



*Stefan Heym, contemporary cosmopolitan
intellectual, looks back on the XVIII century**

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ABSTRACT. The essay considers a novel by Stefan Heym, *The Queen Against Defoe*, which depicts the events that took place in late 1701-early 1702 in London, when Defoe published his satirical work *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. Heym takes advantage of the persecution which Defoe underwent at the hands of British authorities to exalt all who exist against unjust power. The novel does not aim at representing an episode in Defoe's life but rather an episode in the personal struggle of humankind to resist public violence.

KEYWORDS. Defoe, Heym, Resistance, Freedom, Manuscript.

E nella tua mente si insinuò la follia
E ti volesti accusare di stregoneria
Dal vescovo andasti: «Che io sia condannata
E domenica in piazza sul rogo bruciata»
Ma il vescovo stesso per la tua bellezza
Anziché condannarti implorò una carezza
Ti disse: «Signora, placherai il tuo tormento
Nello stanco pallore di un vecchio convento»
Addio, Loreley coi capelli di grano
Sarai prigioniera in quel posto lontano
Addio, Loreley con lo sguardo alto e fiero
Non sarai che una suora vestita di nero.
Alberto Visconti, *A Loreley*, in *L'Orage*,
«L'età dell'oro», Sony Classical, 2013

Libertà va cercando, ch'è sì cara,
come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta
Dante, *Divina Commedia*, Purgatorio, I, vv. 71-2

Opening Remarks.

Daniel Defoe's narrative works, mainly *Robinson Crusoe*, have often been the object of re-writes by other authors of narratives during the three hundred years since they were published. Much has been written on the topic of Defoean re-writes, also by the present writer¹, but, among these productions, a peculiar sort of text is the one I am considering here, that is one in which Defoe steps into the narration to become himself a narrative character²: *The Queen Against Defoe: from the Notes of one Josiah Creech* by Stefan Heym (*Die Schmähschrift oder Königin gegen Defoe* in the German version, by Heym himself, as we shall see). One of the themes of this text is the definition of a free man³: who is a free man? What is a free man like? The very ample question begs a similarly wide-ranging answer, such as, that a free man is mainly someone who is free from fear and such, no doubt, Stefan Heym proved to be – and so was the writer Daniel Defoe, both in his real life and as a character of Heym's.

A good amount of help towards understanding and defining Stefan Heym and placing him appropriately can come from his Archive: it is very peculiar and very few modern writers have left any such amount and variety of material: this is the occasion for us to delve into it and see what it adds to the reading of Heym's works. Heym's long and multifarious life also confirms, by means of countless episodes of resilience, how, from his very youth, a person like him, be he as helpless as can be, is never bound to become a victim to fear. One must keep in mind the fact that

* I already worked on this topic in M. Bignami, F. Orestano, A. Vescovi (eds.), *History and Narration. Looking Back from the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Cambridge 2011.

¹ For example, L. Trisciuzzi, *Cultura e mito nel «Robinson Crusoe»*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1970; M. Bignami, *Defoe e Salgari*, «Studi inglesi», 5, 1978, pp. 373-383; J.-P. Engélibert, *La postérité de Robinson Crusoe. Un mythe littéraire de la modernité. 1954-1986*, Librairie Droz, Genève 1997; M. Bignami, *Robinson dialoga: Man Friday di Adrian Mitchell*, «TESS», 7, 2007, pp. 165-178.

² Two more texts deserve mention: J.M. Coetzee, *Foe*, Viking, New York 1986, whose action mixes Defoe's character with his narrative characters, and B. Larsson, *Long John Silver*, Norstedts Förlag, Stockholm 1995, in which Defoe meets Robert Louis Stevenson in a London tavern to teach him how to write about pirates.

³ Given the fact that this paper deals with a man, I shall always use the masculine gender in pronouns.

those in which Heym gave voice to his opinions were the self-same years in which Heym's contemporary, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, spoke his famous words about the forms of freedom to which every human being should be entitled. In his 1941 *State of the Union* address, Roosevelt spoke of «freedom of speech», «freedom of worship», «freedom from want» and «freedom from fear», the last one, that seemed to sum them all up⁴. In telling Defoe's story, Heym tells the story of every man who is exposed to the brutality and arrogance of power, regardless of the citizen's compliance to the tenets of whoever is in power in the moment.

This is what brought back to my mind the legend of Loreley⁵, which I quoted as an epigraph at the head of this paper in order to support my argument. The fear that authority inspires penetrates the human being to the point that it makes him/her think he/she is necessarily guilty of breach of law. In this particular case, Loreley risks of being accused of witchcraft for the ease with which she seduces men, but she goes so far as to accuse herself of the same crime, because she has introjected the values that would lead to the act of censorship, which should have belonged to the authority of the bishop. She imagines herself burnt at the stake as a witch in expiation for her sins, while the bishop, who perceives her beauty – indeed is bewitched by it and would like to take advantage of it – sends her to live in a convent: the bishop would be the only man allowed near her who would be permitted to touch her, caress her, well knowing what is to be found underneath her unappealing clothes. In fact, the death which Loreley imagines for herself would turn her into a heroine, while the end envisaged by the bishop is simply humiliating. She decides for herself and goes back to the heroic dimension by jumping into the river Rhine and drowning herself: not death by fire, that would purify her, but death by water that that sin would wash away: in any case a death chosen by herself.

The issues brought into the picture by Loreley prepare the way to the higher figure of Cato, the point of reference of the second epigraph

⁴ F.D. Roosevelt, *The Four Freedoms*, 6th January 1941, <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrthefourfreedoms.htm>> (08/03/2017).

⁵ Of the many versions of the legend of Loreley, I chose the most recent one, told in a masterly way by Alberto Visconti in his album *L'età dell'oro*, which he recorded with his band L'Orage in 2013 (Sony, Warszawa).

at the head of this essay⁶. Though a historical figure, here he overcomes this condition to become a symbol: Cato gave up life of his own choice not to give up his own liberty. Yet, by renouncing his life he could no longer influence the world in which he had lived, whereas, on the contrary, Defoe fights on – we shall see how.

My work on *The Queen Against Defoe* will become clearer once Heym's life has been examined.

Stefan Heym: a biography.

Since Heym's long and multifarious life may not be well known by all readers, I would like to begin with some bits of information, which may prove necessary to understand his work. He is deeply steeped in twentieth-century cultural and political life.

Born as Helmut Flieg in Chemnitz (Saxony) in 1913 into a middle-class Jewish family, very early did he come to clash with authority⁷ and was soon obliged to be on the move. Indeed he could not even finish school at home, having been turned out of the local Gymnasium for writing a pacifist text: he was evoking peace just when the Nazis were beginning to army Germany in view of territorial conquests. He became therefore a candidate for discrimination and emigration. He was also obliged to change his name to 'Stefan Heym', thus hiding from Nazi persecution but, maybe, at the same time, setting aside his Hebrew identity. He migrated to the United States where he became a journalist

⁶ The unnamed protagonist of this quotation is Cato Uticensis or 'the Younger' (95 BC-46 BC), who committed suicide rather than submitting to Caesar. In this passage of the *Divine Comedy* Virgil, in front of him, evokes Cato's behaviour in order to praise Dante's choices.

⁷ Not by chance Peter Hutchinson entitles his biography of Stefan Heym *The Perpetual Dissident* (P. Hutchinson, *Stefan Heym: The Perpetual Dissident*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006), from which I draw most of my biographical information. For further biographical information, I draw my details from S. Heym, *Nachruf*, Bertelsmann, Munich 1988; R.U. Hahn, *The Democratic Dream: Stefan Heym in America*, Peter Lang, Berne 2003; D. Nelva, *Identità e memoria. Lo spazio autobiografico nel periodo della riunificazione tedesca. Stefan Heym*, Günter de Bruyn, Heiner Müller, Günter Kanert, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2009.

and a novelist, writing mainly in English. As a novelist, he appeared to be a sort of self-translator, re-writing his stories from the original English version into a German one; yet, he never chose between English and German, keeping them both as his own products. He was drafted into the American Army and fought in World War II in Normandy. At the end of the war, he remained in Europe in jobs connected with the American army, but became more and more disgusted with America, both because of the way it was conducting the Korean war and because of the way it was treating left-wing intellectuals, following the directions of Sen. Joseph Raymond McCarthy.

With his wife Gertrude, he went back to his own Saxony, which had become a part of Eastern Germany: this had fallen under the influence of Soviet Russia, which acted as if it were inspired by Marxist principles. Going back to the GDR did not prove a wise move for Heym, since he could not conform with the harsh ideological conditioning of the Honecker administration. Indeed it should be kept in mind that Heym was a victim of the Stasi (Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, the GDR secret police), so much so that, when the archives of the latter were opened up after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Heym's file turned out to be the fullest.

After the tempest of World War II and the ensuing rise of the GDR, which he joined and supported, nothing new really happened in his life. He continued writing works of political literature until he decided to turn all his papers into a proper Archive and give it, surprisingly, to Cambridge University Library in 1992. He died in 2001 while he was in Israel on a conference.

Two languages.

Heym's literary works, which are what I am interested in, reflect his ambivalence between an English and a German world. In fact, it would be hard to say which could be considered Heym's mother-tongue between English and German, because if we were able to answer this question, that might reveal where his emotive allegiances lay. This connects with his habitual procedure of re-writing instead of translating, because he did not have an L₁ and an L₂, as the linguist would say. He himself wrote in his autobiography, *Nachruf*, that «Amerikanisch sind

seine Haltungen, seine Gedanken, Gefühle, Reaktionen; amerikanisch ist die Sprache, in der er denkt, spricht, schreibt»⁸. Yet, I would like to respectfully point out that there is only one version of that intimate text which is an autobiography and that is in German. The reader would thus surmise that his mother-tongue was German and would end by believing it: yet, the first version of his novels was typically in English, as said above.

In the case of the novel I am at present dealing with, it would appear that he wrote the first version in English in 1968⁹, but there is no publication of it until 1975¹⁰: in this volume the story was published together with shorter narrative pieces (*A Very Good Second Man*, *Across the Fence*, *The Wachsmuth Syndrome*) and the interview with J. Robert Moskin *The Creator & the Commissars. An Encounter with Stefan Heym*. It is not clear when he composed the German version, the first edition of which was published in Zurich (1970) and the second one in the GDR (Leipzig 1974); in the 1970 edition the publisher prints the following notice: «Vom Autor besorgte Übersetzung Aus dem Englishen»¹¹. I shall only examine the English text, being interested in the argument rather than in its wording. Stylistically, Heym takes great care in writing in an English as close as possible to Defoe's to give us the atmosphere besides the facts.

A similar attitude towards multilingualism is to be found in *Errata: An Examined Life*, the autobiography of George Steiner, a character in many ways similar to Heym: he was born a German Jew, he too migrated westward, first to France and then to the United States, as the totalitarianisms advanced; similarly to Heym, with two languages, he wrote in three languages. Steiner refuses to choose which is to be considered his mother-tongue, asserting that all three languages he learned as a child (English, German and French) are mother-tongues and that any at-

⁸ Heym, *Nachruf*, p. 490.

⁹ See Hutchinson, *Stefan Heym: The Perpetual Dissident*, p. 145.

¹⁰ This is the edition I am making use of for the present essay: S. Heym, *The Queen Against Defoe: From the Notes of One Josiah Creech*, in S. Heym, *The Queen Against Defoe and Other Stories*, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1975, pp. 7-57.

¹¹ S. Heym, *Die Schmähschrift oder Königin gegen Defoe: Erzählt nach den Aufzeichnungen eines gewissen Josiah Creech*, Diogenes, Zürich 1970.

tempt by psychologists to find out which was his mother-tongue and make him admit it were vain¹².

The Cambridge Archive.

Heym's Archive confirms his fearless attitude to life, however danger may be bound to come his way: the first remark I can offer is that the Archive is not only so vast, but also so complete and exhaustive that it cannot be a chance collection, it cannot be something that the author came upon unawares in a cupboard somewhere around his house. In 1992 Heym «presented his extensive archive of manuscripts, first editions, newspapers, audio cassettes and videotapes to Cambridge University Library»¹³; but it was only in January 1996 that the Library bulletin, *Readers' Newsletter*, announced the beginning of «work on the detailed sorting and cataloguing of the archive», which included «35,000 letters [...]». Four hundred audio cassettes and 100 videotapes¹⁴. When I began working on Heym I also was informed, in a private letter from a Cambridge librarian, that

[t]he cataloguing project announced in the *Readers' Newsletter* Jan. 1996 was completed in 1997. The catalogue covers the material which came to Cambridge in 1992. Stefan Heym was of course active until his death in 2001. The correspondence and other papers from 1992-2001 are still in Berlin but are expected to come to Cambridge in due course. Of the material in Cambridge all the literary manuscripts are available for consultation; access to parts of the correspondence is restricted¹⁵.

¹² See G. Steiner, *Errata: An Examined Life*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1997, p. 78.

¹³ P. Hutchinson, D.K. Lowe, *Stefan Heym and his archive. Catalogue of an exhibition held at Cambridge University Library from January-April 1994*, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge 1994, p. 1.

¹⁴ *The Stefan Heym Archive*, «Cambridge University Library Readers' Newsletter», 2, January 1996, p. 2. Ora anche in <<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/Newsletters/nl02/#tag3>> (09/03/17).

¹⁵ Christian Staufenbiel (German Specialist, Collection Development and Description, Cambridge University Library) to Marialuisa Bignami, 19th October 2015,

It is hard to say when this collecting habit started with him, but it is clear that from the years of his early journalistic activity in America (the years of the «Deutsches Volksecho» and other New York periodicals) he showed this care not to disperse his writings as well as their preparatory material. Starting from 1942, the year of the publication of his first novel, the best-seller *Hostages*, he became affluent enough to be able to collect and to stack methodically all the material that regarded his work¹⁶: he was never afraid that the latter could or would tell against him.

Regrettably, there is no statement, either private or public, either by Heym or by British academic or political authorities, regarding why Britain was chosen to harbour the Archive and, in particular, why Cambridge instead of either another British institution or another university; nor was there a ceremony held to celebrate the fact that the material had in this way become available to a vast public. In order to produce a first statement on the Archive, a small exhibition was mounted in Cambridge in April 1994 under the care of Peter Hutchinson, Heym's official biographer, and of David K. Lowe. As already suggested, more material keeps coming in from time to time and will keep coming in.

We seem to understand Heym did not want to give his Archive to his native Germany, which had turned authoritarian in the East and too much consumerist in an American way in the West. Neither did he want to give it to America, a country that had indeed given him shelter when he was a refugee, but had shown itself as fiercely anti-communist and also did not have the necessary cultural substance and environment to be a witness of the terrible century he had lived through. It took something more rich in historical suffering to receive the catalogue of his own suffering. With this asserted background, the fact becomes significant that Heym gave his Archive to Cambridge UL, indeed an English-speaking institution as the possible American institutions could have been, but set in a European country that had played such a leading role in World War II. This fact gives prominence to the English side of his activity, moving German from centre-stage to the back areas. In

private e-mail. On 30th September 2016 the same librarian confirmed that nothing had changed.

¹⁶ See P. Hutchinson, *The Stefan Heym Archive in Cambridge University Library*, «German Life and Letters», 46, 1993, n. 3, pp. 291-296: 291.

commenting on the presence of Heym's Archive in the Cambridge UL, Peter Hutchinson remarks that «Heym's decision to place the material in Cambridge had already been taken well before the collapse of the GDR, but recent developments in Germany have confirmed his feelings that scholars and other interested people may be better served by its location in an English-speaking country»¹⁷: which in my view stands to reason, because Heym had clearly decided to send his dangerous material out of his own country when this was, to all practical purposes, ruled by the Stasi.

The Queen Against Defoe: from the Notes of one Josiah Creech (*Die Schmähschrift oder Königin gegen Defoe in the German version*).

When I first laid eyes on the Heym Archive in the Cambridge University Library, I was struck by the presence, in it, among so many other pieces, of material regarding a text (of what nature it could be, it was at first not clear) in which Daniel Defoe appeared as a narrative character. Getting to know Heym better, I became aware of the fact that the material was preparatory to a short novel, entitled *The Queen Against Defoe: from the Notes of one Josiah Creech*. In the present essay, I will take this as an example of Heym's way of representing the world by means of writing a realistic novel, to which an epistemological perspective is not foreign. He moves back to the eighteenth century for this purpose and writes what, as for genre, could be defined as a parable centred around an authority-resistant man; the early eighteenth century was also the time when the modern novel rose and, with it, the use of the novel as a way of getting to know the world¹⁸. By reading his books in general, not

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 296.

¹⁸ After the ground-breaking work by I. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel. Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, Chatto and Windus, London 1957, the most interesting work about the 'rise of the novel' is M. McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel. 1600-1740*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1987. I contributed myself on this topic with the essay *What's New in the Novel*, in M. Bignami, C. Pagetti, G. Iamartino (eds.), *The Economy Principle in English Linguistic, Literary, and Cultural Perspectives*, Proceedings of the XIX Conference of the Associazione Italiana di Anglistica, Unicopli, Milano 2002, pp. 369-375.

only his novels, one realises that Heym is a very able prose-writer and that he can manipulate his subject so as to write a novel through which he gives us his concept of the world.

As we shall see, in the novel which I am at present considering Defoe is meant to stand for the victim of the troubles of human beings. Defoe had written so many prose works, most of them inspired by the events and human meetings of his own life, that it comes as no surprise that Heym should take the eighteenth-century author as an ideal character. Through Defoe Heym represents many of the situations he had lived in his own life and indeed the tensions of his own twentieth century. At the same time, he is moving them into the past in order to create a distance and avoid appearing to be directly discussing his own time and its problems.

At this point, defining this book as a 'historical novel' comes as a matter of course. Heym himself mentions the historical novel when talking about *The Queen Against Defoe* and other works¹⁹; but this case appears to us to be a peculiar sort of historical novel, because it results contaminated by the contiguous genre of the fictional biography. Heym does not build an invented story on a rigorous historical background, but rather brings to life some historical characters, to which he lends attitudes and words of his own invention. They are not simply plausible characters in respect to the historical picture that makes up the background, like Walter Scott's or Alessandro Manzoni's: Heym's is rather a story set in the past, in which there may be invented characters, but also in which the historical characters may behave somewhat differently from what the historical truth records, that is in an invented way. The words they are reported of saying are also invented by the author and though plausible, no one can say they were actually pronounced. In this sense the present novel is a story about the historical Defoe, but also the creation of a fictional Defoe. Heym feels free to invent his own De-

¹⁹ «Then I began to write historical novels: the first one about the revolution of [1848]. That book was published in the GDR, but the next novel, on [Ferdinand] Lassalle, was not» (J.R. Moskin, *The Creator and The Commissars. An Encounter with Stefan Heym*, in S. Heym, *The Queen Against Defoe and Other Stories*, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1975, pp. 115-126: 119).

foe for his purposes: having found a character to his liking, he manipulates it, fashioning it in the shape of a political resistant.

When it comes to the matter of the historical novel, we all take our cue from the seminal book by Lukács *The Historical Novel*, but one should recall the fact that Lukács's book was originally published in 1957 and it only barely reaches and touches on the most modern types of historical novel, such as, among others, the postcolonial historical novel. Lukács concludes his volume with a mention of the «historical novel of anti-Fascist humanism», to which Stefan Heym could belong:

The important writers here approach their theme from a high level of abstraction to begin with. Their historical protagonists embody emotionally and intellectually the great humanist ideas and ideals for which they themselves are fighting. [...] We emphasize once more: this is an important positive feature in the historical novel of anti-Fascist humanism, a step towards eliminating that lack of connexion between past and present from which the historical novel of the previous period suffered even in the work of its most outstanding representatives. But the restored connexion is nevertheless *too direct, too intellectual, too general*²⁰.

Nowadays one may not share Lukács's views, but it cannot be denied that he makes a point on the historical novel in the twentieth century. The most recent historical novelist like Heym has less respect for history and for the traditional historical novel on which Lukács has immortal pages.

Let us now come to Defoe's real story and its historical background, that is to say the occasion in which the Queen, representing the State, brought justice against Defoe: this occasion was the publication on his part of the pamphlet entitled *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* in late 1702²¹. However, Heym's booklet could be read with profit and pleas-

²⁰ G. Lukács, *The historical novel*, translated from the German by H. and S. Mitchell, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1981 (first ed. 1957), p. 345, original italics.

²¹ For the readers' information, I suggest a reading of the facts as everybody believes they really happened, in the authoritative biography by John Richetti *The Life of Daniel Defoe* (Blackwell, Oxford 2005, pp. 19-30). *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* aimed at defending the position of those, like Defoe and his entire Anabaptist community, who dissented from the rites of the Church of England, which was and, to a certain extent, still is the State Church. The Dissenters were therefore reckoned as enemies of the State and excluded from public office. On the face of

ure also by someone who knows nothing about Defoe, but easily comes to the conclusion that this is a story contemporary to us of a political resistant created by the author. Yet, the story told by Heym follows quite closely the historical events.

In fact, before writing the novel proper, Heym had felt the need to enquire into the facts of Defoe's imprisonment in 1703 after the publication of *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*; he even inserted technicalities of English law in the title with the formula «the Queen against [...]» to show that he knew very well what he was talking about. This resulted in what the catalogue of the Archive calls «32 cards»²², which I have

it, the pamphlet seemed to assert that the shortest way with the Dissenters would be to kill them all off; but, obviously, this was a mocked target and, on second reading, it emerged that the aim of the pamphlet was to suggest that the members of the State Church were to be killed off. Defoe was first attacked by his own co-worshippers, while the Church-of-England men rejoiced at the suggestion. It took some time and an accurate re-reading of the text, on the part of the two opposing factions, for the truth to emerge that Defoe meant to confront satirically the enemies of the High Church and to defend his own co-worshippers belonging to Dissent. He had to go into hiding. It took the authorities about six months to spot him and send guards for his seizure. The person who held what we would now call the post of chief of the secret police was Daniel Finch, Earl of Nottingham, represented by Heym as weak and shivery, wrapped up in furs and sitting in front of a roaring fire, but history tells us he lived to be eighty-three. He was in charge of many public departments and therefore a very powerful man. Defoe was sent to Newgate prison, where he was supposed to dwell 'at the Queen's pleasure'. The problem was, as Jody Greene tells us (J. Greene, *The Trouble with Ownership. Liberal Property and Authorial Liability in England, 1660-1730*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2005), that the pamphlet had been published anonymously and the author could not be condemned until his authorship was demonstrated. He was then identified and condemned to stand in the pillory for several days, which would have been, for everybody else, quite painful. Defoe managed to write overnight a long poem entitled *A Hymn to the Pillory*, which was surreptitiously printed and sold along the streets leading to the pillory and which turned what was supposed to be an insult into glorification. After this, Defoe made a secret pact with the authorities through Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford and speaker of the House of Commons, that he would be released if he promised to write a newspaper which would defend the government. This gave rise to the journal called «The Review», which lasted from 1704 to 1713.

²² Cambridge University Library, Heym Archive, item A183, *The Queen Against Defoe*. Card index of sources, 32 cards, mostly handwritten in English.

carefully examined and which contain his notes in view of writing the novel. For instance, Heym gives us a large number of excerpts from books of general criticism on Defoe to show that he had enquired into his biography. It is to be regretted that all the critical and factual bibliography on Defoe was very poor up to the Eighties or Nineties of the twentieth century; in particular, no satisfactory biography of the author was available until Richetti's was published (see note 22). But, for what he could find on the market at the time, Heym seems to have consulted everything available and significant, from Fitzgerald to Sutherland and Moore. Several passages from Heym's notes reveal how he was keen on not omitting anything that could define Defoe as the protagonist of the novel. In fact, Defoe is the only psychologically-worked character in the novel, whereas Josiah Creech and the Earl of Nottingham are literary types: Creech is the mouthpiece of the author and Nottingham could be the chief of any political police.

The text of *The Queen Against Defoe* is rather short (57 pages), but very rich in meaning. It is allegedly made up of the notes «of one Josiah Creech», a manifestly autobiographical character, through whom the moral stances of the text are communicated. We are indeed asked to share Creech's point of view and attitudes towards the story, although he has clearly a limited mind. The beginning is intentionally gross with the mention of a socially disqualified lady with whom S.H. (a fictional Stefan Heym, from now on never to be seen again) had spent a night in 1944, who had lent him the manuscript which makes up the book and never claimed it back²³. The profession of Josiah Creech is never defined, but the reader can surmise him to be a middling police officer in the service of the Earl of Nottingham. The Earl of Nottingham was the

²³ «The following was lent to me in 1944, in London, by Miss Agnes Creech, after a night partly spent conversing on affairs both current and historical. The papers, Miss Creech said, had been in her family for several hundred years. When I came back the next evening to return the manuscript and to present her with a bottle of gin and two cartons of American cigarettes, in which she had expressed an interest, the house in which Miss Creech plied her trade was gone and so was she» (S. Heym, *The Queen Against Defoe: From the Notes of One Josiah Creech*, in Id., *The Queen Against Defoe and Other Stories*, pp. 7-57: 7). The reader should be aware that Heym stresses the fact that S.H. spent part of the night being entertained by Agnes Creech and part of the night discussing the document.

Minister of Police of Queen Anne, the sovereign who reigned from 1702 to 1714: this is the Queen of the title. The part of action to which the text refers takes place between the 18th December 1702, at the very beginning of Anne's reign, and the 3rd August 1703, which corresponds to the end of Defoe's Pillory experience.

Heym's and Defoe's prose styles differ quite widely. Defoe talks about the fight between the State Church (in his days, the 'High Church') and the Dissenters in a stuffy language that would be supposed to expect to be taken in earnest, with the intention, at the same time, of revealing an undercurrent of satire: this is certainly not there, as any perceptive reader can feel. All this comes through Heym's way of narrating, which does not crash Defoe's original prose structure.

Heym as a storyteller, on the contrary, resorts to undermining his own statements by starting off in a very playful way. He has recourse to the narrative device of the manuscript mislaid and accidentally retrieved centuries later: he can afford this since he is, in actual fact, writing centuries later. In the German version of the novel, he goes so far as to state «Bei der Übersetzung ins deutsche bin ich bemüht gewesen, dem Stil des englischen Originals zu folgen»²⁴. This means that Heym creates, as it were, two intradiegetic narrators for his story: S. H., corresponding to the outermost layer of the story, is almost autobiographical in his likeness to the author; inside the story told by 'Stefan Heym' is the novel proper, told by Mr. Creech, who is what really stands between the reader and the story and distances the latter from real history, turning this text into a novel. He is, as it were, the time-master of the novel: the twenty-one unnumbered 'chapters', in actual fact, are featured as if they were sheets from his notebook and each one bears the heading of a date. Every chapter written by this intradiegetic second narrator begins in mid-sentence («... found, at Croome's printshop, several hundred sheets, unbound, of *The Shortest Way*»²⁵; «... so I once more to Robin Hog»²⁶; «... had Mr. George Croome, the printer, taken to Newgate»²⁷),

²⁴ Heym, *Die Schmähchrift oder Königin gegen Defoe*, p. 5.

²⁵ Id., *The Queen Against Defoe*, p. 14.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

as if he were picking up a sheet of paper on which he had been jotting down, from time to time, some notes: another undermining device.

Starting off with a light *double-entendre* contrasts with the gruesome atmosphere of the first pages of the story proper. The scene starts in winter, the season when Defoe went into hiding, whereas, on the contrary, the apprehension of Defoe on the part of the authorities took place in May. But then again Heym was evidently keen on evoking the grim, wintry atmosphere of post-war Berlin, in which the Earl of Nottingham puts his trusted Creech in charge of fabricating a case on the back of the most brilliant mind among his political enemies. In the novel, the Earl of Nottingham wonders how Creech is going to catch Defoe: as an answer, Creech shows the Earl an edition of Defoe's works which seems perfectly legal, but, he reveals, «It's pirated»²⁸. This could be an imitation of the method, belonging to the Stasi (or to any secret police for that), for which the end is to do away with an enemy whatever the cost – even an illegal procedure.

Yet, Defoe is more quick-minded than both of the policemen, high and low, because, by writing his *Hymn to the Pillory*, he becomes the new powerful hero of conciliation. It is clear that Heym, who knew very well the methods of the Stasi, represents Defoe as more clever than the Earl of Nottingham, his gaze moving on the time back and forth between the eighteenth century and the twentieth. Defoe does not bend to the authoritarian laws of the country, nor does he take his life like Cato, but he finds a way out and wins with the Hymn to the Pillory, with a more modern attitude of moderation which will surface mainly in Defoe's newspapers. Heym himself was involved in State politics and, like Defoe, he did not refuse to compromise in order to be present in the life of the State. This is clearly to be seen in the interview that closes the volume *The Queen Against Defoe and Other Stories*, in which Heym answers a question by the interviewer («Your most recent books have not been published in the GDR») first with a curt acknowledgement («My last three books have not been published in the GDR»), then at length mentioning his book about Lassalle and apparently justifying the au-

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

thorities' behaviour by saying «I think the real reason was that Lassalle is a non-person of the working-class movement»²⁹.

Going back to the novel we are reading, after Defoe shows himself the winner, the story inevitably must end on the expulsion of Creech from the scene. When Defoe is on the scaffold of the pillory, Creech attempts to throw offensive objects at him, but he is hit by a mysterious opponent and made to faint and be out of the scene for days. When he comes back to consciousness he receives a letter written by Nottingham, who puts all the blame on his subordinate and orders him to quit his position. The novel ends on the frosty message from Nottingham, with these final impersonal words: «... it is deemed advisable that as of this date you separate from my office. Signed, Nottingham»³⁰. To the query of an astonished Creech («And that's all...?»³¹) the messenger simply answers «Mr. Creech, that's all»³². This curt answer on the part of the messenger silences Creech and leaves the reader and the critic without anything else to say.

²⁹ Moskin, *The Creator and The Commissars*, pp. 118-119.

³⁰ Heym, *The Queen Against Defoe*, p. 57.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² *Ibidem*.