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"'Tis a speaking Sight": Imagery as Narrative Technique in Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*

In the last two decades our image of Defoe as a writer has changed in significant and interesting ways. The Defoe of limited talent and serious defect has been replaced by Defoe the experimenter and innovator. Such a shift is clearly warranted, as recent studies by Hunter, Starr, Richetti, Zimmerman, Blewett and Alkon have indicated.[1] But while the major novels have been intelligently resurrected from the literary-critical backroom and have yielded exciting possibilities in the hands of judicious critics, Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) has been given rather short shrift, and suggestions that "the work is a hodge-podge,"[2] "an incoherent jumble which defies analysis"[3] and, that it is devoid "of any embellishments [or] . . . manipulat[ion] for effects"[4] are quite common and, in my opinion, need to be revised. Arguments about the *Journal* as either history or fiction, and explanations of the medical or political background[5]—these studies have been necessary and also useful to any student of the period, but they do not fully account for the powerful effect which the *Journal* has had on readers, nor do they offer anything more than a partial reckoning of Defoe's intention. Professor Landa is surely correct when he writes that the theme of the *Journal* is "man under the wrath of God";[6] but the narrative techniques which Defoe uses to dramatize such a theme invite further investigation.

Defoe's primary intention in the *Journal* can be clarified by an appeal to his *Due Preparations for the Plague, as well for Soul as Body*, written in the autumn of 1720 and published a month before the *Journal* in 1722. The first half of *Due Preparations* is a narrative dramatization of the preventative measures which a family takes against the plague, but it is in the second half (i.e., a dramatization of a family's spiritual preparations) that Defoe's comprehension of the

plague becomes clear. To Defoe's way of thinking "the plague . . . is a messenger sent from God to scourge us from our crying sins,"[7] and the vast number of biblical quotations that have to do with sin, punishment or appeals for repentance are explicit indications that, for Defoe, physical illness and the plague are outward signs of human sin, man's spiritual alienation from God and divine wrath. For Defoe the plague is clearly a call to repentance, although he is well aware of secondary natural causes, the political and economic implications, and the social repercussions of the pestilence.

Given Defoe's emblematic habit of mind, his eschatological translation of the plague is not surprising. Nor is it unusual that he alludes to biblical cities and biblical sinners to characterize the sins of Londoners. According to J. Paul Hunter,

> The broadened typology [of the seventeenth century] simply extended to contemporary history the principle of regarding one time in terms of another: biblical objects or events . . . might not only prefigure other biblical events or concepts but also the events of later history . . . . nearly all Puritan thinkers represented contemporary times as reflections . . . of the Judeo-Christian experience recorded by inspired writers who understood divine purposes, and as part of the continuing movement of earthly history toward an inevitable climax.[8]

Defoe's emblematic transposition of the biblical significance of the plague onto the threat of plague in 1720 reveals his Puritan habit of mind in *Due Preparations*, and of course the biblical tradition of plague as divine punishment for sin is considerable, especially in the Old Testament.[9] For Defoe the possibility of plague in the 1720s is, like the plagues of the Old Testament, a judgement on man's wickedness and an awful warning for man to repent:

> all manner of wickedness and public debauchery [is] let loose among us, and break[s] in upon us like a flood, encouraged even by those who ought to suppress them . . . . God grant that every sincere Christian may have his eyes up to Him . . . and prepare his mind by a sincere repentance for all their sins.[10]

That Defoe should choose to write a second text on the subject of plague poses interesting questions about his intention and his technique. There are obvious superficial differences between *Due Preparations* and the *Journal* (e.g., extended, cautionary anecdotes vs. the illusion of historical authenticity through a "journal"), but perhaps the most significant feature is that the *Journal* is far less didactic. The theological significance of the plague is unchanged in the *Journal*, but the message is not so overt. True, references to the pestilence as a sign of divine wrath are evident throughout the *Journal* but, unlike *Due Preparations*, such references are interspersed casually and are seldom

more than a few sentences long. That Defoe intends to avoid the moralistic and didactic excesses of *Due Preparations* is suggested toward the end of the *Journal* when H.F. views the cessation of the plague as a call to thankfulness:

> it was evidently from the secret invisible Hand of him, that had at first sent this Disease as a Judgment upon us .... If I should say, that this [sudden cessation] is a visible Summons to us all to Thankfulness ... perhaps it may be thought by some ... an officious canting of religious things, preaching a Sermon instead of writing a History, making my self a Teacher instead of giving my Observations of things; and this restrains me very much from going on here, as I might otherwise do. (246-7)

Defoe still wants to impress upon his reader the fact that the plague is simultaneously a punishment for human sin and a call for repentance; in this respect the *Journal* has the same purpose as *Due Preparations*. But his resolve to eschew "an officious canting of religious things" offers the possibility that Defoe is experimenting with a different technique to articulate the same theme and to effect the same intention.

Some understanding of Defoe's new procedure in the *Journal* can be inferred from H.F.'s constant reference to the senses, especially to sight and sound: "there were innumerable Cases of this Kind, which presented to the Eye, and the Ear" (120). And indeed, much of the force of the *Journal* is tied to H.F.'s incessant mention of the "many dismal Scenes before my Eyes" (80) and "the most horrible Cries and Noise" (178) that are caused by the crippling effects of the plague. Defoe's preoccupation with the eye and the ear—with sights and sounds—is everywhere evident in the *Journal*, not only as a habit of speech in H.F. but also as an essential element of Defoe's direct communications to the reader: "were it possible to represent those Times exactly to those that did not see them, and give the Reader due Ideas of the Horror that every where presented it self, it must make just Impressions upon their Minds" (16); "I wish I could repeat the very Sound of those Groans, and of those Exclamations that I heard from some poor dying Creatures, when in the Hight of their Agonies and Distress; and that I could make him that read this hear, as I imagine I now hear them, for the Sound seems still to Ring in my Ears" (104). Defoe's narrative yearning to engage the reader's visual and aural imagination in some direct and immediate fashion[11]—about which I shall have more to say—is a further indication of the importance of the eye and the ear in the *Journal* but, given his somewhat more subtle spiritual and didactic intent, there are other very good reasons why

sights and sounds or the desirability and *capability* of seeing and hearing should play such a prominent part.

Toward the end of the *Journal* H.F. suggests that "another Plague Year would reconcile all these Differences, a close conversing with Death, or with Diseases that threaten Death, would scum off the Gall from our Tempers . . . and bring us to see with differing Eyes, than those which we look'd on Things with before" (176). In this particular passage Defoe is referring specifically to sectarian animosity, but the sentiment can be applied more widely to that which invites the plague in the first place: human sin. Men have turned away from God; they have become—emblematically speaking—blind and deaf to divine imperatives; they must be made to see and hear "with differing Eyes" and ears, and the plague of 1665 is divinely intended to do just that. The plague is not only "a visible Summons to us all" (247) but, as the sexton at the Aldgate pit says of its horrors, " 'twill be a Sermon to you . . . . 'Tis a speaking Sight . . . and has a Voice with it, and a loud one, to call us all to Repentance" (61).

The limits and capabilities of the sensory organs as figurative emblems of spiritual status is nothing new in Defoe. Nor is the figurative opening of eye and ear through providentially ordered calamity or disaster. After Crusoe's shipwreck on the island of despair, and after his own physical illness, repentance and conversion, he says: "I sincerely gave Thanks to God for opening my Eyes, by whatever afflicting Providences, to see the former Condition of my Life, and to mourn for my Wickedness, and repent."[12] Similarly, Moll Flanders says that before her spiritual rebirth in Newgate "my Senses . . . were all a-sleep," but during the process of conversion "I now began to look back upon my past Life with abhorrence, and having a kind of view into the other Side of time, the things of Life . . . began to look with a different Aspect."[13]

Defoe's characterization of sin as sensory disability, however, is anchored ultimately (and not surpisingly, given his underlying emblematic and typological bent) to biblical *loci*. Both Testaments are rich in sensory-spiritual metaphors, and the following two examples are perhaps representative:

> Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not . . . . This is the city which must be punished; there is nothing but oppression within her. As a well keeps its water fresh, so she keeps fresh her wickedness . . . . Be warned, O Jerusalem, lest I be alienated from you; lest I make you a desolation, an uninhabited land .... To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are closed, they cannot listen . . . . Therefore I am full of the wrath of the Lord. (Jeremiah 5:21, 6:6-11)

> Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? (Mark 8:17-18)[14]

God's figurative opening of man's eye and ear through adversity has its biblical source as well, and would not be unknown to someone who knew his Bible as well as Defoe:

> To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord is God .... Out of heaven he let you hear his voice that he might discipline you. (Deuteronomy 4:35-6)

> He opens their ears to instruction, and commands that they return from iniquity .... But if they do not hearken, they perish .... He delivers the afflicted by their affliction, and opens their ear by adversity. (Job 36:10-15)

> And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your eyes shall see .... And your ears shall hear. (Isaiah 30:20-1)

Defoe's emblematic and allusive reference in the *Journal* to the senses—to the eye and ear that do not see or hear, to the opening of eye and ear to God's call through affliction—is part of his technique to suggest that the plague is "a visible Summons" (247) and "a speaking Sight . . . to call us all to Repentance" (61), and the observer in 1665 might very well have appreciated the theological significance of the plague in this fashion, given the immediate (and likely) threat to his own physical well-being and life. But Defoe writes the *Journal* in 1722 when there is no adversity or affliction—only the *threat* of plague. The technical and theological challenge to Defoe is how to make us see with different eyes and hear with different ears the thunderous spiritual warnings which the plague represents when the physical and biological horrors are not yet present. The difficulty, in other words, is in dramatizing the past event in such a way that its apocalyptic significance has a direct and immediate (rather than historical) impact on the reader in 1722, thereby compelling him to active and urgent spiritual reappraisal and repentance. The earlier *Due Preparations* makes such an effort with its overtly didactic drama and dialogue, but Defoe's intention is resolved in a different and more effective manner in the *Journal*: through imagery.

That Defoe is aware of the difficulty in making his account of the 1665 plague an effective "speaking Sight" in 1722 is evident in his frequent suggestions that verbal or narrative accounts cannot reproduce an immediate sense of the plague itself or its horrifying threat to man: "This may serve a little to describe the dreadful Condition of that

Day, tho' it is impossible to say any Thing that is able to give a true Idea of it to those who did not see it, other than this; that it was indeed *very, very, very* dreadful, and such as no Tongue can express" (60); "In these Walks I had many dismal Scenes before my Eyes . . . terrible Shrieks and Skreekings of Women . . . . it is impossible to describe" (80); "It is impossible to describe the most horrible Cries and Noise the poor People would make at their bringing the dead Bodies of their Children and Friends out to the Cart" (178). But even though Defoe does not have at his disposal the audio-visual equipment that allows the modern journalist to duplicate the sensory enormities of disastrous events, he knows what he must do through his narrative if he is to realize his intention of making us see and hear with different eyes and ears: "If I could but tell this Part, in such moving Accents as should alarm the very Soul of the Reader, I should rejoice that I recorded those Things, however short and imperfect" (104). Although he cannot give us the visual, aural and physiological sensations of providentially decreed adversity in a direct and immediate fashion, he seems to have realized that there is a far more effective way to "alarm the very Soul of the Reader" than by relying on the moralistic narrative cautions and didactic exhortations of *Due Preparations*. What he does in the *Journal* is to experiment with imagery that offers a graphic appeal to our visual and aural imaginations rather than to our intellects; the senses must be activated and frightened before the sermon can be effective. And what is remarkable in the *Journal*—and new for Defoe—is the skills with which he can create images that are calculated to appall and terrify us, which are intended to make us see with different eyes and hear with different ears the wrath of God.

Defoe relies on three kinds of imagery which are geared to open the eye and ear to the physical terrors of the plague and, in so doing, to awaken the reader's soul to the spiritual dimensions which the plague symbolizes: images of physical breakdown and disintegration; domestic and social images which, through pathos, attempt to elicit an emotional and sympathetic response; and images which have biblical and emblematic significance. Examples of the first kind are abundant, and an examination of a few such images will reveal Defoe's narrative strategy:

> it came to violent Fevers, Vomitings, unsufferable Headachs, Pains in the Back, and so up to Ravings and Ragings with those Pains: Others with Swellings and Tumours in the Neck or Groyn, or Arm-pits, which till they could be broke, put them into insufferable Agonies and Torment. (200)

> they not only went boldly into Company, with those who had Tumours and Carbuncles upon them, that were running, and consequently conta-

> gious, but eat and drank with them . . . and even [went] . . . into their very Chambers where they lay sick. (255-6)

> the dead Bodies were disturb'd, abus'd, dug up again, some even before the Flesh of them was perished from the Bones, and remov'd like Dung or Rubbish to other Places . . . . the Bodies on opening the Ground for the Foundations, were dug up, some of them remaining so plain to be seen, that the Womens Sculls were distinguish'd by their long Hair, and of others, the Flesh was not quite perished. (231-2)

The intent, as in Bosch and other artists of the grotesque, is to create a picture of physical mutilation and corruption which will horrify and disgust the reader with its references to partially decayed human flesh, pain, agony, and running sores, and H.F.'s reminders "that some of those Bodies were so much corrupted, and so rotten, that it was with Difficulty they were carry'd" (174) or, that those with "the Plague in their very Blood . . . were in themselves but walking putrified Carcasses, whose Breath was infectious, and their Sweat Poison" (202), are powerful appeals to a deep-seated and universal fear of the mutilation and breakdown of the human form.[15] There are other images of the various postures of death as well: "the Maid . . . coming into the Room found him stark dead, and almost cold, stretch'd out cross the Bed; his Cloths were pulled off, his Jaw fallen, his Eyes open in a most frightful Posture, the Rug of the Bed being grasped hard in one of his Hands" (72); "the Cart had in it sixteen or seventeen Bodies, some were wrapt up in Linen Sheets, some in Rugs, some little other than naked. . . that what Covering they had, fell from them, in the shooting out of the Cart, and they fell quite naked" (62). Tableaux such as these appeal directly to our visual imagination, and the mental images which we are required to form are extremely disturbing and frightening. Images of partially naked bodies in various states of decomposition dumped promiscuously in heaps are indeed "speaking" sights which testify to the awfulness of God's judgement of human sin. The narrative moralizing in *Due Preparations* about the spiritual significance of physical suffering is not particularly effective either in giving the reader a physical sense of adversity or in frightening him into a recognition of the urgent need for repentance. But Defoe's images in the *Journal* do both: the physical horrors of the past event are graphically recreated in the reader's mind, and the grotesque and unnatural dissolution of the human form is a powerful impetus to the reader to view the threat of plague in 1722 not as an abstract and remote sign of God's wrath, but as a palpable and concrete warning about sin and its consequences. Defoe's desire to "give the Reader due Ideas of the Horror that every where presented it self . . . [to] make just Impressions upon their Minds" (16) is effectively realized through imagery of this kind.

As a matter of fact, Defoe's attempt to affect the reader's imagination in an immediate and graphic manner (despite the limitations of any written account) in order to prompt our religious obligation to repent, is reflected in H.F.'s narrative responses to the fearful sights and sounds in the city: "it was enough to pierce the stoutest Heart in the World, to hear them" (16); "it would wound the Souls of any Christian, to have heard the dying Groans" (34); "such loud and lamentable Cries were to be heard . . . that would Pierce the very Heart to think of" (76); "It would make the hardest Heart move at the Instances that were frequently found of tender Mothers . . ." (119).[16] H.F.'s metaphor of piercing the heart and moving the soul is precisely the effect that Defoe's imagery is supposed to have on the reader, and the reference to sounds and sights is a clear indication that the sensory appeal of Defoe's imagery is to have an emotional and spiritual effect on the reader which will open the eye and ear to human obduracy and God's sovereignty. If such an effect is accomplished through images of bodily decomposition, social and domestic images which pierce our hearts by virtue of their pathetic appeal are equally potent.

The anecdote of the poor waterman who provides for his plague-stricken wife and children at a distance (pp. 106 ff.) is one such example of an image (in this case an extended one) which is dramatized in such a way as to appeal to our parental and conjugal instincts, but there are many more compact images in the *Journal* which are designed to elicit our compassion and sympathy through narrative accounts of emotional and psychological grief. The description of the mother who faints and is rendered hysterical by the sudden discovery of "fatal Tokens" (56) on her daughter's body is one instance, as is the family who chases its delirious relative through the street:

> What cou'd affect a Man in his full Power of Reflection; and what could make deeper Impressions on the Soul, than to see a Man almost Naked and got out of his House. . . . I say, What could be more Affecting, than to see this poor Man come out into the open Street, run Dancing and Singing, and making a thousand antick Gestures, with five or six Women and Children running after him, crying, and calling upon him, for the Lord's sake to come back, and entreating the help of others to bring him back, but all in vain, no Body daring to lay a Hand upon him, or to come near him. (171)

Such images are indeed "Affecting," and perhaps none more so than H.F.'s account of those women who gave birth during the plague:

> Sometimes the Mother has died of the Plague; and the Infant, it may be half born, or born but not parted from the Mother. Some died in the very Pains of the Travail, and not deliver'd at all . . . . I could tell here dismal Stories of Living Infants being found sucking the Breasts of their Mothers, or Nurses, after they have been dead of the Plague . . . .

> Likewise of a Child brought Home to the Parents from a Nurse that dy'd of the Plague; yet, the tender Mother would not refuse to take in her Child, and lay'd it in her Bosom, by which she was infected, and dy'd with the Child in her Arms dead also. (116, 118, 119)

It would take a very hard heart indeed to ignore such images of selfless maternal love and devotion, and while the picture of a newborn child nursing at the breast of a dead mother is gruesome enough, scenes such as these arouse powerful emotional feelings and prompt etiological questions. Maternal instincts, the innocence of children, the symbiotic relationship between mother and child—these are disrupted and galled by the ultimate cause of the plague: human sin and spiritual waywardness. The consequences of immorality and figurative blindness and deafness could hardly be put in more moving terms and, given Defoe's intention to "pierce the heart" and "move the soul" to a just recognition of man's sinful responsibility for the pestilence and the need for contrition, the manipulation of such imagery is surely effective.

Defoe's third major type of imagery is biblical, and involves Puritan metaphor and emblem which a reader in Defoe's age could hardly fail to recognize. Aside from the ones I mention earlier, the following are the most significant: desolation, folly and madness, wandering, personified death, prisons, bestiality, warfare, devils and monsters.[17] H.F.'s mention of desolation in London is frequent:

> the Plague . . . came at last to such Violence that the People . . . seem'd quite abandon'd to Despair; whole Streets seem'd to be desolated, and not to be shut up only, but to be emptied of their Inhabitants; Doors were left open, Windows stood shattering with the Wind in empty Houses . . . . In a Word, People began to give themselves up to their Fears, and to think . . . that there was nothing to be hoped for, but an universal Desolation. (171)

Biblical associations of divine punishment with the desolation of cities is a common motif, and the similarity of a sinful London to the many wayward cities in the Bible—all desolated through God's anger—would be immediately apparent to the biblico-conscious mind of Defoe's reader: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without men, and the land is utterly desolate, and . . . the forsaken places are many" (Isaiah 6:11-12).[18]

Images of folly, madness and distraction comprise perhaps the single largest group in the *Journal*. One such example will suffice:

> People in the Rage of the Distemper, or in the Torment of their Swellings . . . running out of their own Government, raving and distracted, and oftentimes laying violent Hands upon themselves, throwing themselves out at their Windows, shooting themselves, &c. Mothers

> murthering their own Children, in their Lunacy .... others frighted into despair and Lunacy; others into mellancholy Madness. (81)

Like physical illness, mental illness in the Bible is in almost every case a sign of spiritual alienation from God,[19] and however much notions about abnormal psychological states might have been changing in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries[20] it is clear that in the *Journal* Defoe wants to characterize both the bodily and mental aberrations as the direct result of God's judgement on human sin. And Defoe's somewhat violent images of internal chaos and insanity are a complement to the external, bodily manifestations of divine wrath and have the same graphic appeal.

Other images which derive ultimately from biblical sources can be mentioned more briefly. References to people who left London during the plague and "liv'd like wandring Pilgrims in the Desarts" (57) or who "wandred into the Country . . . [and] starv'd to Death in the Woods" (114) culminate in the happier story of the three men, but the image of aimless wandering and the threat of death would, for a reader in the 1720s, immediately recall the Old Testament story of the wandering Israelites as well as the troubled wandering of man after the Fall. Similarly, images drawn from warfare—"a Distemper eminently armed from Heaven" (36), "he [God] had . . . his Sword drawn in his Hand . . . to take Vengeance" (69)[21]—serve to recall biblical precedents and, as Hunter suggests in reference to *Robinson Crusoe*,[22] would provide an imagistic focussing of the spiritual warfare between good and evil, between God and sinners. Images of bestiality, satanic monsters and prisons are likewise used to play on the eighteenth-century reader's emblematic habit of mind and, by echoing biblical images and types of sin, to keep constant before the reader's eyes and ears the fact that the biological, mental and social horrors of the plague are ultimately theological. The "seeming propensity . . . in those that were Infected to infect others" (153) is likened to "a mad Dog" (154, 162), and microscopic or bacterial evidence of the plague in the residue from human breath is imaged as "strange monstrous and frightful Shapes, such as Dragons, Snakes, Serpents, and Devils" (203). Biblical associations of bestiality, serpents and monstrous animal savagery with Satan and evil are too common to need reference, and such images confront Defoe's reader with familiar and graphic emblems of the brutal and sinful side of human nature.[23] Imprisonment for sin also has its biblical sources,[24] and H.F.'s many appeals to the people's claustrophobic desperation caused by the shutting up of houses is characterized in such terms: "for here were just so many Prisons in the

Town, as there were Houses shut up" (52); "It is to be consider'd too, that as these were Prisons without Barrs and Bolts . . ." (53).

It is hardly surprising that death should play a prominent role in an account of the plague, but Defoe's procedure (as with his other images) is to dramatize and personify death in order to give it an active and palpable presence: "Death now began not . . . to hover over every ones Head only, but to look into their Houses, and Chambers, and stare in their Faces" (34); "it was charging Death it self on his pale Horse; to stay indeed was to die" (236).[25] The pictorial allusion to Revelation and the last judgement is a frightening reminder that, just as God can give life through his love of a devoted people, so too can he destroy because of the sins of man: "And I saw, and behold, a pale horse, and its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him; and they were given power over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth" (Revelation 6:8).

Defoe's use of imagery which is based on familiar Puritan emblems and biblical allusions accomplishes two things: it brings the theological significance of past incident and event within the range of common experience for an audience whose familiarity with the scriptures should not be under-estimated; but more important, it generates concrete physical images which transform potentially distant theological issues into "speaking" sights—sights which bring home to the reader in highly visual and sensory fashion the terrors of God's punishment for human sin. The appeal of such imagery lies in its emotional stimulation of the reader's visual and aural imagination, and the anxiety and horror which are excited by all three kinds of imagery are ways of making the past event a present terror in the reader's mind. If Defoe realizes that large-scale adversity will "bring us to see with differing Eyes," he is also clever enough to realize that without providing a direct and immediate sense of adversity itself an "officious canting of religious things" is likely to prove ineffective.

It seems reasonable to assume that Defoe's experiment with imagery in the *Journal* is intended to replace the less effective biblical quotations and didactic pleas of *Due Preparations*, and while both works use the past event to gauge the present and future possibility, the *Journal* is far more unsettling and terrifying in its warning. In some ways the *Journal* is Defoe's blackest vision of man, and the cumulative effects of his imagery portrays London's moral and spiritual status as a grotesque and agonizing world of decomposing flesh, dying infants nursing corpses, insanity, torment, prisons, screams of pain, and pits

full of hundreds of rotting, naked bodies. Not a pretty picture, certainly, but we need to remember that Defoe must somehow impress on his reader in the plague-free London of 1722 the awful consequences of human sin. His images of the human body and the domestic, parental imagery certainly accomplish this in a vivid and disturbing way, and the imagery which is biblically allusive keeps the theological point of the plague very close to the surface without becoming "an officious canting of religious things." Defoe's imagery, in other words, carries the brunt of his religious intentions.

In one of his infrequent references to the didactic purpose of the *Journal*, H.F. makes clear that the imagery works in the way I have suggested:

> I would be far from lessening the Awe of the Judgments of God, and the Reverence to his Providence, which ought always to be on our Minds on such Occasions as these; doubtless the Visitation it self is a Stroke from Heaven upon a City, or Country, or Nation where it falls; a Messenger of his Vengeance, and a loud Call to that Nation, or Country, or City, to Humiliation and Repentance, according to that of the Prophet *Jeremiah* xviii. 7, 8. *At what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom to pluck up, and to pull down, and destroy it: If that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.* Now to prompt due Impressions of the Awe of God on the Minds of Men on such Occasions, and not to lessen them it is that I have left those Minutes upon Record. (193)

Defoe may refer to his central narrative technique as "due Impressions . . . on the Minds of Men," but whatever we may choose to call it, his imagery makes the *Journal* perhaps his most pictorial work and gives to the narratives its essential form of continuity. *A Journal of the Plague Year* is a new venture for Defoe—an innovative experiment with the possibilities of narrative technique and effect, and long after we have forgotten the journalistic persona of H.F. we will remember the dreadful images of a dying, sinful city.

NOTES

1. Respectively, J. Paul Hunter, *The Reluctant Pilgrim: Defoe's Emblematic Method and Quest for Form in* "Robinson Crusoe" (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966); G.A. Starr, *Defoe & Spiritual Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965) and *Defoe & Casuistry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); John Richetti, *Defoe's Narratives: Situations and Structures* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); Everett Zimmerman, *Defoe and the Novel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975); David Blewett, *Defoe's Art of Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); Paul K. Alkon, *Defoe and Fictional Time* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979).
2. James Sutherland, *Daniel Defoe: A Critical Study* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), p. 170.

3. F. Bastian, "Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* Reconsidered," *RES*, N.S. 16 (1963), 169.
4. Louis Landa, in his introduction to *A Journal of the Plague Year* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. xxxv. All parenthetical page references are to this edition.
5. On the "history or fiction" dilemma see Bastian and Manuel Schonhorn, "Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year:* Topography and Intention," *RES*, 19 (1968), 387-402; for medical background see Landa's introduction; for the political context and the controversy over the Quarantine Act see Alfred James Henderson, *London and the National Government, 1721-1742: A Study of City Politics and the Walpole Administration* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1945), pp. 33 ff.
6. Landa's introduction, p. xxxvi.
7. *Romances and Narratives by Daniel Defoe*, ed. George A. Aitken (1895; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1974), XV, 102.
8. Hunter, pp. 100-1.
9. One of many examples can be found in 2 Chronicles 21:11-15: "Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father . . . the Lord will bring a great plague on your people, your children, your wives, and all your possessions, and you yourself will have a severe sickness with a disease of your bowels, until your bowels come out because of the disease, day by day." See also Leviticus 26:14-26; Deuteronomy 28:20-22; Psalms 106:28-29; Jeremiah 18:21-22.
10. Aitken edition, XV, 103, 183.
11. For a different, and extremely attractive, account of Defoe's manipulation of the reader's visual and aural imagination in the *Journal* see Alkon, especially the chapter on "Tempo," pp. 168-231.
12. *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. J. Donald Crowley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 114.
13. *Moll Flanders*, ed. G.A. Starr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 279, 287.
14. See also Isaiah 6:9-13; Ezekiel 3:10, 12:1-3, 40:4, 44:5; Matthew 13:13-16; Mark 4:11-12; Acts 28:26-27; Revelation 2:7, 3:18.
15. Cf. Zechariah 14:12: "And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will smite all the peoples . . . their flesh shall rot while they are still on their feet, their eyes shall rot in the sockets, and their tongues shall rot in their mouths."
16. For similar constructions see also pp. 56, 82, 104, 163.
17. For a different discussion of biblical allusions in the *Journal* see Zimmerman, chapter V, pp. 107-25.
18. There are many such sources in the Old Testament. See, for example, Isaiah 24:1, Jeremiah 6:6-11.
19. Cf. Deuteronomy 28:27-28: "The Lord will smite you with the boils of Egypt, and with the ulcers and the scurvy and the itch, of which you cannot be healed. The Lord will smite you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind."
20. See Raymond Stephanson, "Defoe's 'Malade Imaginaire': The Historical Foundation of Mental Illness in *Roxana*," *HLQ* (forthcoming).
21. See also pp. 120, 198, 202, 246.
22. Hunter, pp. 103-5.
23. Blewett's discussion of animal images and images of the prison in *Robinson Crusoe* is well worth consulting in this regard. See Blewett, pp. 47-54.
24. Isaiah 24:22: "They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison, and after many days they will be punished." See also Ezra 7:26.
25. See also pp. 29, 102, 115.