The permanent overtaxing pressure to adjust to the administered world leaves people neither time nor strength to do anything but bore deeper into the material clay of their lives—as though their destiny had been to turn into drill-bits, moving vertically downwards forever, scooping out protracted autobiographies in the form of core samples, tapes, video records. The important questions met along the way are drowned out by the roar of the earthworms delivering their fatal dictum: a huge amplified voice monitored in the Control Room by servo-mechanisms.

One wants to be able to reach out without looking and touch death lightly on the shoulder—but when one's hand encounters something cold and alien in the dark, like a touch of the marble statue's arm, with bits of loam still clinging to it, one draws back, realizing this is not the way.

Defoe speaks of plague families whose houses were locked and barred by the authorities, with guards posted at doors to prevent residents from getting out and contaminating others. "Shutting-up of the houses" was done even when there was only one person affected; in some cases this was not a family member but a servant. It was understood by the authorities that radical evil was loose—something that was no respecter of social hierarchies. In the city, huge pits were dug, and bodies flung in haphazardly, like the floppy-doll skin-and-bones of Belsen victims being "buried" by their erstwhile keepers. Some people, once infected, chose not to wait for death, jumped into the pits while still alive, and were buried along with the dead. Nothing in nature is tragic; a microbe can never do more damage than when it mimics the human moment. "The evil which assails us," said Seneca, "is not in the localities we inhabit but in ourselves." A contamination of evil in the soul dimension is marked by signs of fear and apprehension as though a plague had settled into the marrow of one's nerves, feeding black juices to a hideous ghost who lives there and is always hungry.
it just slipped out