

Lena Liapi. *Roguary in Print: Crime and Culture in Early Modern London*. Rochester, New York: Boydell Press. 2019. Pp. 194. \$115.00.  
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*Roguary in Print* promises many things. It is firstly a discussion of a subgenre of Elizabethan, Jacobean, and restoration literature, the rogue pamphlet. As such, it contributes to ongoing dialogues within the histories of crime and of the city of London. Secondly, *Roguary* attempts to link the several ways by which scholars have approached rogue literature: the historians, who often dismiss it as ephemeral escapism; the New Historicists, who read it “as an articulation of power and as a site where subversion was generated in order to be contained”; and literary scholars, who argue that rogue literature “depicted an imaginary underworld...sometimes as jovial, sometimes as sinister” and connected that underworld to Shakespeare’s forest fantasies (4). Lastly, it is a contribution to the history of commercial print and the early modern book trade.

The first task of such a broad-ranging text is to define the subject and the sources. “The word ‘rogue’ was used loosely and often derogatorily,” Liapi says, and settles for a functionally-driven definition: rogue “describe[s] various kinds of urban deviant behavior with direct links to small-scale economic crime” (12). Though it serves well enough, the loosely defined term robs the work of some precision. Armed with the definition, Liapi identifies one hundred twenty-two rogue pamphlets from the period 1591 to 1670. The start date coincides with the earliest “peak” of rogue literature; the end date, with the publication of the *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*, which transformed the depiction of urban crime. During this period, dozens of printers and booksellers participated in the trade, which Liapi characterizes as profitable and dependable. Thus, rogue literature followed the general trends in printing, with a healthy growth in pamphleteering from 1562, a florescence in the 1650s, and the gradual reassertion of controls in the restoration period. The guiding motive was profit, and the major expense was the price of paper. Rogue pamphlets were short and sensationalist with little attention paid to authorship. Censorship is outside the scope of the text, but a majority of the source pamphlets

were published anonymously.

Perhaps the strongest section of *Roguary in Print* is Chapter Two: "Laughter, Tricksters and Good Fellows," which offers a corrective to an older academic tradition. In the 1980s, Liapi says rogue tracts, "were usually viewed as part of an 'othering' process through which the elites attempted to marginalise and stigmatise the mass of [the] poor and unemployed" (52). By depicting the rogue as a trickster and endowing the rogue with the qualities of a good companion, the rogue pamphlet was not involved in "othering, but [in] a figurative inclusion of the criminal in urban society" (55). Rogues were thieves, but their thievery was often directed against those even less deserving. Rogues were outlaws, but the corrupt officers of law enforcement were guilty of bribery and blackmail. Rogues might be grasping, but a citizen lending money at interest was more deserving of punishment than a "poor theefe" (71). Though they might be untrustworthy, a rogue worthy of the name could be trusted to stand around and drink deeply in good fellowship. Rogue pamphlets, far from "othering," attest to a common urban culture, offering an "affirmation of values" shared by their readership (86).

Elizabethan and Jacobean magistrates were concerned with crime and imagined, not without cause, an organized network of crime operating in the metropolis. Historians of crime, however, have shown that the pamphlet press, given its tendency toward sensationalism, "grossly exaggerated" the extent of a criminal underworld. In Chapter Three: "Trust Sociability and Criminal Networks," Liapi juxtaposes a traditional body of sources, the Westminster Quarter Session Rolls, with the relevant rogue literature to conclude, "that the existence of organized networks of crime depended on the eye of the beholder." The simple distinction, "that rogue pamphlets depict an organized underworld whereas archival evidence show that this was not the case" must be qualified "by considering the multivocal nature of both kinds of records" (116). What begins as a challenge to an existing verity then ends with a non-conclusion.

In the 1640s, a rising tide of political pamphleteering seemed to crowd out much rogue literature. Liapi reports only three new titles for the entire decade. Starved for rogues, she is forced to engage with slightly different material: newsbooks, anonymous pamphlets,

and a rich vein of historiography on the pamphlet press in general and roguery in particular. From 1642–1649 a London-centered and Parliamentary-leaning press associated robbery and lawlessness with royalism. That association endured even as the disorder of the 1640s receded. At the same time, rogue literature came roaring back. In 1651, nine new rogue titles emerged to be followed by seventeen more in the next decade. Royalists embraced their identification with illegality in the context of an illegal regime: “Most of the pamphlets about criminals as Royalists” in the 1650s “were written as polemic against the Commonwealth” (124). A new type of urban criminal emerged, the hector, long-haired libertines who frequented prostitutes, drank freely, and dueled inveterately. Given their lifestyle, they were a pointed inversion of the upright roundhead. The “hector (with its connotations of bravery, criminality, and merry defiance) became a synonym for Cavaliers” (140). After his restoration, Charles II explicitly rejected the “drinking, roaring and cursing” that his rowdy urban supporters engaged in, but “the image of the hector and the Cavalier [had] coalesced” and could not be disentangled (153).

The new rogue literature carried on the patterns of earlier tracts. There remained the ambiguity of the rogue as a criminal but also as “the quintessential good fellow,” there remained the victims who deserved their fate (155). There was also, however, the ongoing “politicization of rogue pamphlets” (156). In the 1660s, the hectors drank and swore in opposition to puritanical abstinence. In the 1670s, rogues were utilized to condemn the “informers of the Popish Plot and by consequence the Whigs who had tried to benefit from it.” Then, in the 1680s, rogue pamphlets were yoked to the Tory cause, supporting the Stuart succession. The text concludes with the obligatory call for more research, more specifically an examination of how these urban crime tales “were received by provincial readers” and an examination of the interconnections between “the different traditions of rogue pamphlets” (163).