

Roguery, Piracy and Early Modern English Print Culture

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First cemented by the sensational reportage of piracy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the literary trope of the swashbuckling rogue is a familiar one. This figure, popularized by the public's appetite for sensational stories of piracy and the reports of the criminal trials and executions of those captured, is partly a creation of fiction and is consequently related to texts as well as to historical context.¹ But before the rogue of the high seas came to dominate print culture, earlier iterations of the rogue existed in English minds through ephemeral material. The 'rogue,' 'vagrant' and 'vagabond' were cultural constructions attributed to the mobile poor, who flooded into London during Tudor times and were often met with contempt by local authorities. This dramatic shift in urban demographics is immortalized through the literary genre that has come to be called 'rogue literature,' flourishing all over Europe but especially rich in England.² As transatlantic travel increased throughout the early modern period, mobility was again attributed to roguery, but this time to the transient workforce of sailors, due to old ideas that rootlessness bred idleness, idleness gave way to immorality, and immorality reaped crime.

This essay explores the continuity of the 'rogue' as a cultural construction in English print culture in how it ostracized certain groups outside authorities' control, particularly the 'mobile poor' among the maritime trades: the common sailor. By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, whether sailors had committed acts perceived as transgressive or not, they were often grouped together by landmen as 'rogues,' due to a heightened period of piracy. This paper argues that in the popular print culture of the period, roguery and piracy became increasingly synonymous through the vehicle of transatlantic mobility, feared by landmen to breed vagrancy among sailors, and with it, piracy. The impact of this literature is so profound that, to this day, we still have trouble disentangling fact from fiction in our ideas of the 'lovable rogue' and determining where these notions came from.

'Roguery' and the 'Old World'

¹ Margarette Lincoln, *British Pirates and Society, 1680-1730* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2014), 28.

² Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 2.

In early modern England, ‘rogue,’ ‘vagrant’ and ‘vagabond’ were the three most common words used to describe poor people on the move. ‘Rogue’ was the most widely used of the three terms, particularly in printed works, but it held myriad meanings. For example, Thomas Killigrew, an English dramatist and supporter of Charles II, portrayed the period of Oliver Cromwell’s rule as a decade of ‘holy war,’ where the people had gone mad from hearing Puritan doctrine preached by a band of “Russet Levites, Apron-Rogues, with horn hands” in *The Parson’s Wedding*.³ When the comedy premiered in 1664, it was understood that to be ‘rogue’ was to be subversive—breeding illicit sexuality, criminality, and marginality.⁴ First coined in the 1560s to describe vagrants who used disguise, rhetorical play and counterfeit gestures to insinuate themselves into lawful social and political urban contexts, the word developed during a period when the English government was increasingly concerned with issues of population movement and ‘masterless men.’⁵ In 1547, four vagrancy bills were introduced in the House of Lords, resulting in harsh legislation which specified a penalty of two years’ enslavement for a first vagrancy offense and a life enslavement if the slave absconded.⁶ This suggests a governmental panic at an emergency situation.⁷ Pamphleteer Phillip Stubbes reported in 1583 that “the poor lie in the streets upon pallets of straw, and well if they have that too, or else in the mire and dirt,...having neither house to put in their heads, covering to keep them from the cold, nor yet to hide their shame withal, penny to buy them sustenance, nor anything else, but are permitted to die in the street like dogs, or beasts, without any mercy or compassion showed to them at all.”⁸ There was an evident social problem of poverty in London, but the perceived threat that vagrancy was what dominated print culture.⁹

Anxieties about the mobile poor was reflected in media, which portrayed them as a danger to the entire body politic. Although the ratio of female vagrants to men in the seventeenth

³ Thomas Killigrew, *The Parson’s Wedding in Comedies and Tragedies by Thomas Killigrew* (London, 1664), Act I, scene, I.

⁴ David J. Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society, 1650-1750, Bloomsbury Cultural History* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 13.

⁵ Nandini Das, João Vicente Melo, Haig Smith, and Lauren Working, *Keywords of Identity, Race, and Human Mobility in Early Modern England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 211.

⁶ Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, 1.

⁷ Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, 1.

⁸ Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, 2.

⁹ Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, 2.

and eighteenth centuries was comparable, the ‘rogue’ was predominantly associated with young, single, able-bodied men from penurious backgrounds, frequently bound for urban destinations and unattached to settled society.¹⁰ The word ‘rogue’ could be used as a noun or an adjective (‘roguish’), and took on a variety of connotations, including “scoundrel,” “villain,” “atheist,” and “double-crosser”: it became an umbrella term for an array of social deviants and outcasts by authorities.¹¹ It could refer to ‘an idle vagrant, a vagabond’ as defined by the Vagabonds Act of 1572, or to wander or behave like a rogue or rascal.¹² Put simply, a ‘rogue’ was a label attributed to a person who defied convention and transgressed normative behaviour owing their environmental, social, and economic conditions. Crucially, rogue and roguery were powerful terms of projection which preoccupied the minds of the respectable. Such groups powerfully imposed onto “vagrants qualities they disowned in themselves: social mobility, linguistic innovation, sexual misconduct, sedition, and notably, idleness.”¹³ The discrepancy between the ‘settled deserving pauper’ and ‘unsettled incorrigible rogue’ or ‘idle vagabond’ is a timeless gap in sympathies that is starkly evident in early modern English literature.¹⁴ What was deemed ‘roguish’ thus became the inverse of the respectable Renaissance self-image.¹⁵

Despite the cultural contempt exhibited in printed literature from ‘above’ (e.g. proclamations, pamphlets, newspapers, and the musings of elites), vagrancy was central to early modern society’s shaping of itself and its people as they “constructed their own identities against what vagrants represented.”¹⁶ The bourgeois readers’ sense of liberty was ironically constructed through a complicated identification with the outlaw heroes in early pieces of crime reporting; the emphasis of which was less on the actual criminals themselves than on the force behind criminality, namely the dangerous erosion of morality.¹⁷ Known for their “circumstantially dense narratives,” these sources acted as a precursor to the novels of Daniel Defoe and Henry

¹⁰ Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, 5.

¹¹ Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz, *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 2.

¹² Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, 13.

¹³ Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, 16.

¹⁴ Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, 17.

¹⁵ Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, 13.

¹⁶ Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, 5; and Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, 18.

¹⁷ Dionne and Mentz, *Rogues*, 16.

Fielding.¹⁸ These pamphlets worked in diverse and sometimes conflicting ways, often mixing social complaint with humor.¹⁹ In print media, these figures took on antiheroic attributes and first appeared in the ‘cony-catching’ pamphlets of the late sixteenth century. These comedic tales about merry tricksters subverting vanity and presumption in its various forms was a “staple of Tudor jesting.”²⁰ Popular works like Gilbert Walker’s *A Manifest Detection of Dice-Play* (1552), Thomas Harman’s *A Great Caveat or Warening for Common Cursetors Vulgarely Called Vegabones* (1556), and John Awdeley’s *The Fraternity of Vegabonds* (1561) created an imaginary lawbreaker network in London’s growing metropolis as they displaced dominant notions of social hierarchy and order onto the growing populations of metropolitan vagrants.²¹ These different crime narratives shaped the historical experience of real vagrants via the laws, officers and institutions designed to punish, apprehend, incarcerate, and reform them.²² Moreover, they reveal how settled contemporaries perceived, responded to, discussed, and felt about vagrancy.²³

The context in which these sentiments were expressed, however, profoundly changed in the century between 1650 and 1750. This period witnessed dramatic social, economic, and cultural change in England and in the peoples and places that came to be associated with the English empire.²⁴ Vagrants were subjected to new commercial, legal, imperial, and cultural forces which had not materialized during Tudor times as fully. The ‘newer’ vagabond was not strictly metropolitan but pulled in many new directions as many “vagrants were transported overseas, improved or ‘corrected’ at home, redefined into and out of existence by new laws, feared, casually relieved, constantly ostracized, and always resettled somewhere else.”²⁵ The most common reason for vagrants’ mobility was their search for work in order to achieve subsistence and survival. Single, young men were often drafted or impressed into military service and subjected to transportation owing to England’s multiple wars at the end of the seventeenth century, including William III’s suppression of a Jacobite rebellion in Ireland and the

¹⁸ Dionne and Mentz, *Rogues*, 16.

¹⁹ Dionne and Mentz, *Rogues*, 19.

²⁰ Dionne and Mentz, *Rogues*, 17.

²¹ Dionne and Mentz, *Rogues*, 7.

²² Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, 16.

²³ Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, 16.

²⁴ Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, 12.

²⁵ Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, 12.

Nine Years' War against France. The rogue became the stranger at home, as to be vagrant was 'to be without home, without church, and without land.'²⁶

Roguary and the 'New World'

By the late seventeenth century, the stereotypes of the rogue, vagabond and vagrant were entrenched in English minds. Crime reports, gallows tales, ballads, novels, and 'pirate histories' signalled a new era in crime writing that increasingly featured daring characteristics of the rogue. The technological innovation of deep-sea sailing ships enabled more people to travel farther distances than ever before, giving way to new types of literature that epitomized these experiences. Enthralling sea and travel narratives emerged, many written by former seamen, who wrote about their exciting adventures on the other side of their known world. Between 1600 and 1850, the twin processes of imperial expansion and capitalist commercialism took many forms, creating multiple free and unfree labor regimes around the world.²⁷ European imperial planners built plantation colonies based on the combined work of convicts and indentured servants as well as enslaved Africans, and, later, 'liberated' apprentices.²⁸ Many of England's able-bodied poor were transplanted to the 'New World' to 'work,' based on the assumption that vagrants did not choose to work at the 'proper' occupations—if they chose to work at all.²⁹ In *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, David Hitchcock identifies houses of correction and alehouses as typical 'vagrant spaces' in London, but the Atlantic Ocean and colonies can also be understood as exactly that with millions on the move during this period.

A major movement of people, who enabled the engine of capitalism to run, were deep-sea sailors. Sailors were a major mobile labour force pivotal to the changing history and political economy of the North Atlantic world.³⁰ They laboured in the merchant marine, Navy, slave trade, East India Company and fishing and whaling industries, gaining fulsome experience working at sea in varying capacities. Some shipped out in search of adventure; in an age where most men

²⁶ Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, 17.

²⁷ Marcus Rediker, Titas Chakraborty, and Matthias Van Rossum, eds., *A Global History of Runaways: Workers, Mobility, and Capitalism, 1600-1850* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 3.

²⁸ Rediker, et al., *A Global History of Runaways*, 3.

²⁹ Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, 19.

³⁰ Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 10.

and women in England lived in clustered local communities, the mariner inhabited an international world. However, many were coerced into the service, particularly with the Navy, as naval press gangs were an ever-present threat to sailors and landsmen alike, especially during times of war. Others joined the maritime trades because they were ‘bred to the sea’ (a familial trade or tradition), or it was an alternative sentence to hanging, or because landed work was scarce.

Most commonly, it was economic necessity that pushed many men to the water’s edge since many mariners came from poor backgrounds. Seamen exhibited a distinctive appearance and were easily recognized as men of the sea by contemporaries. Sailors of all stripes had their own manner of speech, dress, and mannerisms. When they were ashore between voyages, seafarers often stayed in boarding houses located close to the docks, known as sailortowns, on the periphery of town. They spoke with “unusual syntax, distinctive pronunciations, and a generous portion of swearing and cursing.”³¹ Additionally, due to the constant motion of the ship, sailors were known to walk with a peculiar gait. Men of the merchant marine wore baggy breeches tarred with pitch as protection against the cold and dampness, as well as a checkered shirt of blue and white linen, stockings, a blue or gray ‘fearnought’ jacket and a Monmouth cap.³² Seamen’s long absences at sea transformed them into a socially distinct workforce that exhibited ‘roguish’ qualities to locals. Not unlike vagrancy, landsmen viewed sailors’ mobility as a vehicle for roguery, especially when they were “idle” in port between voyages. As one eighteenth-century mariner notes, “sailors when idle are generally plotting mischief.”³³ Known for their taverns, brothels, and indecorous entertainment, landsmen avoided the sailortown as they were places known to propagate immorality, vice, and spendthrift. Indeed, as expressed by the seventeenth-century sailor Edward Barlow, the sailor was often dismissed by landsmen as an ‘old dog’ or ‘old rogue’ when ashore.³⁴ As such, the landsmen’s labelling of sailors demonstrates the

³¹ Rediker, *Between the Devil*, 11.

³² Rediker, *Between the Devil*, 11.

³³ Sameul Kelly, *Samuel Kelly: An Eighteenth Century Seaman, Whose Days Have Been Few and Evil, to Which is Added Remarks, etc., on Places He Visited During His Pilgrimage in This Wilderness*, edited by Crosbie Garstin (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925), 87.

³⁴ Appleby, *Women and English Piracy*, 193-94; and Edward Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal of His Life at Sea in King’s Ships, East & West Indianmen & Other Merchantmen from 1659 to 1703*, ed. by Basil Lubbock, vol. 1 (London: Hurst & Blackett, Ltd., 1934), 160.

continuity in printed works, and the cultural ideation that mobility among employed individuals would nevertheless lead to roguery.

‘Pirates’ in Print in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries

The perilous conditions sailors faced at sea, the social marginalization they frequently encountered ashore, and their familiarity with the world’s lucrative shipping lanes led some to crossover to maritime crime, namely piracy. This underpinned landsmen’s anxieties about mariners’ predisposition for roguery. ‘Pirate histories’ produced in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries cemented the notion that in turning to piracy, mariners effectively became ‘masterless men,’ or ‘rogues’ of the high seas who had little chance of rehabilitation. As one eighteenth century observer puts it, “Doubtless ‘tis possible for a man to prove a hearty Rogue after he is forced into the Service of the Pirates, however Honest he was before, and however Undesignedly or against his Consent he at first come among them.”³⁵ In early modern culture, the connection between masterless men and mercantile exchange had deep roots.³⁶ Not unlike the landed trades, ships needed experienced and talented masters to successfully oversee its complex operations and maintain shipboard consensus.³⁷ Desertion, mutiny, and piracy were often undertaken when the wars ceased. Ironically for landsmen, sailors—instead of remaining ‘idle’ or making smaller wages—could go rogue by turning to piracy, thus inverting the mirror image of settled society by becoming their own masters at sea and in life. By the end of the seventeenth century, piracy became an alternative for sailors who were eager for better living conditions, more money, and a say in their fate, as outbreaks came in waves.³⁸ Therefore, when former Flemish buccaneer, Alexandre Exquemelin, first published his ‘pirate history,’ *De Americaensche Zee-Roovers* (known in English as the *Buccaneers of America*) in 1678, about his exploits with Sir Henry Morgan in the Caribbean, he immortalized the idea of the rogue of the high seas in popular media.

³⁵ Peter T. Leeson, *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 141.

³⁶ Dionne and Mentz, *Rogues*, 22.

³⁷ For further reading on ‘consensus,’ see Cheryl Fury’s *Tides in the Affairs of Men: The Social History of Elizabethan Seamen, 1580-1603* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2011).

³⁸ Hans Turley, *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash: Piracy, Sexuality, and Masculine Identity* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1999), 43.

The buccaneers of the Caribbean colonies were a motley crew comprised of alienated, indigent and dispossessed sailors, soldiers, hunters, and indentured servants: all who personified the wreckage of the harsh colonial systems of France, England, and the Netherlands.³⁹ According to Exquemelin, indentured servants from the French Tortuga and Hispaniola and from Jamaica became an especially significant source of men.⁴⁰ Exquemelin claimed to have been an indentured servant for the French West India Company on Tortuga and wrote *Buccaneers of America* based on his own first-hand experience with the buccaneers, notably Henry Morgan.⁴¹ Translated into English in 1684, *Buccaneers of America* drew on the recent exploits of freebooters. As a travel narrative and ‘pirate history,’ the work gripped readers’ imaginations as Exquemelin had personally served with Morgan as a barber-surgeon until 1674. Laced with impressionistic and anecdotal evidence, *Buccaneers* gives personification to roguery through the real men it describes. After finishing his period of indentured servitude, Exquemelin describes falling “into the hands of the wickedest rogue [Henry Morgan] in the whole island.”⁴² Penniless and devoid of other opportunities, Exquemelin tells readers that he had no other choice but to join the buccaneers’ ranks.⁴³ The buccaneers’ rough lives, typically characterized by Exquemelin as “atrocious cruelties,” toughened and hardened them in both the physical and psychological sense.⁴⁴ Exquemelin’s account of Roche Brasiliano and Francois L’Ollonais, buccaneers of Dutch and French background, shocked readers with their reported use of such barbarous cruelties such as roasting Spanish prisoners alive or beheading them after their surrender.⁴⁵ Exquemelin characterized Morgan as “the second L’Ollonais,” claiming that his attack on Porto Bello in 1668 was accompanied by “many insolent actions of rape and adultery committed upon very honest women, as well married as virgins, who being threatened with the sword were constrained to

³⁹ David Head, ed., *The Golden Age of Piracy: The Rise, Fall, and Enduring Popularity of Pirates* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018), 135.

⁴⁰ Head, ed., *The Golden Age of Piracy*, 135.

⁴¹ Head, ed., *The Golden Age of Piracy*, 136.

⁴² A.O. Exquemelin and Basil Ringrose (ed.), *The Buccaneers of America : A True Account of the Most Remarkable Assaults Committed of Late Years upon the Coasts of the West Indies by the Buccaneers of Jamaica and Tortuga, Both English and French* (New York: Dover Publications, 1893), 34.

⁴³ Exquemelin and Ringrose (ed.), *Buccaneers of America*, 34.

⁴⁴ Head, ed., *The Golden Age of Piracy*, 136.

⁴⁵ Appleby, *Women and English Piracy*, 171.

submit their bodies to the violence of these lewd and wicked men.”⁴⁶ At the end of the seventeenth century, the buccaneers were brought under control when they became a threat to other European states who had interest in the West Indies.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the *Buccaneers of America* spearheaded and legitimized a literature on the rogues of the ‘New World,’ with other important works soon following.

After *Buccaneers of America*, piracy trials, execution sermons, novels, plays, and other pirate literature, gained prolific traction and distribution as the government cracked down on maritime crime. The publication of the piracy trials of Henry Every’s crew provides an early example of media manipulation on a grand scale as the English government sought to publish their own version of Every and his acts at his crewmembers’ trials in October 1694.⁴⁸ In response to recent events, England introduced the Act for the More Effectual Suppression of Piracy in 1700, stipulating that:

Persons committing Piracies, Robberies, and felonies on the Seas, in or near the East and West Indies, and in Places very remote, cannot be brought to condign Punishment without great Trouble and Charges in sending them into England to be tried within the Realm, as the said Statute directs, insomuch that many idle and profligate Persons have been thereby encouraged to turn Pirates, and betake themselves to that sort of wicked Life.⁴⁹

With pirates preoccupying English minds, the next highly influential work to come out of this period was Captain Charles Johnson’s *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates*. Published in London in 1724, Johnson’s work was an instant best-seller.⁵⁰ A second edition was published in 1724, a third in 1725, and a fourth in 1726. While

⁴⁶ Exquemelin and Ringrose (ed.), *The Buccaneers of America*, 118, 140.

⁴⁷ Turley, *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash*, 43.

⁴⁸ Douglas R. Burgess Jr., “Piracy in the Public Sphere: The Henry Every Trials and the Battle for Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Print Culture,” *Journal of British Studies* 48 (October 2009): 888.

⁴⁹ William III, 1698-99: *An Act for the More Effectual Suppressions of Piracy*. Chapter VII. Rot. Parl. 11 Gul. III. P.2.n.5. [Recital of State. 28 Hen. VIII. C. 15. & 1] BHO: *British History Online*, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol7/pp590-594>.

⁵⁰ Lincoln, *British Pirates and Society*, 29.

Exquemelin's book describes eye-witness accounts of the Caribbean buccaneers, Johnson's *General History* book was based on the evidence of pirate trials, newspaper reports and interviews with sailors who had been captured by pirates or came into contact with piracy.⁵¹ Johnson's *General History* provided important context for the pirate narratives incorporated in the book, including brief biographies of their lives and accounts of their deaths, and captivating illustrations. The work refers to either 'rogue' or 'roguery' thirty-five times throughout the work, describing through myriad examples who roguery resembled in the context of piracy for audiences.

From these works, pirates became notorious for acts that were easily popularized for their sensationalism. According to Johnson, Edward Teach (better known as Blackbeard), "being truly the Superior in Roguery," reportedly had fourteen wives, which did not stop him or his crew from stealing the wives and daughters of Carolina planters for sexual favours.⁵² Johnson also describes Henry Every's infamous attack in September 1694 on the *Gunj-i-Suwae*, the largest ship belonging to Aurangzeb (known as the 'Great Mughal'), the ruling monarch of India. Making its way back from its pilgrimage to Mecca, Every and his crew plundered the *Gunj-i-Suwae* of its jewels, gold and silver, recognizing that the "Eastern People travel with the utmost Magnificence, so that they had with them all their Slaves and Attendants."⁵³ Constructing these factual accounts with fictitious elements, Esquemelin and Johnson's works greatly contributed to the outflow of rogue literature with candid descriptions of real events. *A General History* paints a flattering portrait of Bartholomew Roberts' final moments: "[Roberts] at the same Time, resolved, like a gallant Rogue, to get clear, or die" as the HMS *Swallow* gave chase to his flagship.⁵⁴ Johnson's *General History* was notably compiled with attention to accuracy and detail. The author carefully authenticated his material, comparing newspaper stories with one another, regularly interviewing participants in the exploits he chronicled, and examining

⁵¹ Lincoln, *British Pirates and Society*, 28.

⁵² Charles Johnson and Daniel Defoe, *A General History of the Pyrates, from Their First Rise and Settlement in the Island of Providence, to the Present Time. With the Remarkable Actions and Adventures of the Two Female Pyrates Mary Read and Anne Bonny; Contain'd in the Following Chapters ... Chap. I. Of Capt. Avery. II. Of Capt. Martel. III. Of Capt. Teach. ... By Captain Charles Johnson*. The 3rd ed (London: Printed for, and sold by T. Warner, 1725), 75, 77, 93.

⁵³ Johnson, *A General History*, 51.

⁵⁴ Johnson, *A General History*, 270.

indictment and trial records to make his accounts as close to the truth as possible, despite the occasional inclusion of a fictional buccaneer or manufactured background data.⁵⁵

Evidently, many other examples of pirates being perceived as rogue subjects by contemporaries exist. At his second appearance before the House to plead his case in London, William Kidd was called “a fool as well as a rogue” by Tory partisan, Sir Edward Seymour.⁵⁶ This sort of material fed into the prolific career of Danie Defoe, who wrote widely on rogue literature that held reoccurring themes of piracy. Published in 1720, Daniel Defoe published *The Life, Adventures and Piracies of the Famous Captain Singleton* based on the exploits of Henry Every. The book’s main character, Bob Singleton, refers to his own crewmembers as ‘poor Rogues’ that wasted their loot on ‘Brandy, Whores and Riot.’⁵⁷ Some of Defoe’s most acclaimed works of fiction were published contemporaneously with the *General History*,⁵⁸ clearly illustrating a heightened historical, cultural, and literary moment for piracy. Governor Bennet of Bermuda took note of this in 1717, expressing to the Board of Trade that “North and South America are infested with those rogues but the Bahama Islands are their rendezvous and by a modest computation it’s concluded that at least 1000 [are] distributed in ships, brigantines and sloops.”⁵⁹ Indeed, according to Johnson, Nassau on New Providence was a “Colony of Rogues” before Woodes Rogers’ appointment as governor in January 1718.⁶⁰ By the time Defoe published *A New Voyage Round the World* in 1725, the problem of piracy was ostensibly diminishing, noting how the “little Common Wealth of Robbers” was being reduced to a “Gang of desperate Rogues.”⁶¹ But even while real rogues of the high seas were being hunted, caught, and executed,

⁵⁵ B.R. Burg, *Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition: English Sea Rovers in the Seventeenth-Century Caribbean* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), 245.

⁵⁶ Robert C. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 205.

⁵⁷ Lincoln, *British Pirates and Society*, 211-12.

⁵⁸ Some scholars believe ‘Captain Charles Johnson’ to be a pseudonym for Daniel Defoe who wrote widely on crime produced many acclaimed works, including *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *The Life, Adventures and Piracies of the Famous Captain Singleton* (1720), and *Moll Flanders* (1722). Defoe purportedly wrote *Robinson Crusoe* from first-hand reports about Alexander Selkirk, the Scottish privateer famously marooned for four years on an uninhabited island now known as San Juan Bautista off the coast of Chile. Defoe portrayed his protagonist as a self-reliant, decent and resourceful man—an icon of the European colonializing mindset. Lincoln, *British Pirates and Society*, 219.

⁵⁹ Lt. Governor Bennett to the Board of Trade, July 30, 1717, C.S.P., Colonial Series, 1717-1718, n.677.

⁶⁰ Johnson, *A General History*, 141.

⁶¹ Appleby, *Women and English Piracy*, 37.

the trope of the swashbuckling rogue endured. Once a sailor turned to piracy, his reputation as a 'hearty Rogue' branded him in print if not also in life.

Conclusion:

The image we have today of the swashbuckling pirate-rogue was first introduced in early modern English crime writing. It began in Tudor times as the mobile poor poured into London seeking refuge, relief, and recovery from economic losses. Often met with contempt, this demographic was perceived by local authorities as a threat to the body politic due to their perceived idleness, raising fears that complacency would breed social disorder and rampant crime. These poor populations were thus rebranded as rogues, vagrants and vagabonds in a genre which became known as 'rogue literature.' Due to the numerous poor laws in early modern England, many individuals were criminalized for their lack of productivity and sent overseas as unfree labourers in the colonies. A mobile labour force that commonly employed young, single men from poorer backgrounds were the maritime trades. During this period, the transiency of sailing, and the mobility of vagrancy, blurred as sailors became increasingly recognized for their distinctive appearance, mannerisms, speech, employment and lifestyle. In consequence, they were recognized as exhibiting roguish qualities by landed society. Landsmen perceived sailors' apparent rootlessness in port as idleness, which reflected an 'old world' fear that idleness bred immorality, and with it, serious crime. Thus, maritime crime was personified by the mariner who had the predisposition to 'go rogue' based on his mobility, or 'vagrancy,' as a man of the sea. As piracy became popularized through media, legislation and reportage in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, roguery became increasingly affixed to pirates. This is not only clear in the so-called 'pirate histories' of Alexandre Exquemelin and Charles Johnson, but is also expressed in popular novels by Defoe and other contemporary sources. The familiar idea of the swashbuckling or loveable rogue that we know today, often synonymous with piracy, is a product of the early modern mythmaking machine that churned out this 'crime literature' based on real social problems. Like the mobile poor in London in the sixteenth century, authorities affixed roguery to populations perceived to be outside of their control. Throughout the period, this idea was espoused to the transiency of sailors, knowing that while not all sailors were pirates, most pirates were at one time or other sailors that had 'gone rogue.'

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