd: [Is swiftly explained:]  
Hij eet alleen maar dán [He eats only then]  
Als ‘t ergens anders kan. [When he can somewhere else.]

However, at our tables dining always had a contemplative aspect, described thus by the Dutch poet Weemoedt (5):

*De Trek (The appetite)*  
s avonds gezeten op een hek [In the evening sitting on a fence],

Zag ik het naad'ren van een trek [I saw the approach of a fancy]:  
 Een grote biefstuk kwam voorbij [A big steak passed by],  
 Gebakken aardapp'len en prei [Fried potatoes and leek]  
 Gevolgd door flensjes, Franse kaas [Followed by crêpe, French cheese].  
 Een dikke pens, een volle blaas [A bloated paunch, a full bladder].  
 Daarachteraan op zijn gemak [Beyond that all at its ease]  
 Slofte de koffie met cognac [Lace the coffee with cognac].

Whatever the circumstances, we never became down-hearted, or as the German poet Mascha Kaléko (6) expresses it:

*Zwiebeln (Onions)*  
 Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen ass,  
 (O Wolfgang, nimm's nicht übel!)  
 Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen ass,  
 Der ass es ohne Zwiebeln!

In our editorial work we had to be most attentive to the authors' superabundance, or as Matthias Claudius (7) expresses it in his *Kartoffellied (Potato-song)*:

Und viel Pastet und Leckerbrot  
 Verdirbt nur Blut und Magen.  
 Die Köche kochen lauter Not,  
 Sie kochen uns viel eher tot;  
 Ihr Herren lasst euch sagen!

For a right and just policy we have always observed the following virtues:

Respect for the fine arts. Cooking and writing are both fine arts, as the German poet Wilhelm Busch (8) says in his *Kritik des Herzens (Critics of the Hearth)*:

Es wird mit Recht ein guter Braten  
 Gerechnet zu den schönen Taten. . .

We always had an open eye for the poetic charm of the papers, as Kaléko expresses it in the poem *Tomaten (Tomatoes)* (6):

Nun singen wir ein Lied zum Preis  
 Der liebliche Tomate.  
 Wie zart errödet sie im Reis,  
 Wie lockt sie im Salate.  
 Wär ich Johann Sebastian Bach,  
 Ich schrieb ihr drei Kantaten.

(Doch wenn's zu Hause Tomaten gibt,  
 Flücht ich in den Prälaten)

The airy things were always honored: time and again we have also honored the airy, as Roth (1) says in *Roh-köstliches zu Fisch und Fleisch (Raw-precious for fish and meat)*:

Die Rohkost macht durchaus nicht roh,  
 Sie macht uns frisch und frei und froh,  
 Nicht grade fromm, doch ziemlich frömmlich,  
 Und sie ist ungemein bekömmlich.  
 Vereint mit Kulten, rein und östlich,  
 Macht sie das Seelenleben köstlich, . . .

Honesty and reliability were kept in high esteem. Mediaeval men knew very well that being able to enjoy a good glass of beer or wine, as we did at our meetings, is a kind of divine judgement for these two virtues. An ancient Dutch poem (9) expresses this:

Die sich van den dranck onthouwen [Those who abstain from drink],  
 Sulcken moet men niet vertrouwen [Should not be trusted].  
 Hij die het gerstenat versmaedt [Who dismisses the beer],  
 Dat is een valse kameraedt [Is a false comrade].  
 Hij die geen bier drinckt en geen wijn [He who drinks no beer or wine],  
 Dat moet een bloode schobber zijn [Should be a silly simple soul].  
 Hij die zijn dorst met water lest [He who assuages his thirst with water],  
 Dien moet men meyden als de pest [Should be avoided as the pestilence].  
 Hij die geen bier door 't keelgat giet [He who does not pour beer through his gullet],  
 Is vast de waere broeder niet [For sure is not your honest brother].

Alertness was very much appreciated. The digestive of a cup of coffee was savored to optimize alertness. Roth (1) sings the praise of coffee in *Der Kaffee*:

Ein Mensch, der viel Kaffee getrunken,  
 Ist nachts in keinen Schlaf gesunken.  
 Nun muss er zwischen Tod und Leben  
 Hoch überm Schlummerabgrund schweben  
 Und sich mit flatterflinken Nerven  
 Von einer Angst zu andern werfen  
 . . .  
 Im höllischen Gehirn-Urwald

In einer Schlucht von tausend Dämpfen  
Muss er mit Spuckgestalten kämpfen.

...

Der Mensch in selber Nacht beschliesst,  
Dass er—Kaffee nie mehr genießt.  
Doch ist vergessen alles Weh  
Am anderen Morgen beim Kaffee.

In this way we gained in strength, as Gottfried August Bürger (7) says:

Jedermann hat von Natur  
Seine sondre Weise.  
Mir gelingt jedes Werk  
Nur nach Trank und Speise.  
Speis'und Trank erhalten mich  
In dem rechten Gleise.  
Wer gut schmiert, der fährt auch gut,  
Auf der Lebensreise.

We have always honored the adage: 'Keep faith in your work and promote this faith in others'; promote it in your authors. Martial (4) expresses it succinctly:

Lezers en hoorders loven reeds [Readers and audience already praise]  
De kracht en rijkdom van mijn werken [The power and richness of my art]  
Terwijl een pulpoëet er steeds [While a zero poet time and again]  
Nog dingen op heeft aan te merken [Has remarks to make].  
Maar och, ik trek me er niets van aan [But I don't take this to heart],  
Want beter kunnen je gerechten [For better that your dishes]  
Er bij de gasten goed ingaan [Are savoured by your guests]  
Dan bij halfgare keukenknechten [Than by cracked kitchen helps]

Remember that the short piece (e.g. case-report) is also worthwhile, as Weemoedt (10) expresses it in his *Dagschotel (Today's special)*:

'Ruim het maar af, ober, 'k ben klaar' [Please clear the table, waiter, I have finished].  
'Heeft het gesmaakt [Did you enjoy it, Sir]?'  
'Ja, maar even maar [Yes, but only for a short while].'

As things can and do change in 'wining and dining', we have contributed our share to the

change in the opinions of colleagues and the public towards biological psychiatry and the addictions. The seemingly paradoxical appraisal of wine by 'Le Lique nationale contre l'alcoholisme' in 1900 (the French temperance movement) may be exemplary (2):

Le vin est la boisson la plus alimentaire, la plus précieuse et la plus énergétique.

Hermann Broch (11), in his *Kulinarisches Liebeslied*, articulates my wish for all with whom it has been my pleasure to cooperate in the scientific groups mentioned above: dining as a metaphor of life. 'Companion' derives from the Latin *cum pane*, with whom one breaks his bread; of these individuals one can see the sun shining in the water:

Oh, ich weiss, ich weiss:  
wen's freut den anderen essen zu sehn,  
des Liebe wird täglich und nächtllich aufs neue  
erstehn und nimmer vergehen.

May the Board of the ISBP, the editorial board of *Acta Neuropsychiatrica* and the Boards of both sections dine for many years with much delight.  
Ave.

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