

One of the highlights of this book lies in the interesting discussion of the figure known as the changeling (pp. 260–79), the ‘wrong’ or disabled child, believed to have been substituted for the ‘real’ or ideal child. Goodey draws illuminating parallels between the medical and psychological description of modern coping strategy, where parents are informed by the experts that their child is disabled and when those experts expect parents to go through a ritualised hierarchy of reactions, and the pre-modern version of such a ‘desanctification ritual’, in which supernatural agents such as devils, witches or fairies were blamed on causing the ‘wrong’ child.

If there is one major criticism it is that Goodey’s narrative is extremely sparse on chronology, so that few dates are mentioned in association with the authorities cited, especially for medieval writers like Avicenna (c. 980–1037), Averroes (1126–98) or Albert[us Magnus] (c. 1200–80); placing the key players in time would allow the reader to form a more comprehensive overall picture of normative developments as a process. The book is also not helped by the somewhat confusing structure of Goodey’s narrative. For instance, the very important point that Aristotle’s (in)famous statement ‘man is a rational animal’ did *not* stem from Aristotle himself in this format is spread out over two separate chunks of text (pp. 34 and 284 respectively), with a crucial part of the information – that it was actually transmitted to posterity centuries after Aristotle via a paraphrase by the third-century Neoplatonist Porphyry – only given at the later stage, thereby diminishing the main argument already presented some 250 pages earlier.

Overall this is a phenomenally ambitious, interesting and reflective interdisciplinary history of ideas. It may, after a fashion, make uncomfortable reading for those of a hardcore scientific persuasion, but for the humanist it assembles some convincing evidence for the processes by which changing sets of ideas, or an accident of historical contingencies, have come to shape allegedly incontrovertible universal truths. At the risk of turning a tautological phrase, this is a highly intellectual history of intellectual disability.

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**Daniel Defoe.** (David Landa and Louis Roberts (eds)) *A Journal of the Plague Year*, Revised edition, Oxford World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 320, \$9.95, paperback, ISBN: 978-0199572830.

‘Oh! Death, Death, Death!’ screams a woman from the window of a house near Cornhill. No neighbours stir and the street is deserted save for the book’s narrator. What does he do? Noting a chill in his blood, the man then simply continues his journey through the City of London streets. This book is a fascinating record of trying to cope during the capital’s last plague epidemic of 1665.

Daniel Defoe was only around 5 years old during the Great Plague which claimed nearly 100 000 lives. This makes *A Journal of the Plague Year*, originally published in 1722, an imaginative reconstruction. Its shadowy narrator, known only as ‘H.F.’, seeks to record the terrifying progress of a disease that had no known cause and therefore no known cure. Defoe uses his skills as a journalist, novelist and Londoner to knit together evidence with

story-telling. In doing so, he presents a vivid picture of a plague epidemic but also the mean streets of seventeenth-century London. Some inhabitants are shown to be brave and caring, but many are understandably plain scared, confused and desperate. The most sensational and wicked acts tend to be reported as hearsay with the weekly bills of mortality acting as sobering anchors of evidence.

It ought to be noted that ‘H.F.’ is not the easiest of companions. ‘As I said before’, ‘I mentioned above’ and ‘as I have observed’ are common phrases for a narrator who thinks nothing of digression and repetition. Obsessively noting down the exact route of his journeys is another characteristic. These most human of idiosyncrasies should not detract from the fact that *A Journal* is the most comprehensive account of plague we have. Defoe had done his homework, and the most likely printed sources he used for the novel are listed in the explanatory notes.

This edition has a new introduction by Professor David Roberts, Head of English at Birmingham City University. Roberts is particularly interesting when considering the publishing environment of Defoe’s time. As a new plague epidemic threatened Europe, books on the theme became increasingly popular. Roberts identifies Richard Bradley’s *The Plague at Marseilles Consider’d* as the subject’s bestseller for the period. During 1721 Bradley’s book went into five editions. *A Journal* did not do as nearly so well, with a second reprint only appearing in 1755. In contrast, four editions of *Robinson Crusoe* were published in about as many months when it first appeared. Concentrating on *Moll Flanders* first may have cost Defoe and his publishers dearly. Roberts wonders whether they were a few months too late with *A Journal* to fully capitalise on the market. It is perhaps significant that Defoe’s book was the last substantial title to appear on plague during this period. Whether the swine flu epidemic of 2009–10 inspired this new edition from Oxford University Press is unclear.

*A Journal* is perhaps Defoe’s most under-valued novel and it is heartening to see *Oxford World’s Classics* repackage it. Whether the indistinct photograph of a sixteenth-century charnel house door from France used for the front cover will stand the test of time is a small detail. The compact font sizes are perhaps more troublesome. Aside from Roberts’s introduction, this edition’s value lies in largely retaining Louis Landa’s exhaustive notes from the 1969 edition. A four-page appendix includes a succinct ‘A medical note’ of the plague with an analysis of Defoe’s understanding of the disease. The topographical index will be sufficient for many but Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert’s *The London Encyclopaedia* (2008) is recommended. A screen with Google Maps or a hardcopy street atlas may also be wise as Defoe’s London is still largely there for the walking.

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**John Trevor Hughes**, *Henry Power of Halifax; a Seventeenth Century Physician and Scientist* (Oxford: Rimes House, 2010), pp. xii + 120, £20.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-1-874317-04-3.

As a child I remember playing in a friend’s somewhat dilapidated house and enjoying racing around an upstairs gallery and making out the curious shapes on the royal arms