

A house where Defoe once lived, near London, England Published when Defoe was in his late fifties, Robinson Crusoe relates the story of a man's shipwreck on a desert island for twenty-eight years and his subsequent adventures. Though Defoe himself admitted that "Writing upon Trade was the Whore I really doated upon," even the most conservative bibliography of his printed works would support the contention that politics was the woman he was married to. And the previous chapters have maintained, if proleptically, that The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe is a political fable that emanated from an imagination that had been actively engaged in the most intense political debates in modern English history. Yet this assertion of a significant political component to Robinson Crusoe should come as a surprise to the present reader, for given the scholarship of the past fifty odd years, Defoe's great fiction appears to have everything in it but politics. In 1925 Charles Whibley judged it a miracle, not that the Adventures were written, but "that Defoe, the politician, should have recorded them." Defoe went to school Newington Green with a friend named Caruso. The novel has been assumed to be based in part on the story of the Scottish castaway Alexander Selkirk, who spent four years stranded in the Juan Fernandez Islands, but his experience is inconsistent with the details of the narrative. Throughout its episodic narrative, Crusoe's struggles with faith are apparent as he bargains with God in times of life-threatening crises, but time and again he turns his back after his deliverances.