EVER since Pococke published his bilingual, Latin and Arabic, edition of Ibn Tufayl’s «philosophical romance» Hayy ibn Yaqzan in 1671¹, the work has been popular in the Western world and it has been translated a number of times.

The contents of the treatise are well-known: a boy, called Hayy ibn Yaqzan (Living son of Awake) grows up all alone on an uninhabited island and gradually learns to understand the world around him. His intellectual development leads him from the discovery of the simple truths of natural science to the abstract philosophical concepts of Aristotelian thought, and from there to the ideas of Neoplatonic mysticism. He succeeds in reaching the ultimate goal of the mystic, the beatific vision, and then comes into contact with a visitor from the habitated world—Asal—who tells him about the teachings of traditional religion. It becomes clear to them that traditional religion is a veiled form of the truths which Hayy has discovered all by himself. Hayy insists on going to Asal’s island, because he is convinced that the higher truths only need explaining to be accepted by the masses. But he soon discovers that religion at this level is beyond the grasp of the common believer, and returns, together with Asal, to his island, to practice their form of religion for the rest of their days.

The lively and personal way in which the story is told has attracted not only the student of philosophy, but also the general reader, and the book attained great popularity in Europe in the century following its first

¹ This was not the first translation which appeared in Europe. An anonymous translator rendered the text into Hebrew, and Moses of Narbonne wrote a commentary in 1349 (cf. M. Steinschneider, Hebräische Übersetzungen para. 208-210). That the Hebrew text was translated into Latin by Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) is reported by Sami S. Hawi (Islamic Naturalism and Mysticism, p. 270), but I have been unable to identify the source of this rumour.
printed Arabic version. Eleven editions, in different languages, appeared between 1671 and 1783, and it is hardly surprising that the question of literary parentage with European works should have arisen. The most illustrious titles which have cropped up in this context are Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Baltasar Gracián’s *El Criticón* (1651), but no conclusive evidence has come to light.

In the discussion about *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*’s Western progeny one work has generally escaped attention, although it is mentioned in passing by several scholars. Antonio Pastor promised to show that «the elements out of which the story is built are of remarkably interesting origin» but unfortunately only the first volume of his fascinating study *The Idea of Robinson Crusoe* appeared.

The Iraqi scholar Madani Sālih mentions the book and points out its indebtedness to Ockley’s English translation of *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, but the matter is left at that. So, a short account of the contents of the work in question, *The Life and surprizing Adventures of Don Antonio de Trezzanio*, does not seem out of place; it might even induce somebody to continue Pastor’s research and trace the elements of the story to their respective sources, or succeed in identifying the unknown author—questions which are outside the competence of the Orientalist.

The full title of the anonymous work is: *The Life and surprizing Adventures of Don Antonio de Trezzanio, who was Self-educated, and lived Forty-five Years in an uninhabited Island in the East-Indies*.

The book consists of 158 pages, and according to the title page it was printed for H. Serjeant, a publisher who is known to have been active in the second half of the 18th century. The Catalogue of Printed Books of the British Library (s.v. Trezzanio) gives 1761 as the year of publication; on what grounds, I do not know. The catalogue further describes the work as ‘an abridged translation of the *Philosophus Autodidacticus* or *History of Hai ebn Yagdhan* by Abu Bakr ibn al-Tufail’.

To the general reader the title of *Trezzanio* will probably call to mind

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2 See note 25.
5 Pastor, op. cit. p. 179.