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The Depiction of Chicago Gangster Era in American Filmography

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Zásady pro vypracování

Na začátku 20. století došlo v Chicagu vinou rapidního nárůstu populace k rozšíření sociálně patologických jevů, především pak organizované trestné činnosti. Město je díky tomu známo obzvláště kvůli působení mafie, která mezi své řady lákala ty, jimž se nepovedlo dosáhnout tzv. amerického snu. Toto gangsterské období se následně stalo předlohou pro mnoho filmů.

Úvod práce se zaměří zejména na americké hodnoty a na to, do jaké míry se ideály, jakými jsou ?self-made-man? nebo ?americký sen? podepsaly na změnách, kterými Chicago na začátku 20. století prošlo. Pro sledování této transformace jsou důležité zejména zjištění tzv. Chicagské školy a dalších sociálních kritiků, zabývajících se vývojem města.

Hlavní částí práce bude analýza filmografie, tedy těch snímků, které zobrazují organizovaný zločin na pozadí Chicaga v prvních dekádách 20. století. Tato analýza se bude soustředit na to, do jaké míry dochází k reflexi dřívějšího zjištění a na to, jak se filmový pohled na mafii a její význam pro zklamanou společnost změnil v průběhu několika desetiletí.

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ANOTATION

This thesis discusses the depiction of Chicago gangster era in the selected filmography. First, the paper provides the theoretical background by describing the history of the city and the social problems associated with the changes Chicago experienced at the start of the 20th century. This part also discusses movie history and gangster characters. Secondly, the analysis of the selected movies is divided into three chapters discussing different aspects of the films. At the end, a conclusion on how the movies reflect the real situation in the city and what is the tendency of the film makers towards the depiction of gangsters is made.

KEYWORDS

Chicago, gangsters, sociology, movies, history

NÁZEV

Obraz Chicagské gangsterské éry v americké filmografii

ANOTACE

Tato práce se zabývá obrazem Chicagské gangsterské éry ve vybrané filmografii. Nejprve práce nabízí teoretický základ, ve kterém je popsána historie města a sociální problémy spojené se změnami které Chicago na začátku 20. století pocítilo. Stejná část také pojednává o filmové historii a postavách gangsterů. Následně je analýza vybraných filmů rozdělena na tři kapitoly, které se zabývají rozdílnými záměry vybraných snímků. Práce je pak uzavřena konstatováním, do jaké míry filmy odrážejí reálnou situaci ve městě a jaká je tendence filmařů vůči zobrazování gangsterů.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Chicago, gangsteři, sociologie, filmy, historie

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INTRODUCTION

Movie gangsters are often being depicted having guns, respect, loads of money, expensive cars, or beautiful women, but there is more behind it. This diploma paper cannot possibly cover the whole topic of gangsters' portrayal in films as there is a huge number of them dealing with the topic. There are black-and-white ones with the story narrated from the perspective of the villain, as well as film noirs with the narrative constructed by Philip Marlowe-like detectives. And that is just the beginning. It could be continued with more modern interpretations starring Mafia bosses who resemble the well-known Don Corleone or other movies which may focus on the contemporary crime. One of the results of the fact the topic is so popular is that it is possible to encounter with film gangsters in different genres or time periods. However, there is one specific era in history and one exceptional city which might be taken as a unifying element – 1920s and 1930s Chicago. To come at a conclusion concerning the depiction of the city, its environment, and different tendencies towards the portrayal of the characters and gangster era representatives is the main ambition and high aspiration of this paper.

The start of this diploma paper will aim on the historical context and it will be attempted to find reasons behind the huge population changes the city of Chicago experienced at the turn of the 19th and 20th century and the consequences it had. The first relatively short chapter deals primarily with the transformation the metropolis underwent following the Great Chicago Fire in 1871. The focus is on the rapid city rebirth, the desperate situation of immigrants, the Great Depression and the chapter also discusses the depiction of the metropolis in American literature. The second chapter of the introductory part then presents *The Chicago School of Sociology* and its conclusions. The group of sociologists is introduced and their findings which were essential for this paper are interpreted. First, the question of delinquency is considered with the aim to find out why misbehavior occurs in a city rather than rural environment and why was the city of Chicago a good laboratory to study the phenomena. The problem of the poor city areas and the destructive influence they had on its inhabitants consisting primarily of immigrant families from Europe is studied with a close attention to the ethnicity of individuals participating in gang activities. There is also an attempted conclusion on what provided them with motivation and to discover why these people differentiated from the rest.

Having set up both historical and social context, it is possible to continue with discussing the gangster era. The era of organized crime in Chicago is introduced with a special attention to the way the organizations worked in order to explain what does the later assumption that the city was rotten stem from. The link between gangsters and public officials including policemen

and politicians is established and this part of the diploma paper also brings a short account of the real historical characters and events which are often being related to the 20s and 30s Chicago “underworld”. The final chapter of the introductory part is then devoted to discussing gangsters and movies. First, the gangster hero is introduced using primarily Robert Warshow’s texts and a basic characteristic is done. Then, it is looked into the history of film making with a special focus on the movies showing violent behavior, crime, and gangsters. The most influential ones are then submitted for a short overview with the chapter trying to outline the history of movies depicting gangsters discussing different tendencies decade after decade.

The second part of the paper is then divided into three chapters in which different aspects of the gangster era depiction are examined. The first discusses Chicago and its image as the city is the crucial element here. It is unifying the movies from the selected filmography with all of them either taking place there or being connected with a certain part of the gangsters’ careers. The attention is devoted mainly to the older films as its makers created more space to show the role of the environment and its influence on characters, but the chapter is not limited only to them. The data secured from the sociologists of the *Chicago School* was also used to show the tendencies towards the depiction of Chicago in more modern movies too. The second chapter covers the ideas of the American Dream and self-made-man. It examines how the film makers considered to use the movies to show that crime and participating in organized crime is not the proper way to achieve them. One of the questions for this section to be answered is how the gangsters are approached. If the films evoke certain sympathies for them or if they are just people the society should get rid of. The last chapter of the paper extends the idea of the previous one because its objective is to discuss the portrayal of the two infamous gangster characters – John Dillinger and Al Capone. Their examples are used to demonstrate the different tendencies of Hollywood movie makers. To heroize or romanticize the characters, on the one hand, and to reprobate them and show them simply evil, on the other.

Overall, the aim of this paper is to provide its readers with a comprehensive view on the remarkable era in Chicago from the perspective of sociologists and other scholars. Its objective is to argue that the movies often contain a social appeal, which may be depicted differently, and that the ideas behind films which can be linked with the city during the gangster era have during the nearly eighty years covered significantly changed.

1. INTRODUCTORY PART

1.1. City of the big shoulders

This paper should be started with a quick overview of Chicago and you cannot discuss its late 19th and 20th century history without starting with the Great Chicago Fire in 1871. In the book by Donald L. Miller on the history of the city, it is claimed that the fire resulted in a destruction of the city center leaving around 90 000 people without their homes and with almost 300 people killed. The glory of a Western metropolis ended up in flames.¹ However, for the city it was also a new beginning, a possibility to recover and to make the place better than it was. Following the fire, the city was undergoing an amazing transformation not only back to its former glory, but to even brighter future. The breathtaking pace of the reconstruction might be illustrated on the following statement from Miller's book. It is claimed that by 1893, only 22 years after the devastating tragedy, Chicago became the busiest and the most modern downtown in the United States, having a cutting-edge architecture and hosting the *World's Columbian Exposition*; "the first of the great cities of the world" as Henry B. Fuller, a famous Chicago novelist put it.² These enormous changes were, of course, spotted by other authors, with, for example, Mark Twain in his well-recognized book *Life on the Mississippi* mentioning:

We struck the home-trail now, and in a few hours were in that astonishing Chicago—a city where they are always rubbing the lamp, and fetching up the genii, and contriving and achieving new impossibilities. It is hopeless for the occasional visitor to try to keep up with Chicago—she outgrows his prophecies faster than he can make them. She is always a novelty; for she is never the Chicago you saw when you passed through the last time.³

Chicago following the reconstruction was, according to Miller, also considered a prime example of then economic and technological achievements. The city's economy was based on industrialism, something which is in the text labeled as a "supreme urban creation".⁴ The city's vitality and mainly spirit during and following the years of reconstruction in the late 19th century contributed to Chicago's extreme attractiveness. The Midwestern city was not only inviting people searching for a better life, but, as it is declared by Miller, it also attracted architects, writers or reformers who wanted to capture and interpret the new experience of a metropolitan life. As a

¹ Donald L. Miller, *City of the Century The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America* (RosettaBooks LLC, 2014), Preface.

² Miller, *City*, Preface.

³ Mark Twain, *Life on Mississippi, Complete*, (Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg), 60, retrieved November 29, 2020, from <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/245>.

⁴ Miller, *City*, Preface.

result, the city found itself, as it is stated by Miller, in the middle of “the greatest achievements and failures of American urban life”.⁵ Chicago was, on the one hand, an exciting newly built city, but on the other hand, it had due to its rapid growth also a darker side being, as it is written in the book, a corrupted and violent place. Miller suggests that the 19th century Chicago might be simply seen as a place engaged in a battle between growth and control.⁶ This battle could be interpreted, in other words, as a fight between progress, which was represented by a number of exciting possibilities with the “elite” individuals and, contrary to this, the lack of organization symbolized by masses of people desperately searching their fortune; a clash of cultures. For some of these people the city might have become a place where their dreams could come true, but there were others who did not manage to incorporate to the new society.⁷ Due to all this, Miller cites Robert Park, who alleges the history of Chicago, must not be freed from the “human nature”. Chicago is, according to him, its product and, at the same time, the inhabitants of the city were shaped by the place.⁸

The previously mentioned industrial face of Chicago was also observed by Andrew J. Diamond who perceives the place as the symbol of the American power worldwide.⁹ The city was attracting the immigration not only from other parts of the USA, but different countries as well resulting in the city having a long tradition of cultural pluralism. This is evident from the presence of more cultures which resulted mainly from the European immigration. In the official account it is stated that at the end of the 19th century, people were coming to the city of Chicago mostly from Ireland, Germany, Poland, or Lithuania. These people then, instead of assimilating, often settled in specific areas of Chicago in which they consequently tried to renew their lives and culture they were used to from their European homelands.¹⁰ The fact the city experienced enormous changes in population may be likewise illustrated on some numbers. John T. Cumbler claims that in 1870, Chicago had just 299 000 inhabitants, 20 years later it was 1 099 800 and in 1900 there were almost 1 700 000 citizens.¹¹ The huge problem with such a mass of people was, according to the website on the immigration to Chicago, in the fact that they were hardly employable. It is claimed most of them were unskilled and non-English speaking that doomed

⁵ Miller, *City*, Preface.

⁶ Miller, *City*, Preface.

⁷ Miller, *City*, Preface.

⁸ Donald L. Miller, *City*, Preface.

⁹ Andrew J. Diamond, *Chicago on the Make: Power and Inequality in a Modern City* (California: University of California Press, 2017), Introduction.

¹⁰ “Chicago,” Immigration to the United States, accessed November 30, 2020, <https://immigrationtotheunitedstates.org/414-chicago.html>.

¹¹ John T. Cumbler, *Northeast and Midwest United States: An Environmental History*, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 139.

them to poorly paid and often even dangerous jobs based on manual labor, usually working in steel mills of meatpacking plants.¹² The bad situation with employment was further complicated by the Great Depression following “Black Tuesday” with one *Chicago Tribune* website article revealing that “during the depths of the Great Depression in the mid-1930s, 16 million people — or one-third of the American workforce at the time — were out of work”.¹³

The impact of the immigration and changes in Chicago in general were so dramatic that they were reflected in American culture and mainly in literature. In the second part of this thesis, it is focused purely on filmography and movies with gangsters, but to enrich this diploma paper with further cultural context, the most influential literary works concerning the city of Chicago and the changes it was undergoing might be now shortly summarized. One of the most famous texts concerning the Midwestern metropolis is surely Upton Sinclair’s novel *The Jungle*, which deals with the poor condition immigrants were experiencing in a meatpacking factory. The main character is Jurgis Rudkus, an immigrant from Lithuania, who believed that the United States would enable him to fulfill his dreams, therefore he moves to Chicago. However, he soon finds out that the work of immigrants is exploited and that there is no chance his American Dream will be fulfilled. The story and tragedy of the main character may be perhaps best illustrated on the following excerpt: “They had dreamed of freedom; of a chance to look about them and learn something; to be decent and clean, to see their child group up to be strong. And now it was all gone—it would never be!”¹⁴ It must not be forgotten, however, that Upton Sinclair’s novel was influenced by the author’s socialistic belief and thus it cannot be taken as a completely objective and relevant source of information. This claim is supported by Brooke Kroeger who maintains that *The Jungle* was written with the aim to push through the socialistic reform to the world of literature using the theme of exploited workers.¹⁵

In contrast to this, the city is seen in a quite positive perspective in *Sister Carrie* written by Theodore Dreiser. The novel tells a story of a young woman who moves to Chicago from a rural environment and who uses the urbanized city to her advantage. Jolie Sheffer from Bowling Green State University in Ohio suggests it shows how the main heroin managed to successfully

¹² Immigration to the United States, “Chicago.”

¹³ “Flashback: A time of deprivation and despair: A look back at the Great Depression in pictures and words,” *Chicago Tribune*, accessed February 24, 2021, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/opinion/commentary/ct-opinion-flashback-stock-market-crash-great-depression-20191101-ximtzyydrhhnd4taiwiffbbe4-story.html>.

¹⁴ Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, (New York: Grosset & Dunlap publishers, 1906), 168.

¹⁵ Brooke Kroeger, *Undercover Reporting: The Truth About Deception*, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2012) 77.

adapt to the new environment, the glittering 19th century metropolis.¹⁶ Finally, this rather short overview of Chicago and its picture in literature may be finished with a poem and Carl Sandburg who presents both of the two opposing points of view. The poet celebrates the city and its great glory, but he also does not avoid social problems. Chicago is in the poem nicknamed as “City of the Big Shoulders”, which could be interpreted in the way it had to cope with the tremendous pressure of being the leading force of the modern USA. The fact that the city had not always fulfilled the expectations is then reflected in another part, in which Chicago is addressed by the following words: “And they tell me you are crooked and I answer: yes, it is true I have seen the gunman kill and go free to kill again.”¹⁷

1.2. Urban sociology

Having introduced the city, it must be said that the gangster era and its picture in movies may be surely discussed from different points of view, but in order to be able to compare the movie picture with the real-life situation in Chicago, to include the social situation in the city and also human interaction with it, urban sociology seems to be the best option. And concerning urban sociology and the Midwestern metropolis, there is no one more qualified than the sociologists of the Chicago School.

1.2.1. Chicago School

In 1926, a journal called “Social Forces” published an article called “The Teaching of Urban Sociology” which starts by this:

One of the most notable and significant development in the United States is the shifting of the people from rural to urban residence. For the sociologist, this situation teems with possibilities of research and investigation. The city has become a vast laboratory of fascinating sociological material inviting the most careful and conscientious exploration.¹⁸

Undoubtedly, such environment as was described in the previous chapter required some reaction of sociologists. It was inevitable cities will become scenes of an increase in occurrence of socially pathological phenomena as there was not only immigration from the rural areas, but,

¹⁶ “Theodore Dreiser’s Sister Carrie and the Urbanization of Chicago,” Digital Public Library of America, accessed December 1, 2020, <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/theodore-dreiser-s-sister-carrie-and-the-urbanization-of-chicago>.

¹⁷ “Chicago,” poets.org, accessed November 30, 2020, <https://poets.org/poem/chicago>.

¹⁸ Harmon O. DeGraff, “The Teaching of Urban Sociology,” *Social Forces* 5, no. 2 (December 1926): 248.

as it was mentioned, from foreign countries as well. It did not last long and the situation was reacted on by a group labelled as *The Chicago School of Sociology*. The sociologists were, as Wayne G. Lutters and Mark S. Ackerman claim it in their article, formed by scholars who took the city of Chicago as a social laboratory. It is mentioned the *School* was formed at the turn of the century and lasted until the late 1950s with its prime and most revolutionary era in the period between the First World War and the end of the Great Depression. With the accelerating trend of population shift to industrial metropolises, cities experienced a huge growth and it is argued that no city was more hit by these changes than Chicago. Thus, the first department of sociology was formed there and by 1892 it had started its activity.¹⁹

The paper further describes that the *Chicago School* was markedly different from then sociology with its members taking interest in topics such as urban decay, crime, race relations or family. Their work could only have its outstanding quality, richness and depth thanks to the methodology chosen – naturalistic observation of urban and social phenomena. They had been examining the “true human nature” in its “natural habitat” and it all led them to their main goal – to grasp why is the city, land, culture, and population an inseparable whole.²⁰

This rather brief introduction of the background and the history of *The Chicago School of Sociology* should not omit at least some of its most prominent members who not only heavily influenced this paper, but the world of sociology as a whole. Lutters and Ackerman claim that the leading member of the group was Robert E. Park who took passionate interest in almost every aspect of city life including race relations or ethnic minorities. He also wrote, together with Ernest W. Burgess, a book called *The City*, which is a valuable source for the following chapters.²¹ Apart from that, he was also one of the editors of the book called *Urban Sociology*. That is a selection of primarily his and Donald J. Bogue’s work in which the most significant findings of the contemporary sociologists are presented. The last author who should definitely not be omitted, as his works is heavily relied on in this part of the diploma paper, is Frederick M. Thrasher. He is in his book called *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* introduced as a professor who taught sociology at the University of Chicago.²²

¹⁹ Wayne G. Lutters and Mark S. Ackerman, “An Introduction to the Chicago School of Sociology” (Interval Research Proprietary, 1996), 2.

²⁰ Lutters and Ackerman, “An Introduction”, 2-4.

²¹ Lutters and Ackerman, “An Introduction”, 3-4.

²² Frederick M. Thrasher, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

1.2.2. Delinquency

To discover and understand what stands behind the city's degeneration, that is symbolized by crime, which was then depicted in different movies, it must continued in the exploration of the situation in Chicago in the first half of the 20th century and discover where did the delinquency which then led to organized crime and the gangster era start.

Robert E. Park in the book *The City* presents two opinions about the start of delinquency. The first is, as he puts forwards, that man is by nature completely unsuitable for life in society. An ordinary human being is according to him weighed down by the demands of the community and after spending most of one's childhood learning what he or she must and must not do, youth is usually characterized by rebellion. It is further stated that in the remainder of one's life, man usually tends to escape from the social order because there was never a complete reconciliation with the system.²³ Moreover, children have their natural impulses which are not in accordance with social situations, Park suggests. Their relation to the community seems to be only a set of "don'ts".²⁴ The second viewpoint on the beginning of delinquency is that it could also be seen as a natural consequence of the bad conditions under which the juveniles were living. To Park, the social environment was similarly determining to the education based on banning. The poor conditions are then in Park's texts associated mainly with the reality that American cities had been full of people who had "fallen out of line in the march of industrial progress and have been scrapped by the industrial organization of which they were once a part."²⁵ These disillusioned people then, according to what Park states, inhabited the areas which may be called "slums". In other words, parts of cities which were characterized by deteriorated houses, poverty, vice and most importantly – crime.²⁶

Urban life and delinquency cannot be separated. Big cities had, according to Robert E. Park, enormously contributed to the increase of vice and criminality as it is argued there were the "disintegrating influences of city life".²⁷ It is further claimed that commercialized vice (i.e., organized crime which will be discussed later in detail) is "indigenous" only to cities, something which would not be possible to happen in a smaller community.²⁸ It is also argued that part of the attractiveness of city life is the opportunity for everyone to find his or her place there. The city environment is a key factor here because urban settlement could be seen as a place which

²³ Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, *The City*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 99-100.

²⁴ Park and Burgess, *The City*, 105.

²⁵ Park and Burgess, *The City*, 109

²⁶ Park and Burgess, *The City*, 109.

²⁷ Park and Burgess, *The City*, 24-25.

²⁸ Park and Burgess, *The City*, 32.

tempts people to break the law as it enables them to financially profit from it; to benefit from being different. It is claimed that while in smaller communities it is a “normal” individual who is the one most likely to become prosperous, cities, in contrast, reward eccentricity. According to Park, the combination of a city and delinquency is also so established, because a criminal has an excellent opportunity to develop his disposition in an urban settlement.²⁹ The mobility of a city life is a major factor, it is stated. Cities with its stimulations attract demoralization and the areas of high mobility are the ones where appears the most deterioration and vice.³⁰

In the article on delinquency research done by Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay, it is stated that the delinquency subculture might be seen as a “complete social system in itself – a self-sustaining society at war with established society – a more or less autonomous social entity and reality.”³¹ In other word, a rebellion against the society. The two authors also describe that delinquency occurs in larger communities and neighborhoods and that there is a continual interaction. Crucial for delinquency and city environment are the boys’ gangs, which Shaw and McKay perceive as a “unique social invention”, as a consequence of urban living.³² The origins of boys’ grouping and crucially ganging is further described as Shaw and McKay remark boys had the tendency to form groups, which are typical products of a life in “disorganized sections of the city as well as in the outlying residential neighborhoods.”³³

In *Urban Sociology*, a book edited by Ernest W. Burgess and Donald J. Bogue, there is also a historical point of view, which will take us slightly back. In accordance with the sources used in the first chapter, it is stated that Chicago was hit by an increase in immigration, which was at its highest in the two decades, from 1890 to 1910, after which followed a pause with the United States going to the First World War. The flow of immigrants continued again even after the war, but this time there was a huge change – the ethnic groups had been already established. It is claimed that by this time, the ethnic minorities already had their own churches, schools, stores or restaurants and they had created own little communities within one large community. As a consequence, they had become detached and separated from the majority society. It could be this isolation that caused the prejudices and discrimination, which followed. In the same text, it is moreover stated that in the after-war period, there were anti-Jewish, anti-Polish or, more importantly for this paper, also anti-Italian feelings which resulted in an intense segregation and

²⁹ Park and Burgess, *The City*, 41.

³⁰ Park and Burgess, *The City*, 59.

³¹ Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay, “Delinquency Research of Shaw and McKay and Associates,” in *Urban Sociology*, ed. Ernest W. Burgess and Donald J. Bogue (The University of Chicago Press: First Phoenix Edition (abridged), 1967), 298.

³² Shaw and McKay, “Delinquency,” 299.

³³ Shaw and McKay, “Delinquency,” 298-299.

the children of these immigrants being caught between two worlds. It is further stated that the already mentioned forming of street groups, or gangs, might be seen as one of the consequences, having been rejected from the majority community.³⁴ This claim is also supported by Frederick M. Thrasher who, in the book *The Gang*, suggests that a gang is a symptom, or expression of “disorganization incident to cultural conflict among diverse nations and races gathered together in one place”.³⁵

A similar point of view on delinquency and its connection with cosmopolitan settlement and the historical development of a modern metropolis is presented in the already mentioned book *The City*. As it was foreshadowed, Chicago has likewise other large cities areas which are inhabited by particular ethnic minorities. The people who immigrated into the city usually from Europe shared not only the area, or a community, but some cultural heritage as well. Burgess claims that the fact they had moved and changed their place of living also led to the possibility or even probability of a certain cultural decadence. The disintegration and disharmony resulting from the clashes of cultures might have then developed into immorality, delinquency or in other words – personal and social disorganization. To confirm this, Burgess refers to the statistics which showed that there was a higher number of the juvenile delinquents among children of immigrant parents.³⁶

One opinion of Frederick M. Thrasher was already presented and, in his book, there is more to draw from. His view on delinquency and city life does not vary as it is claimed that the gang in Chicago is primarily a phenomenon of the poorer immigrant community. Based on the data secured, more than third of all Chicago gangs were of mixed nationalities (39,89 %). The second place in this statistic secured Polish gangs as they constituted 16,82 % of the gangs in the city. The third place then belongs to Italians (11,25 %) and the fourth place took Irish gangs (8,52 %).³⁷ Delinquency is, according to what Thrasher claims, so linked with the immigrants simply because parents of the boys had spent most of their lives in rural or semirural Old World where there had been hardly any dangerous distractions. In a sharp contrast to this, their children found themselves in a completely different situation. They had whole Chicago and they were unprepared for such a life with all its possibilities and influences. Thrasher also argues that the neighborhoods provided a boy from an immigrant family with a broad range of contacts which

³⁴ Ernest W. Burgess and Donald J. Bogue, “Research in Urban Society: A long View,” in *Urban Sociology*, ed. Ernest W. Burgess and Donald J. Bogue, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 4-5.

³⁵ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 220.

³⁶ Park and Burgess, *The City*, 150.

³⁷ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 191-192.

had demoralizing effects on him.³⁸ The boys of immigrant families were not only affected by living in a partial segregation, but by the social situation in their urban areas as well. In another part, Thrasher further mentions that these regions were interstitial to the more settled, stable, and better organized parts of the city, that there was a large gap. Gangs were appearing in the regions defined by deteriorating neighborhoods, disorganization or shifting populations – areas often labeled “the poverty belt”. These places were isolated from the rest, from the wider culture and community and it was Thrasher who observed that “the gang develops as one manifestation of the economic, moral, and cultural frontier which marks the interstice.”³⁹

Before continuing, it may be appropriate to reveal why it seems like everyone is blaming the European immigration. It needs to be said that as much as ganging so far seems to be almost synonymous with the boys from immigrant families, they were definitely not alone in founding gangs. Apart from the already mentioned children of European origin, there were also African-Americans. Despite the fact that they were, based on the Thrasher’s statistic, represented only by 7,16 % in the total number of gangs mapped in Chicago, some sociologists paid them extra attention.⁴⁰ One of them was E. Franklin Frazier who wrote an article called “The Negro Family in Chicago”, in which he states the city, due to the opportunities for an employment in industry, attracted mainly men populating primarily the deteriorated areas close to the city center.⁴¹ Park further describes that the reason for the African-American migration to the north was that they, similarly to European immigrants, perceived their movement as a way to new economic and cultural opportunities. It is, however, alleged that their migration, similarly to the migration of Europeans, only created a state of disorganization not just in Chicago, but other northern cities and communities as well. Subsequently, a huge amount of delinquency occurred in the areas inhabited by them, as Park claims.⁴²

And this paper still did not touch upon another group which Thrasher calls “native white American boys”. White boys of American origin, according to him, formed gangs just as much as children of European parents (although in the statistic they were represented with just 5,11 %⁴³), but it is added that there was a crucial difference. These boys were usually members of a middle or wealthier class, so they had their lives organized and looked after by the American institutions, customs, and traditions and therefore they did not suffer the previously mentioned

³⁸ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 252.

³⁹ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 23.

⁴⁰ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 191.

⁴¹ Edward Franklin Frazier, “The Negro Family in Chicago,” in *Urban Sociology*, ed. Ernest W. Burgess and Donald J. Bogue, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: First phoenix Edition (abridged), 1967) 226.

⁴² Park and Burgess, *The City*, 108.

⁴³ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 191.

“disorganization”. This might be interpreted in the way “native white American boys” simply managed to avoid getting into more serious troubles. Children of immigrants, on the other hand, as Thrasher states, did not have the same possibilities because they were not able to reach this kind of support to make their lives organized.⁴⁴ Mentioning the organization of one’s life, it is believed by Thrasher, that this was closely related to leisure time activities. The beginnings of gangs were laid in the manner juveniles spent their free time as it was the time left after school, children’s spare time, which was according to the sociologist, the serious problem. It is said the families from underprivileged classes in many cases failed to provide satisfying upbringing of their children as it is mentioned youngsters were in a number of cases neglected, misdirected, or suppressed. Thrasher even argues that for such a boy having too much free time, living in a highly crowded area or even a slum, he was almost destined to become a gang member as it is additionally believed that a gang is to a certain extent a substitution for the activities and control not provided elsewhere. Additionally, the idea is put forward that once a boy had experienced the exciting street life, other activities became unattractive.⁴⁵

Ganging, on the other hands, was attractive. At the young age, as Thrasher mentions, it started with a “romantic” factor. According to him, boys were able to transform the otherwise unsatisfying environment using their imagination. They were bandits whose enemies were the neighborhood policemen or a rival gang. They were also in a strong opposition to the society, in which the respected people should be “good”, someone on the right side of the law. Children in these deteriorating areas had different heroes, namely notorious criminals they glorified and, according to Thrasher, also emulated when they become older.⁴⁶ At the young age, the boys, as Thrasher states, yearned for any kind of adventure and their rampages might have even ended up being serious crimes as the author lists an example of one of the adventures which resulted in a boy of thirteen killing his “enemy”, a boy of twelve.⁴⁷

Talking about the attractiveness of ganging, there are more elements making it so charming to the young boys. It was for instance the possibility to satisfy their desire to be recognized; to acquire some status. Thrasher suggests that the gangs gave the underprivileged boys the best chance to become respected; to stop feeling as the lowest of the low. It is claimed that to be a member of such a group was essential to the boys and to participate in its activities was of a key importance to them. Being partly rejected from the majority society, it is not surprising they

⁴⁴ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 217.

⁴⁵ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 79.

⁴⁶ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 116-118.

⁴⁷ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 131.

wanted to fulfil their desire to be recognized at least in a smaller group. In the text, it is further alleged that these boys were not interested in the status they were enjoying in other social groups as they were living only for the gang, which was their own social world. It was then the boys' effort to improve their role within this social group (gang), which encouraged them to vandalize and to do other criminal activities.⁴⁸ To be a member of the gang provided the boys, as believed in the book, with a more adequate satisfaction of their wishes and dreams than they could have achieved as individuals. Thrasher further suggests being a part of the gang ensured its members with excitement and fellowship. Few years later, with boys getting older, the main motivation changed. For adolescents, the reason to be in a gang was mainly economic for the simple reason that they wanted to financially profit from the criminal activities. With the possibility to get some money, the priority changed. The romantic element that was described earlier in the text had gradually faded out with the prime motive now being the vision of possible easy earnings from a commercialization of their criminal activities.⁴⁹

It might seem premature to associate boys' gangs with serious offenses and organized crime and consequently its depiction in the American filmography, but there is, as stated in the sources, a clear connection. Based on the findings which were presented by Thrasher, origins of some gangs participating in organized crimes activities such as rum-running or bootlegging may be traced back to the young boys' and their grouping. Moreover, it is claimed it is difficult or yet impossible to draw a clear borderline between adolescent and adult gangs.⁵⁰ The situation is also further complicated since it is explained numerous gangs had both adolescents and adult members. As a consequence, there must have been a high rate of mutual influencing, and joined activities surely as well.⁵¹ It is even suggested that the only distinction between children's and adult gangs might be done is in the fact that younger boys preferred less risky activities, while the older boys took part in more serious crimes such as assaults with weapons or hugely popular prohibition violations.⁵²

Further remarks on the interconnection between boys' gangs and criminal gangs might be added by Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay. It is claimed that it is not only about the fact gangs had both adolescent and adult members; they were under the negative influence even earlier. The reason is children and adolescents came into contact with deviant adults in the areas of low economic status and from what they saw, they made the assumption that crime paid off.

⁴⁸ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 331-332.

⁴⁹ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 419-422.

⁵⁰ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 367-368.

⁵¹ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 409.

⁵² Thrasher, *The Gang*, 412-413.

Gangsters participating in organized crime were wearing expensive clothes and driving luxury cars, with the source of the wealth being illegal activities. The presence of a large number of criminals in the area then meant the children were in a direct contact with the people who chose a criminal career over the law-abiding one and consequently, the kids made a wrong assumption of how the world works. Moreover, the mutual contact of these boys with the older criminals resulted in, as the authors conclude, creating a tradition; delinquency was being passed on. The “art of stealing”, techniques of Jack-rolling, shoplifting or automobiles stealing were all well-developed and passed from one generation to the next.⁵³

An interesting insight into the life of a gang member could be the 1938 study of the lives of five delinquent brothers mentioned in the same article by Shaw and McKay. Not only it does repeat some of the crucial points, but this study will also prove the link between boys’ gangs and serious crimes. It is stated that the reasons behind their delinquency laid in the childhood and their home situation. The criminal offenses should be, according to the authors, perceived as a consequence of the social world they were living in and also their desire and will to reach human satisfaction in an otherwise desperate situation. The same study, according to the article by Shaw and McKay, further showed the brothers were never fully aware of the consequences following their offences and they simply started stealing as it was a type of activity which was not only commonly done in their group, but also accepted. The fact that there is a wider society which had its standards which were at odds with what they were living in came to their attention only after being brought to a court.⁵⁴

It is further claimed that the brothers were coming from the community of great physical deterioration and the low economic status of the area partly formed them. The residents of the community did not serve as perfect examples as most were, according to the source, unskilled laborers who had low-paying jobs which did not provide them financial security and stability. It is stated that even during the times of “prosperity” there was no living the high lives in these communities and the period of depression made them to rely on charity help. Children in those areas then simply followed in their footsteps and accepted any employment they could obtain no matter if they wanted to pursue a different career. At the same time, they came into contact with the standards of living in other areas, the level they simply were not able to achieve. This experience then played the key role in making them determined to obtain the same standard of

⁵³ Shaw and McKay, “Delinquency,” 314.

⁵⁴ Shaw and McKay, “Delinquency,” 306-308.

living, no matter how. Crime and the rackets, as the authors put it, often offered them the only possibility to secure a sufficient income.⁵⁵ The only way to pursue their American Dream.

For the story and example of the brothers, another point is important. It is mentioned in the article that they could be confused on account of the wide diversity of population consisting of a significant number of different nationalities. These national groups differed in behavior, standards, expectations, or most importantly moral values. The upbringing of children was then affected by the different influences and patterns of behavior which resulted in the previously mentioned disparity in the philosophy of life between European-born parents and their children who were born and only knew the American environment. It is also claimed most adults in their community accepted delinquency with a tacit approval and tolerated it. Shaw and McKay hence agree and give evidence for the opinion that delinquency may be seen as an integral part of the pattern of life in the communities, as a social tradition.⁵⁶

Delinquency was simply a part of the culture in the area where the brothers grew up and their path is indifferent to the typical frame described by Thrasher. Becoming members of boys' gang, they engaged in minor crimes and eventually came into contact with adult criminals who introduced them to the world of major crime. What is more interesting is the example mentioned further in the text. One of the brothers was given a job in a bank, but it is claimed that no matter he tried hard, he was not able to succeed because other workers mocked his language, manners, or clothes, so he rather returned back among his old companions in crime. The rejection of the wider society may thus be seen not only in the connection with the lack of institutions providing life of the boys in the slum areas "organized", but also in closing the majority society to those who wanted to adapt. The start was the same for each of the brothers – they suffered due to the environment they were born to. They were not set the right moral values by the poverty-stricken immigrant family and later, they were influenced by the tradition of boys' gangs and criminal activity in the area. No matter how hard they tried, they did not make it to be accepted by the wider society. Even though they were given the possibility to live a life of a law-abiding citizen, the temptations of an adventure and easy money logically prevailed. It is further alleged that the brothers were not exceptional cases and hence they should not be considered differently to common people as it is claimed "they are to be looked upon as normal persons who had the misfortune of adjusting themselves to a weaker part of the community."⁵⁷ If they had the chance

⁵⁵ Shaw and McKay, "Delinquency," 306-307.

⁵⁶ Shaw and McKay, "Delinquency," 307.

⁵⁷ Shaw and McKay, "Delinquency," 308.

to live somewhere else, being far away from the disruptive influences of the neighborhood and community, they would be, according to the text, able to become “well-adjusted persons”.⁵⁸

To look at delinquency once again, this time from a historical point of view, it is claimed that to be a criminal was considered to be rotten naturally, the badness was ascribed to the devil. Consequently, criminals were treated as being a distinct class, as people who differed from the rest of the society. The problem yet proved to be different. It is declared by Shaw and McKay that a high number of inmates in prisons were diagnosed as pathological personalities, i.e., not being able to adapt, instead of being abnormal or weak-minded as it had been believed earlier.⁵⁹ Park, who was paraphrased at the start of this subchapter, was therefore right in claiming that by nature, humans are unsuitable for living in a society. Yet the even bigger problem does not seem to be the society, in the sense that there is a large amount of people at the same place with rules, but its failure to provide resistance to the development of the juvenile delinquents into serious criminals participating in organized crime.

1.2.3. Gangsters

The previously discussed boys’ gangs had, as Thrasher claims, an essential role in grouping and organizing criminal activities.⁶⁰ But before moving to its description, the phrase “gangster era” which appears in the title of this thesis and also numerous times throughout its text should be commented on. “Gangster era” is not some precisely defined term with a clear time frame and attributes. In connection with the city of Chicago it was used for example in an article written by Sabrina Wu, but it is not clear what period exactly she refers to.⁶¹ The term “gangster era” is as well used in the title of William Elliott Hazelgrove’s book called *Al Capone and the 1933 World's Fair: The End of the Gangster Era in Chicago*. Here, the name does not only serve as another example of the phrase use, but it also hints on what might be considered as the end of the period – the year 1933. The same year has put the 18th amendment to its end. And if it could be agreed that the end of the prohibition also resulted in the end of the gangster era, then the year when the amendment became effective, 1920, can also be, at least for the purposes of this thesis, considered as its start.⁶² The term “gangster era” is therefore, at least in this paper, used interchangeably with the more popular one – the “Prohibition era”.

⁵⁸ Shaw and McKay, “Delinquency,” 307-308.

⁵⁹ Shaw and McKay, “Delinquency,” 308.

⁶⁰ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 423.

⁶¹ “Chicago: How the Gangster Era Shaped the City,” Great American Country, accessed November 23, 2020, <https://www.greatamericancountry.com/places/local-life/chicago-how-the-gangster-era-shaped-the-city>.

⁶² Jeffrey A. Miron and Jeffrey Zwiebel, “Alcohol Consumption During Prohibition,” *The American Economic Review* 81, no. 2 (May 1991): 242.

With the term defined, it might be looked at the organized crime in the Midwestern city. From today's point of view and with all the gangster movies, it could seem like the idea of the Chicago gangster era and murderous 1920s and 1930s is something created later with the aim to underscore the epoch and exploit its events. Yet the impression of a crime wave, or a gangster era, was in fact formed back then. Thrasher suggests the reasons for the situation to be perceived seriously even by then society were numerous. Firstly, there was an alliance between gangs and politics which may have aroused the feeling that gangs are hugely powerful groups which were above the law. Secondly, the survey cited in the Thrasher's book, done with selected members of a gang, showed they understood their illegal activities as an "industry".⁶³ It implies that the recognition of criminals had changed hugely and to be a gangster equaled to have a job. If the gangsters themselves did not believe that they were outcasts, it must have surely influenced the public opinion as well and it led to a certain "normalization" of crime. Thirdly, it may be looked into statistics as there was a higher number of eye-catching crimes. To give an example from the early years of the gangster era, in 1924, a bank in Chicago was raided every seven weeks. A very similar situation also developed for the US mails as they presented another possibility to get capital. Most importantly, however, not all the harm caused by gangs could be quantified in the money stolen as Thrasher mentions the large number of murders resulting from gang activities in Chicago. According to the statistics in the same book, in 1920, more than 36 % of people killed in Chicago were murdered when resisting burglaries and holdups. The numbers were alarming concerning police officers too, as during the gangster era, they were killed in such enormous numbers that in average, each week one policeman was killed.⁶⁴

Killing among gangsters and gang wars certainly deserve its own paragraph as it is also an extremely popular motif used in movies. According to the estimates which Thrasher cites, there were 115 people killed in gang wars in the first ten months of 1926. The numbers are even worse if taken into account that it was no coincidence there was a wrong identification of the target, or there were innocent bystanders who were killed altogether with the enemy gangsters. The same book also brings contemporary accounts of the events from *Chicago Daily News*, in which it is stated that the city had found itself in medieval conditions with robbers intimidating inhabitants of the city and representatives of law being unable to fight the problem.⁶⁵

⁶³ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 424.

⁶⁴ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 426-429.

⁶⁵ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 429-430.

The attention of the papers was crucial in creating the impression that Chicago had been the “crime center of the United States” or even “murder capital of the world”.⁶⁶ If looking only on statistics, presented by Thrasher, you will find out that the crime situation in Chicago had been in fact improving since 1875. However, the reasons why it is the start of the 20th century which provoked a strong response of newspapers are two. First, there were new journalistic techniques which enabled making the impact of the events more dramatic. Second and the more important reason is that although there was no increase in crimes in general, there was a higher number of spectacular crimes as mentioned in the previous paragraphs. The bank robberies and gang wars were the ones desired by the readers of the Chicago newspapers.⁶⁷

To have a more detailed account of the gangs and the way they worked, it could be again looked into Thrasher. He claims that the most successful and permanent type of a gang consisted of young men. These, as Thrasher calls it, “master gangs” had grown out of small beginnings, an example being “The Valley gang”. The members of this gang were often appearing at the front pages of Chicago papers as they were enjoying the wealth which came together with the Prohibition. They entered into the rum-running business, continued with controlling a number of breweries and, according to the author, the leaders ended up having earned millions. This real-life example also shows the previously mentioned link between gangsters and people at the good side of the law as it is mentioned they could have afforded the best lawyers to defend their interests. It may be also seen, on their example, that the main interest of the 20s and 30s gangs was to make money in manufacture and sale of liquors.⁶⁸

But that does not mean gangs abandoned other activities, as Thrasher mentions that they were not averse to the previously mentioned robberies with some of them, for instance, being able to find a fortune in gambling. Different gangs specialized on different fields of crime with Thrasher claiming that they had its specializations based on the technique they had developed having acquired some special knowledge and experience. The fields of actions then involved pickpockets or burglars who specialized on certain stores or jewels. And not all crimes were happening on streets. Some criminal activities required an elaborate preparation as, according to the text, there was, for example, a number of gangs specializing on kidnapping, blackmailing, counterfeiting, or smuggling. Some gangs were also able to switch between more activities, but for most of them the goal was to find some that was profitable and at the same time not highly

⁶⁶ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 448.

⁶⁷ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 448-450.

⁶⁸ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 433-434.

hazardous.⁶⁹ That exactly was the business opportunity provided by the 18th amendment. It is declared in *The Gang* that this activity was more profitable and less dangerous than for example robberies. The liquor syndicates which came into existence as a consequence of the Prohibition, then, according to Thrasher, became complete organizations which had enough political power and influence to control the law representatives. Not only that, it is also stated that those who were in charge of law enforcement often became regular customers, they demanded alcohol as well, so even the public officials profited from the work of gangs. This relationship then resulted in paralyzing the city of Chicago and the previously mentioned inability to fight the problem.⁷⁰

Other important remarks on the interconnection may be added by John Landesco. In his article, he cites further statistics which show that there was also more violence as a consequence of the Prohibition. In his text, it is claimed there were, for example, 29 people killed just in the fight over the monopoly of the beer racket in the first four months of 1926. But a more important piece of information for this part of the paper is on the political influence the gangsters had. Despite the large number of people killed in gang wars, as the real peak of the gangster era is considered, according to Landesco, the year 1927 with a young assistant state's attorney found death in highly suspicious circumstances in a company of notorious gangsters. According to the text, it was never definitely established what were the conditions under which it happened and the offender had never been arrested. Still, the connection between a public official and the "underworld" was dramatic enough to arouse a huge public disdain with Chicago inhabitants demanding a reform. It is also claimed Chicago newspapers did not only refer about the events, but they were, *Tribune* especially, the leading force calling for a change. The attention of public directed towards the investigation, as Landesco mentions, with detailed the newspaper accounts serving as the best source of information.⁷¹

Similarly to the previous chapter with the story of the brothers and their delinquency, organized crime may be illustrated on the story of John Torrio. He is the main representative of the early years of the gangster era as he is in the article by Landesco, titled as the "Chicago's beer king".⁷² His strength was not only that he was able to supply almost the whole metropolis; customers even paid him for "protection", something infamously known from gangster movies. It can also be a matter of interest that his partner was the notorious Al Capone, who later arose into arguably the most famous gangster of all times. But the focus is now on Torrio, who was

⁶⁹ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 434-436.

⁷⁰ Thrasher, *The Gang*, 439-440.

⁷¹ John Landesco, "Organized Crime in Chicago," in *Urban Sociology*, ed. Ernest W. Burgess and Donald J. Bogue, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: First phoenix Edition (abridged), 1967), 275-276.

⁷² Landesco, "Organized," 279.

crucial for the development of boot-legging into a criminal business enterprise as he, according to the author of the article, came with a set of rules which enabled not only him, but also his successors to build and run a strong enterprise. It was John Torrio's beer business that hugely benefited from having good relations with everyone. His relationship with city administrators (which further undermined the already fragile trust in public officials) gave him protection from the police, but Torrio also benefited, as Landesco describes, from the ability to ensure protection of his fellow gangsters. He became almost immune to any kind of punishment as he ensured an agreement with other gangsters about the distribution of the territory to avoid the gang wars. Another important aspect which helped not only Torrio, but other bosses to run the organization successfully was also establishing a group of criminals which specialized on different activities such as assassinations or thievery. The organizations even had its doctors and lawyers.⁷³

Although Torrio had his set of rules, nothing lasts forever and Landesco states that later there appeared the administration of Mayor Dever which took steps in enforcing the law and started a war against bootlegging. The status quo which had been the gangs enjoying until then was changed. The approach adopted by the new administration not only resulted in the end of Torrio's empire, but it also ignited the gang wars. It is declared that in the three years between 1923 and 1926 there were, according to Landesco's statistics, about 215 gangsters murdered by the hands of other criminals. In the same period of time, the police killed a supposed number of another 160 gangsters. It was the same time Al Capone, who was already mentioned in the previous paragraph, emerged as the new leader of the Chicago "underworld". He, similarly to Torrio, entered in the agreement made among gangs about the division of the territory which helped to establish years of a relatively peaceful situation.⁷⁴ Due to the fact the books used as sources for this paper were being written mainly during, or soon after the end of the gangster era, they lack some kind of summary or a look in hindsight. To have this paper complete, it may be added that as the end of the gangster era might be apart from the already suggested end of prohibition considered also the end of Al Capone's rule, who was in 1931 found guilty and sent to 11 years in federal prison for tax evasion and prohibition charges.⁷⁵

It was already mentioned that to be a gangster meant to acquire a great status. Landesco paid attention to the origins of ganging and agrees with the previously mentioned authors that a gangster could build on the criminal tradition which was in his neighborhood usually deep-rooted. These neighborhoods were commonly, as it was shown in the earlier part of this thesis,

⁷³ Landesco, "Organized," 279-280.

⁷⁴ Landesco, "Organized," 280-281.

⁷⁵ "Al Capone," FBI, accessed January 11, 2021, <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/al-capone>.

inhabited by immigrant families, and afflicted by vandalism, delinquency, and brutality with the attitude towards the law and its enforcers being “copper hating”. Children living there then, according to Landesco, saw older men who achieved success even though they had the same difficult starting position, i.e., being descendants of a poor immigrant family living in a run-down neighborhood. Landesco states that these men were the people who set them the example. They could, unlike their parents, afford to visit gambling houses, pay for expensive clothing and they were good-natured and sophisticated. They represented, as Landesco puts it in his text, the “nouveau riche of the underworld”.⁷⁶ A gangster, according to Landesco, grew up in an environment where the world is a place in which everyone runs or participates in some kind of illegal activity. Not only that they believed that almost everything can be “fixed” for the right amount of money, they also thought there was nothing keeping them from pushing back the boundaries.⁷⁷ Crime, as Empey suggests, was the way to achieve “the American success ideal” and to become respected.⁷⁸ The majority society was too hostile against these people living in deteriorating neighborhoods and did not enable them to earn the appreciation, to fulfill their American Dream. The result was that crime presented them the only possibility to go because they could take what they wanted.

When deciding for a career path, a gangster could also weight the alternative – to find a legitimate job. He could work long hours for only low wages (not being able to get a good job), or he might prefer to earn relatively “easy money” and to enjoy the “good time” of a beer runner. There were obviously some risks to start with: they could be caught or killed by the police or another gang. On the flip side, apart from the huge advantage of making incredible amounts of money easier way than going to nine-to-five jobs, gangsters had also, according to Landesco, considerable respect. They were admired for their power, courage, or skills. At the same time, it is, as Landesco puts it, an evidence of the lack of moral values in the society if people ever felt (or still feel) such admiration. Yet, it would be fair to say that gangsters were able to defend themselves quite well. It is claimed that when asked, a gangster was advocating himself stating that everyone had a “racket”, even policemen, their traditional enemies. Their approach to law enforcers was quite pragmatic as they were, according to the author of the article, perceived as the beneficiaries of gangsters’ earnings. They thought the situation with the police is simple: it only required to give up some of their income in behalf of them to avoid problems. They were

⁷⁶ Landesco, “Organized,” 289.

⁷⁷ Landesco, “Organized,” 288-289.

⁷⁸ Lamar T. Empey, “Delinquency Theory and Recent Research,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 4, no. 1 (January 1967): 38.

helping each other. Similarly, it is stated that politicians used gangsters when they needed, as Landesco puts it, “political pull”, as they were entrusting them with, for example, intimidation of their political opponents.⁷⁹

Concerning gangsters’ defense of their lives and careers and their approach towards the public officials, it is stated that they also felt some kind of superiority. According to “Organized Crime in Chicago”, the attitude of the underworld was best expressed by Al Capone in one of his interviews:

There is one thing worse than a crook and this is a crooked man in a big political job – a man that pretends he is enforcing law and is really taking dough out of somebody breaking it. Even a self-respecting “hood” hasn’t any use for that kind of a fellow. He buys them like he would any other article necessary in his trade, but he hates them in his heart.⁸⁰

Contrary to the believes of honorable citizens gangsters were not filled with remorse as Landesco found out during his four-year time of encountering with Chicago criminals that there was very little or no bad conscience. The problem for gangsters was not to commit crimes, but to be caught and the only regrets came with the danger of prosecution. According to Landesco, it was only in the moment there was no longer any hope to avoid the punishment when self-appraisal and misery came. Gangsters, it is suggested, were not sorry for the original crime, but rather for being mistaken and having to pay the price. This sorrow might have been, as Landesco believes, deepened if there was betrayal. To betray a comrade was the only crime for which a gangster could have felt genuine remorse as it was against unwritten rules of the underworld. Taking into account it is against gangsters’ nature to be racked with guilt, it was an extremely difficult task to make them believe that crime did not “pay off” and force them to lead a moral life or return to be well-behaved citizens after being sentenced to a prison.⁸¹

It is stated that ex-convicts could succeed in following a law-abiding life, but it was only seldom without troubles. Working hard for a poor pay might have been extremely painful if the gangster was seeing his former friends continuing successfully in crime activities, making “easy money”. It is even worse, when it was almost impossible to find a well-paid job reason number one being obviously the former association with crime. The reason number two is then the lack of training. The third reason mentioned was, as Landesco puts it, the “assistance and kindness” of their old partners in crime. These were the ones who may have provided the former criminals

⁷⁹ Landesco, “Organized,” 288-289.

⁸⁰ Landesco, “Organized,” 289.

⁸¹ Landesco, “Organized,” 290.

with more understanding and human sympathy than any institution. The inevitable consequence of the various temptations is that there was only a low number of ex-convicts who underwent a really successful reformation, leaving their unlawful past behind. Landesco adds that sometimes it was impossible to recover for those who had been sentenced to prison as they rather focused on the number of possibilities crime offered them than the consequences. They perceived the organized society with laws, justice, or courts just as a system of oppression they must bypass.⁸²

To complete the picture of a gangster in an organized crime and to summarize this part Landesco might be paraphrased saying that it is believed not only by the sociologists, but by the gangsters themselves that becoming a criminal was nothing more than a logical consequence of the unfavorable environment and conditions they were part of. Once again, we come back to the American cities and slums, the areas formed with the massive growing of the city at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century and parts which were hit by the massive waves of immigration. The driving ambition of all the people living there was, according to the text, to fly away to a better district of the city. While some families were lucky enough to succeed in their pursuit of the American Dream, to move away, to leave their unsuccessful past (being an unaccepted foreigner), and to transform into being American, gangsters and most importantly their influence on the neighborhood stayed, giving the children an extreme example. Gangsters are the products of this surroundings, Landesco claims, in the same case as respectable citizens are the result of their environment.⁸³

The good citizen has grown up in an atmosphere of obedience to law and of respect for it. The gangster has lived his life in a region of law-breaking, of graft, and of “fixing.” That is the reason why the good citizen and the gangster have never been able to understand each other. They have been reared in two different worlds.⁸⁴

1.3. Gangsters in movies

With the second part of this paper being focused on the picture of the gangster era in movies, it is necessary to provide further context on basis of which the movies will be analyzed. With the films showing mainly violence and crime, the aim of this chapter is to look into the history and check how did the movie shooting and depiction of vice developed over the time.

⁸² Landesco, “Organized,” 290.

⁸³ Landesco, “Organized,” 291.

⁸⁴ Landesco, “Organized,” 291.

1.3.1 The gangster hero

First, it might be looked at Robert Warshow's text called *The Gangster as Tragic Hero*. In the work from 1948, which is available on the website of the Duke University, the author alleges that while the main aim of mass culture is to keep up and maintain public morale, the role of a gangster movie is different. From its beginning it is a "consistent and astonishingly complete presentation of the modern sense of tragedy".⁸⁵ There were efforts, it is stated, to incorporate the genre into what he calls the "prevailing optimism" of the American culture, but these tries ended up unsuccessfully. A gangster film as a genre is, according to the author, successful only until it follows a fixed dramatic pattern and new ideas and originality is welcomed only if it improves the original experience without ruining it.⁸⁶

Apart from the genre introduction, the author mentions the factor of the city. Warshow claims, similarly to the previously mentioned sociologists, that the gangster is inseparable from this environment, but here, it is slightly different. His understanding might be interpreted that there are more perspectives upon a city. The first perspective is that it is not an actual place as Warshow suggests the gangster does not live in the real city. The movie gangster, according to the author, lives in a sad and dangerous place of the imagination, because the outlaws, who the audience watch in cinemas, are, above all, characters of the fantasy. They, as it is further stated, just appear without any information about their background having only the skills making them different from "the real people of the real city".⁸⁷ It is suggested that while real cities produce only criminals, the imaginary ones produce gangsters who are, as it is put in the text, "what we want to be and what we are afraid we may become".⁸⁸ Concerning the second perspective on the city, Warshow agrees with what Robert E. Park claimed. The author of *The Gangster as Tragic Hero* states that the city is in the movies shown as an environment in which one must stand up from the crowd, or he cannot succeed. The whole story of the gangster is then a story of an individual who is different from the rest of the city inhabitants. If the gangster wants to achieve something, he must do so alone. The third perspective the city in gangster movies could be seen in is its anonymity. It is proposed that being alone is often the reason why the movie gangster dies and dying in loneliness is his ultimate failure.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ "The Gangster as Tragic Hero," Duke University, accessed December 2, 2020, <http://people.duke.edu/~dainotto/Texts/gangster.pdf>.

⁸⁶ Duke University, "The Gangster as Tragic Hero."

⁸⁷ Duke University, "The Gangster as Tragic Hero."

⁸⁸ Duke University, "The Gangster as Tragic Hero."

⁸⁹ Duke University, "The Gangster as Tragic Hero."

Another remark made by Warshow is on how the gangster perceives himself and what is his destiny. It is stated that the character tends to speak about himself in the third person as even to himself, he is a product of his imagination, something made up. The fate of the gangster is then, according to Warshow, a kind of punishment for his attempt to achieve success. On his way to it, he tended to improve his life at the expense of others and it is stated that the inevitable failure is “a kind of death and success is evil and dangerous, is-ultimately-impossible”.⁹⁰

Just as importantly the author paid attention to the gangster’s activities through which viewers get to know him, our perception of the character. It is stated that in a film, the gangster often runs a rather remarkable enterprise, but this enterprise has usually an unclear background. The typical source of income of the film gangster is selling of liquor, or a different racket, it is claimed and we, as viewers of the movies, do not usually get to watch different aspects of his life. Hence, his career becomes almost his entire personality. Simultaneously, it is evident that the ultimate goal of the gangster and his, often violent and brutal, behavior is to achieve success, because a typical gangster movie is a story of a criminal who is steadily progressing upwards until there is the precocious fall. The brutality, as claimed by Warshow, is then only a mode to achieve the desirable outcome.⁹¹

The second text by Warshow which should be discussed here is called *Movie chronicle: The Westerner* and was published in the book *Film: An Anthology* edited by Daniel Talbot. The text will provide this thesis with additional remarks on the characters of gangsters as it focuses on two extremely prominent film genres – gangster movie and western, and its main characters. Concerning the gangster, Robert Warshow in this text adds that the fact the character is lonely fascinates the viewers, because he can be perceived as an outsider, which might be captivating. The author claims the gangster appeals to the ones who do not believe in the “normal” way of achieving happiness and success, those who did not accepted the official American culture. The gangster’s loneliness and melancholy are then also the result of him not being able to come to terms with his own nature. It might be said that the gangster lives the life others were not brave enough to do as Warshow claims that the gangster’s death at the end may be also seen as paying for our fantasies and dreams.⁹²

But even though Warshow’s texts provided a background for the later analysis of some gangster characters, it must be remembered that his ideas might be from today’s point of view

⁹⁰ Duke University, “The Gangster as Tragic Hero.”

⁹¹ Duke University, “The Gangster as Tragic Hero.”

⁹² Robert Warshow, “Movie Chronicle: The Westerner,” in *Film: An Anthology*, ed. Daniel Talbot, (University of California, 1972), 149-150.

marked as outdated and his analyses have, according to Steve Neale, its limitations. In his book, *Genre and Hollywood*, it is suggested Warshow's conclusions are general as they are based on three movies of which only two are focused on in detail. At the same time, the studies were, as Neale believes, rather selective. Neale also paid attention to other accounts of gangster films, for example Shadoian's book *Dreams and Dead Ends* which contains further key remarks. It is suggested that both Warshow and Shadoian perceive the film gangster as an urban figure who is also the embodiment of the contradictions of the American Dream. They both agree that the gangster is an outsider and, in accordance with the previously mentioned sociologists, they also suggest that the gangster is a product of the society – the same environment they consequently fight, due to its norms, laws, institutions, and rules.⁹³

1.3.2 Gangster movies

In 2013, a movie called *Gangster squad* arrived at cinemas, but it was not without difficulties. It is referred in an article on *reuters.com* that the premiere of the film was postponed due to 2012 summer killing which happened inside a movie theatre in Aurora, Colorado. The delay, it is declared in the article, was caused by certain movie scenes depicting a similar action having to be reshot. During a press conference, the director of the movie, Ruben Fleischer, opposing the public not approving the depiction of violence in movies said one crucial thing: "There will always be violence in movies. And whether it lends (itself) to the one psychotic that's out there thinking the worst thoughts you can possibly think is always going to be a mystery."⁹⁴ Fleischer was right, violence and movies are closely connected from the start. Back in the year 1895, with cinematography still being in its beginnings, the director Alfred Clark shot a short movie called *The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots*. According to IMDb, the movie lasts just about a minute and the only act it shows is beheading of the former English Queen.⁹⁵ Robert Sklar, who wrote a book on history of American movies, claims that Clark crucially understood what were the advantages of movies – apart from a range of different aspects, it gave viewers access to the historical events. People did not have to only read about it, but to actually watch something dangerous in a complete safety.⁹⁶ This factor is, of course, not only crucial for movies depicting

⁹³ Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), 70.

⁹⁴ "Postponed by U.S. violence, 'Gangster Squad' opening in theaters," REUTERS, accessed on December 1, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/film-gangstersquad/postponed-by-u-s-violence-gangster-squad-opening-in-theaters-idUSL1E9C906420130109>.

⁹⁵ "The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots," IMDb, accessed on December 2, 2020, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0132134/>.

⁹⁶ Robert Sklar, *Movie-made America*, (Vintage Books Edition: Revised & Updated, 1994), 21.

violence, but for films showing gangsters and crime as those which were selected for the later analysis in this diploma paper.

It is clear that violence in movies can be traced back to the film beginnings, but from now on, it will be focused solely on the depiction of crime and mainly on the “gangster films”, keeping with the distinction in the book by Steve Neale.⁹⁷ “Criminals, crime, victims of crime, and official and unofficial agents of law, order and justice have featured in films since the turn of the century,” Neale claims.⁹⁸ The earliest crime film included in *Genre and Hollywood* is *A Career in Crime* from 1900. However, the movie probably did not gain significance as there is very little to be said about its plot or depiction of crime.⁹⁹ A more famous movie on the topic was shot only three years later, in 1903, and it was Edwin S. Porter’s *The Great Train Robbery*. Robert Sklar claims that the movie was “something to marvel at” as it featured lots of action, fights and even shooting. The director also used different shots including close-up shot of firing bandits.¹⁰⁰ In fact, these scenes were so powerful and seemed to be so realistic, it is stated on the website of *Los Angeles Times*, that people in movie theaters believed they were going to be shot.¹⁰¹ Other movies depicting crime followed. In the book by Steve Neale, Charles Musser is cited claiming that the success of *The Great Train Robbery* encouraged movie-makers to shot similar movies as it was followed, for example, by *Bold Bank Robbery* or *Capture of the Yegg Bank Robbers*.¹⁰²

1910s marked an avid interest in movies showing crime and gangsters. To illustrate this, Steve Neale mentions the film called *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* from 1912. However, even though all these films dealt with the gangster topic, they are not considered *gangster movies* as Steve Neale cites Phil Hardy, who claims the gangster movie was not a unique genre until late 1920s and early 1930s.¹⁰³ A true gangster film should, according to a summary by Neale feature professional gangsters involved in illegal activities as well as representatives of the good side, law and order. Such a movie also contains physical violence and dramatic conflicts.¹⁰⁴ This theory was put into practice in the films such as *Underworld* (1927), and *Little Caesar* (1931), or more importantly also the films which were chosen for the analysis in the second part of this

⁹⁷ Neale, *Genre*, 65.

⁹⁸ Neale, *Genre*, 65.

⁹⁹ Neale, *Genre*, 65.

¹⁰⁰ Sklar, *Movie*, 26-27.

¹⁰¹ “Timeline: Violence in movies,” *Los Angeles Times*, accessed December 1, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/moviesnow/la-et-mn-movie-violence-timeline-pictures-photogallery.html>.

¹⁰² Neale, *Genre*, 40.

¹⁰³ Neale, *Genre*, 71.

¹⁰⁴ Neale, *Genre*, 198.

thesis – *The Public Enemy* (1931) and *Scarface* (1932), which are considered to have laid the foundations of the genre. The book by Steve Neale also mentions other authors, who focus on the history of gangster movies, for example Tomas Schatz, who noticed there are more features, that contributed to the recognition of gangster movies as a genre. Schatz, cited in the book by Neale, remarked that the films such as *The Public Enemy* or *Scarface* could be seen as examples of the “classic” gangster movies formula because they feature the character who was apparently celebrated as the gangster-hero and since they contained a gloomy picture of the contemporary city. One of the consequences of this depiction, it is moreover claimed, was the reality that the films were popular, but controversial as well. The controversy consequently resulted in federal regulations forcing studios to change the “classic” pattern and gangster movies were therefore enjoying only a short “classical” period, with the “classic formula” being soon abandoned.¹⁰⁵

The end of the “classic” period of gangster movies did not result in a dramatic drop of the genre popularity as William Everson, cited in the book by Steve Neale, describes a long life of another formula. This formula might be found, it is claimed, in various movies of 1940s and 1950s as most of them contain the typical feature of a detective hero infiltrating into a gang and contributing to its destruction. Neale additionally states that this formula overlaps with another, the one which Langman and Finn call “the cops-and-robbers”. In this formula, public officials and agents of law are in an open conflict with gangs or criminal syndicates.¹⁰⁶

1950s and 1960s were, regarding gangster movies, decades marked by investigation of criminal organization, Neale claims. A criminal organization was newly labeled as “the Mafia” and there was an increase in government supervision of crime. This resulted in the impression that crime is in the society omnipresent. Concerning the gangster films, some worked with the idea of improved formulas from the previous decades, but others, Neale declares, tried to base its story on the new “Mafia mystique”. And the after-war era of American filmography brought much more. 1950s movies, it is stated in the text, dealt with city and small-town corruption.¹⁰⁷ Something based on true stories, taking into account the chapter on organized crime. The 50s, 60s and 70s furthermore brought a series of heist movies, Neale paraphrases. More importantly, there also appeared gangster biographies and Prohibition and Depression reconstructions, i.e., films which took inspiration in real-life events. It is said movies shot during these decades and especially *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and *The Godfather I and II* (1972, 1975) might be seen as

¹⁰⁵ Neale, *Genre*, 71.

¹⁰⁶ Neale, *Genre*, 73.

¹⁰⁷ Neale, *Genre*, 73-74.

a portrayal of the culture which was hostile to human needs to such extent that crime appeared as the only possibility to survive and fulfil one's dreams.¹⁰⁸

The previously mentioned movies were so influential that they should be looked at in a greater detail. *Bonnie and Clyde* were notorious criminals who inspired different stories and the film version which was directed by Arthur Penn in 1967 is hugely important because, as David A. Cook states, the film marked the beginning of the New American cinema. *Bonnie and Clyde* is perceived as an "avatar of an American New Wave" as it was full of unparalleled violence which fulfilled the expectations of the new cinema that would be characterized mainly by, as it is mentioned in the book, violence, sex and art.¹⁰⁹ Louis Menand from *The New Yorker* claims that the film could only offer such an exciting experience and consequently be such significant for the history and further development of the gangster genre due to the specific circumstances it was shot under. It is claimed the movie was done in between two regimes of Hollywood self-censorship – the old Production Code and a new rating system.¹¹⁰ *Bonnie and Clyde* was after a long period the first gangster movie that did not have to comply with the guideline created to impose censorship, that lasted for decades and which, as Gregory D. Black believes, often had dominating influence on the movies filmed from 1934. Unlike the previous gangster films, *Bonnie and Clyde* escaped careful inspections with producers not being pushed to avoid adult themes including criminal behavior or violence.¹¹¹ The second crucial movie is *The Godfather*, which recognition confirms the popularity of the "Mafia mystique". Although it is arguably the most famous movie with gangsters, Robert Sklar claims its triumph was rather surprising. The crime genre's popularity had, according to what Sklar claims, decreased in the years preceding this movie, but Coppola's film, it is further claimed, restored the position of the once-popular genre. The first movie of *The Godfather* film series offered, as it is also stated in Sklar's book, "a retreat into familiar genre filmmaking without relinquishing rebelliousness or a critique of official institutions".¹¹² Contrary to the movies mentioned in this chapter which presented, often controversially, a gloomy vision of a modern city, *The Godfather* took a different route. Yet the

¹⁰⁸ Neale, *Genre*, 74.

¹⁰⁹ David A. Cook, "Auteur Cinema and the 'Film Generation' in 1970s Hollywood" in *The New American Cinema*, ed. Jon Lewis (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1999), 11-12.

¹¹⁰ "'BONNIE AND CLYDE' FIFTY YEARS AFTER," *The New Yorker*, accessed January 11, 2021, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/bonnie-and-clyde-fifty-years-after>.

¹¹¹ Gregory D. Black, "Hollywood Censored: The Production Code Administration and the Hollywood Film Industry, 1930-1940," *Film History* 3, no. 3 (1989): 168-169.

¹¹² Sklar, *Movie*, 327.

movie did not avoid provoking disputes with Gene D. Phillips stating that the film was criticized for glorifying the efficiency of organized crime.¹¹³

The films produced in the next two decades, 1980s and 1990s, including movies such as *Scarface* (1983), *Goodfellas* (1990) or *Casino* (1995) then “helped reinforce an association of the gangster film with the ‘classical formula’ of the early 1930s,” Neale suggests.¹¹⁴ It might seem the current phase (the start of the 21st century) is too fragmented, so it is difficult to reveal clear tendencies or preferences concerning movies with gangsters. Yet, it is a matter of interest that apart from all the movies which focus on contemporary gangs, there are still film makers who look back into the history and try to capture the Chicago gangster era. Looking for recent movies that could have possibly fit this paper, there is a 2020 film simply called *Capone*, which, according to the short text, that is available on IMDb, shows the end of the gangster’s life.¹¹⁵ Last, but not least, there is also still in a development movie called *The Untouchables: Capone Rising* that will perhaps focus on his beginnings.¹¹⁶

2. PRACTICAL PART

2.1. Urban jungle

For the start, the movie selected for this diploma paper often try to capture the city of Chicago and as it will be shown in this subchapter, they tend to construct a rather gloomy picture of the Midwestern metropolis during the gangster era. Chicago is in the films often shown as having a destructive influence on individuals or as a violent place being in a war with gangsters.

To demonstrate the claims, it may be started with the oldest movie in the selection, *The Public Enemy* from 1932, which shows Chicago as an “urban jungle” as Daniel Agacinski puts it in his article.¹¹⁷ The first hints of this portrayal were dropped right in the opening scenes with Christopher Shannon noticing that the city is established as one of the characters. It is declared that there are shots to highlight the industrial face of the city including factories or stockyards. Shannon further remarks that the existence of the place seems to be revolved around beer which might have been done in order to show the dependence of the city’s inhabitants on alcohol and to suggest that the Prohibition will be a crucial factor later in the film. The role of the city is so important that it makes Shannon believe Chicago made the main hero, Tommy, a gangster. He

¹¹³ Gene D. Phillips, *Major Film Directors of the American and British Cinema*, (Lehigh University Press, 1999), 148.

¹¹⁴ Neale, *Genre*, 74.

¹¹⁵ “Capone,” IMDb, accessed March 7, 2021, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6199572/>.

¹¹⁶ “The Untouchables: Capone Rising,” IMDb, accessed March 7, 2021, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0425602/>.

¹¹⁷ Daniel Agacinski, “West and the City,” *South Atlantic Review* 76, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 25.

is believed to be a product of the corrupting social environment.¹¹⁸ And it is not assumed only by Shannon, Agacinski came to a similar conclusion as he believes Tom is crucially defined by the environment even though he denies the idea of determinism arguing not every child growing up in a city is destined to become the next Al Capone.¹¹⁹

However, these conclusions would be too hasty. The extent to which was Chicago and its environment forming Tommy and if it really made him a gangster deserves a closer analysis with the character looked at in a greater detail, including his ethnicity. Tom Powers is an Irish-American gangster, as claimed by Shannon.¹²⁰ So far, concerning Irish immigrants, it was only stated that they have been migrating to the USA and to the city of Chicago in high numbers and that there was a considerable number of them participating in gang activities which could be attributed to the disruptive influence of the poor parts of the metropolis. But Tom's example is different because he could have avoided ending up as a gangster. He is part of a family which does not only denounce his criminal behavior, but that creates him opposition – while Tom is breaking the law, his father enforces it; he is a policeman. And the contrast is even more striking thanks to the character of Tom's brother, Mike, who had the same background and possibilities, as he was growing up in the same family and neighborhood and who is a good citizen.

The presence of Mike hence shows that the city environment, Chicago in particular, may be blamed for Tommy's delinquency only partially. While Mike is leading a law-abiding life, even serving in the US army in WWI and being a family member, protecting the rest of his relatives from the bad influence of his brother, Tom is different. He may be seen as a typical gangster character recognized by Warshow earlier in the paper – an individual who is in a fight with the society and who is craving for his personal success. His delinquency and the fact he became a gangster is not an inevitable consequence of being from a poor immigrant family in Chicago. He could have ended similarly to his brother, but to Tom, a career in crime was simply too attractive option to make money, a shortcut. He was enabled to profit from the activities he was, similarly to real members of boys' gangs, rather enjoying. To give an example, Shannon mentions the scene with shoplifting. It is stated that although he is a poor boy, he is at the same time from a stable family, so his behavior seems to be rather an evidence of his lack of respect for authorities than necessity. The impact of his acquaintances was similarly defining as Shannon claims that crime is in the film social and not individual and the motivation to engage in illegal

¹¹⁸ Christopher Shannon, "Public Enemies, Local Heroes: The Irish-American Gangster Film in Classic Hollywood Cinema," *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 9, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 52-53.

¹¹⁹ Agacinski, "West," 25-26.

¹²⁰ Shannon, "Public," 51, 53.

activities was also the element of comradeship; to be a part of a gang.¹²¹ It is in accordance with what Thrasher noticed in his mapping of Chicago's gangs. The influence of the neighborhood was also important. Its force might be perhaps best seen on the characters of Putty Nose and later Paddy Ryan. It is Putty Nose who makes Tom and his friend, Matt, join a bigger gang. At first, he pays the boys for the stolen watches and six years after the this, in 1915, he also offers them their first opportunity for a breakthrough in their careers – a warehouse robbery, which is where the real troubles began as one gang member was killed and a policeman shot.

When Tom finally achieves what he wanted, he is, in accordance with what was earlier suggested by Warshow, lonely at the top as he is not accepted by “the high society of the city”, as Agacinski remarks.¹²² Not only that he wanted to be part of the elites, as Shannon noticed, Tom was also desperately longing for an acceptance of his family “in order his success to feel complete”.¹²³ But that had never come. Contrary to what was suggested by Shaw and McKay earlier, Tom's family never accepted his criminal career and, in *The Public Enemy*, they are in fact trying to create a resistance to the evil influence of the neighborhood. Throughout the film, they were constantly trying to make their beloved son leave the “underworld” and to return among law-abiding citizens; to come back home. It is quite pathetic that when he eventually leaves the business, it is already too late. In the final scene of the movie, an anonymous caller informs Mike that his brother is finally coming home to a great joy of his family, but this delight does not last for long as in the next scene, there is Tom's dead body at the door.¹²⁴ Sklar suggests that Tom was most importantly an “aberrant” character.¹²⁵ He was not entirely a product of the social environment, he was rather different from the rest. Tom was an eccentric individual, who was, as suggested by Park and Warshow, enabled to profit from his activity thanks to the urban environment and due to being different, not fitting the majority society and its norms, he took advantage of the opportunity.

A different understanding of the term “urban jungle” is in *Scarface* which was released the same year as *The Public Enemy*. Chicago is again shown as having a disruptive influence on an individual with the city being shown, similarly to *The Public Enemy*, as a dark place full of objects, people, vehicles and sins, as Agacinski noticed.¹²⁶ Even more importantly, however,

¹²¹ Shannon, “Public,” 52.

¹²² Agacinski, “West,” 26.

¹²³ Shannon, “Public,” 53, 55.

¹²⁴ *The Public Enemy*, directed by William A. Wellman, (Warner Bros, 1931), 1:21:57.

¹²⁵ Sklar, *Movie*, 181.

¹²⁶ Agacinski, “West,” 24.

Chicago might be perceived as a violent place, Marilyn Roberts states.¹²⁷ Contrary to *The Public Enemy*, the film makers did not pay attention to the gradual development of an individual into a gangster and Chicago simply *is* a violent place, due to the fact that there *are* people like Tony Camonte and the movie makers did not try to discover where they came from; they are part of the violent nature of the city. In fact, the amount of violence in the movie even caused problems as, according to Grønstad, it resulted, ironically enough, in the film refused to be screened in Chicago and other American cities. In order to make it available, there had to be changes made, which might seem to be quite exceptional for a film that was shot in Pre-Code Hollywood. Yet, it is stated further in the text that even before the Code there were other self-regulatory systems with its first embodiment “Thirteen Points” appearing as soon as 1916.¹²⁸

A true urban jungle might also be rotten concerning corruption and that is another face of Chicago which the movie makers wanted to show in *Scarface*. This way of a depiction is no coincidence or a result of a vivid imagination, as it was declared in the first half that the city was really experiencing difficult times with gangsters appearing in headlines and in association with public officials. *Scarface* should have been, at least in this respect, a faithful representation of the contemporary reality. Chicago experiencing gang wars, bootlegging and corruption as it really was. But just because it was happening in real-life and in the real city of Chicago, it did not mean that it was welcomed in cinemas. The depiction aroused controversy, so, as it is stated by Grønstad, to make the film more suitable for cinemas, not to show the city in its true nature and to perhaps even to calm American citizens, an added scene showing politicians and public officials rejecting to tolerate criminals had to be added.¹²⁹

A different depiction of Chicago and its corruptness was possible in *Al Capone* as it was filmed at the end of 1950s and the film makers had the benefit of a hindsight. Thanks to the gap between the end of the gangster era and the movie production being over 20 years, *Al Capone* could adopt almost a documentary approach. What is even more important for this part of the paper, *Al Capone* did not have to suffer from the enforced changes as the movie was showing something that happened in the past and was no more contemporary. It could, unlike *Scarface*, show the connection between gangsters and public officials as it was. This is evident right in the first part of the film, just few days after Capone’s arrival to Chicago. He is not punished by the police because he is under the protection of a criminal organization that has a huge influence

¹²⁷ Marilyn Roberts, “Scarface, The Great Gatsby”, and the American Dream,” *Literature/Film Quarterly* 34, no. 1, (2006): 77.

¹²⁸ Asbjørn Grønstad, *Transfigurations: Violence, Death and Masculinity in American Cinema* (Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 99-101.

¹²⁹ Grønstad, *Transfigurations*, 97, 100

upon the institution.¹³⁰ But although *Al Capone* does not avoid showing the controversial topic, taking into account the previously mentioned gap between the gangster era and the production of this movie, it could be agreed with Bosley Crowther who in his article wrote that *Al Capone* “isn't the devastating critique we might expect after all these years.”¹³¹ The movie might have been done as an accurate biography of the notorious gangster showing the corruptness of the city, but, at the same time, it is deprived of emotions and it lacks the social critique. Unlike the previous two movies, here, the city is not depicted as the disruptive place. It is just the opposite. *Al Capone* is in the prologue outlined as a narrative of a battle between Chicago, which was a rich and prosperous city, and criminality, which is embodied by the gangster.¹³² It seems as if there were no problems apart from Al Capone.

Again, a similar depiction of Chicago is present in *The Untouchables*. Al Capone is the person who embodies everything bad about the city. Brian De Palma, the director of the movie, was cited in an article on *Cinephilia & Beyond* stating that he regards Capone's Chicago as “a slick world, a world that's run by big money and corruption” which, however, at the same time looks fabulous thanks to the oppressed people being hidden.¹³³ But it needs to be said De Palma did not show these people either. Or at least in the sense it would be expected. *The Untouchables* presents a simplified version of the city's fight with crime and instead of focusing on the social problems, the movie rather chose to rely on emotions. Unlike the 1930s movies which show the impact of the urban environment on a young boy or streets full of violence, *The Untouchables* took a different approach. In order to show viewers that crime is ruthless and the city is rotten, right at the start of the film, there is a scene in which dies a child and other innocent people as a result of the gang wars that threaten the city of Chicago.¹³⁴ Again, something based on real events from the gangster era, as it was shown earlier. In contrast to this, as Tim Pelan noticed, there is Elliot Ness, a federal agent and representative of the “good ones”, who comes to the rotten city to save it.¹³⁵ He will bring Al Capone to justice and everything in the city will be fine again. In *The Untouchables*, it is, similarly to *Al Capone*, simple as that.

¹³⁰ *Al Capone*, directed by Richard Wilson (Allied Artists Pictures Corporation, 1959), 0:07:57.

¹³¹ “Ancient History of 'Al Capone'”; Steiger Takes Title Role at Victoria Documentary Flavor Marks New Film,” *The New York Times*, accessed on January 20, 2020.

¹³² *Al Capone*, 0:00:30.

¹³³ “Gang Wars, the Prohibition Menace: Brian De Palma's 'The Untouchables',” *Cinephilia & Beyond*, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://cinephiliabeyond.org/the-untouchables/>.

¹³⁴ *The Untouchables*, directed by Brian De Palma, (Paramount Pictures, 1987), 0:05:59.

¹³⁵ “Gang Wars,” *Cinephilia & Beyond*.

2.2. Those who wanted too much

Tommy Angelo, the main hero from the famous Czech video game *Mafia*, epitomized the effort to improve his livelihood by becoming a gangster in the following words:

I think it's important to keep a balance in things. Yeah, balance, that's the right word. Cause the guy who wants too much risks losing absolutely everything. Of course, the one who wants too little from life might not get anything at all.¹³⁶

It was already mentioned in the introduction to this paper that gangster's life is usually associated with guns, action, expensive clothing, cars, or women. At the same time, however, as it was suggested by Warshow, gangster's life is also a modern sense of tragedy as, in the end, the gangster character also more than often meets the destiny of those who wanted too much – premature death. *The Public Enemy* was, together with other films, already discussed in relation to the picture of the city of Chicago it provides, but there is more to discuss. The story of Tom Powers and other gangsters are also narratives of individuals who did not want to settle for less than everything. To achieve one's American Dream not thanks to hard work, but preferably to become a self-made man, to go from “rags to riches”, thanks to a shortcut and the possibility only crime provided. Yet, the aim of this chapter is to show that films about gangsters are done in order to show viewers that crime does not pay; they have a message. They are communicating a tragedy. If it was so difficult to reform a gangster, as it was mentioned, the best approach was to provide a deterrent example. The movie makers behind most of the selected films then tried their best, although they often chose different ways to convey the message.

In the first selected film, the message seems to be clear right from the beginning of the movie as there is a title in the prologue which states that the goal of *The Public Enemy* was to “honestly depict the environment that exists today in a certain strata of American life, rather than glorify the hoodlum or the criminal”. In the same title, it is additionally alleged the story of *The Public Enemy* is a true one.¹³⁷ And the fact that the film was trying to fight against the situation in the city and might, in some respect, be perceived similarly to the city's newspapers demanding changes is apparent from more aspects. Tom may be seen as the character showing viewers how it should *not* be done, while there is the previously mentioned contrast with his family members and his brother especially, who demonstrate the viewers the *right* way, having successfully adapted to the new environment. The appeal of the movie makers should be also clear from the title at the end of the movie, which is claiming that Tom's story is a narrative of

¹³⁶ “Mafia (2002 Video Game),” IMDb, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0338221/characters/nm0815257>.

¹³⁷ *The Public*, 0:01:30.

“every hoodlum” and “The Public Enemy” is a problem the public must solve.¹³⁸ Taking into account these aspects, it is logical to think that the appeal against crime is clear enough.

Yet, Sklar argues the intended messages in 1930s movies were often miscommunicated and *The Public Enemy* may be identified as one of them. He claims that, in these old gangster movies, members of other gangs and sometimes even the police, might be depicted as being capable of worse actions, representing even bigger social disorder. The main characters are then the less rotten ones and, as it is consequently proposed in the book, the audience could identify with the heroes because they are fighting the society that was more decayed.¹³⁹ Tom from *The Public Enemy* can be then celebrated as a gangster-hero as mentioned earlier, because he is not the least likeable character. The movie makers did not make him and his friend Matt despicable enough as they were, for example, repeatedly betrayed by fellow criminals, so they were partly in the roles of victims. It might be also suggested that they arouse certain sympathies with the rival gang depicted more negatively as they were the ones to be blamed for triggering the gang war which results in Tom’s death. And apart from this, there is an even greater problem with reinforcing the message that crime is something to fight in *The Public Enemy*. Although there is the contrast with his brother, Mike is not rewarded for living an honest life. He comes back from the war wounded and although being a kid, he was working on himself by going to school, he was only learning how to be poor, as Tom noticed.¹⁴⁰

In *Scarface*, there is, as it was acknowledged earlier, no story of a gradual development of a delinquent boy into an adult gangster, but it may be proposed that the discouraging picture, the message, is in the film also present. Instead of a gradual involvement in more serious crimes which would similarly to *The Public Enemy* make the main character further involved in crime, there is, as it is suggested by Grønstad, an escalating chain of violent events.¹⁴¹ The fashion in which the movie makers wanted to make their point is different to *The Public Enemy* as in this movie, it should perhaps be the brutality and violence as the elements arousing aversion to the way gangsters were living. Although the movie contains also a prologue which should have set things straight, stating *Scarface* is nothing more than a depiction of the contemporary situation and critique of the government’s lack of interest, it was only added, as it is claimed by Lehman and Luhr, after the objections of the censors.^{142 143} The original aim of the movie makers hence

¹³⁸ *The Public*, 1:23:51.

¹³⁹ Sklar, *Movie*, 181.

¹⁴⁰ *The Public*, 0:10:55.

¹⁴¹ Grønstad, *Transfigurations*, 98.

¹⁴² *Scarface*, directed by Howard Hawks and Richard Rosson (The Caddo Company, 1932), 0:01:26.

¹⁴³ Peter Lehman and William Luhr, *Thinking about Movies Watching, Questioning, Enjoying*, 3rd ed., (Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 20.

seems to be focused solely on visual violence. But if it was in the previous paragraph proposed by Sklar that the message in *The Public Enemy* may be miscommunicated, all the shooting and violence in *Scarface* could have also be misinterpreted. Perhaps, it should be rather focused on what Roberts submits as one of the main points, that is the idea of Tony believing in American Dream, but in “a highly material version of the American Dream that seems to promise wealth, the love of a high-status woman, and immediate justice”.¹⁴⁴ The idea, or the message should be that he chose the wrong way to chase the Dream and that he wanted too much. However, in the case of *Scarface*, it seems to be hidden behind the number of violent scenes.

It would be plausible to think that more than 20 years after the gangster era *Al Capone* could be filmed without paying attention to conveying the message. Bosley Crowther from *The New York Times* even demanded that given the existence of movies about Al Capone and other films about gangsters, it seems to be “superfluous” to shoot a new one on the same topic.¹⁴⁵ Yet the message was being conveyed even in the 1950s movie. In the 1959 *The Desert News* article on the movie and Rod Steiger who played Al Capone, it is claimed that this film version was done with the desire to deglamorize the gangster. It is stated that Steiger himself felt the pressure as he said the life of Al Capone should be presented in a manner which would show the young audience, consisting mostly of viewers between 13 and 22 years old, that crime is something “bad”. Further, it is even stated Steiger refused the original version of the film script as he had the feeling it idealized the lives of gangsters too much.¹⁴⁶

To find the reasons why movie makers had to be cautious even more than 20 years later, it must be looked into Peter Stanfield’s book on 1950s cinema. In the text, it is stated *Al Capone* was not only a film showing the public’s interest in organized crime and Mafia syndicates, but the film is moreover a representant of the already mentioned late 1950s and early 1960s period of gangster movies revival. This, as Stanfield calls it, “retro-gangster cycle” was based on the Prohibition era, or in this diploma paper – gangster era, and its notorious characters including Machine Gun Kelly, Baby Face Nelson, Pretty Boy Floyd, or John Dillinger.¹⁴⁷ 1950s might be arguably seen as a renaissance of the genre with Stansfield declaring that the interest in the lives of gangsters was not limited to films, but it is claimed there were also television programs, pulp magazines, radio series or books. People had the possibility to explore the lives of gangsters in

¹⁴⁴ Roberts, "Scarface," 77.

¹⁴⁵ The New York Time, “Ancient.”

¹⁴⁶ “Rod Steiger Plays Villain Again; Now He Deglamorizes Capone,” *The Desert News*, accessed February 18, 2021, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=Aul-kAQHnToC&dat=19590530&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>.

¹⁴⁷ Stanfield, *The Cool*, 17, 143.

different manners.¹⁴⁸ However, the problem with exploiting the 1920s and 1930s hoodlums and gangsters' stories two decades later was that the trend was associated with "headline-grabbing, sensational stories of delinquent youth in the 1950s".¹⁴⁹ Delinquency and crime were discussed only in relation to the gangster era, but as it is evident from Stanfield's book, it is a persisting problem and films are continuing in a fight against it. Crime was perhaps presenting and to this day it still offers a possibility to achieve one's fulfillment and American Dream. Yet it can be suggested not even *Al Capone* succeeded in clearly communicating the message against crime. The problem is that the characters are rather detached. After all, Capone was attempted to be deglamorized and thus he is shown evil and distant to an ordinary viewer.

And it was not better with Roger Corman's *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre*, that again tells the story of Al Capone and as it is apparent from its title – the killing in 1929.¹⁵⁰ Both *Al Capone* and *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* are similar in paying attention to the historical authenticity. Similarly to *Al Capone*, at the start of Corman's movie, there are historical events unfolded with the narrator setting the scene. However, the difference was that they were shot in two contrasting decades. While the detached approach of *Al Capone* was in accordance with the previous trend to distance from the gangsters and to make them deterrent, the expectations in the 60s had changed and *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* was received poorly. Roger Ebert, a film critic writing for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, claimed that Corman took the idea, to make a gangster movie, too seriously, which resulted in *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* being "semi-documentary". According to Ebert, the movie was based on "a lot of research" and it was done "more or less factually accurate", but it also resulted in being "very complicated" and rather a disappointment.¹⁵¹ One of the differences between the two films is also that *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* at least paid attention to some social problems discussed earlier. There is, for example, one scene with an immigrant saying: "it is very hard to get a good job when you talk with an accent."¹⁵² Yet even though the movie presents hints on the problems ordinary people were facing in the pursuit of their American Dream, it is believed that the tragedy of the gangster characters and the message is again communicated ineffectively.

The situation in the late 60s was, concerning the American film industry, revolutionary. With the Production Code being officially abandoned in 1968, it may be suggested that just one

¹⁴⁸ Stanfield, *The Cool*, 136-137.

¹⁴⁹ Stanfield, *The Cool*, 135.

¹⁵⁰ "The St. Valentine's Day Massacre," IMDb, accessed January 24, 2020, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0062301/>.

¹⁵¹ "The St. Valentine's Day Massacre," RobertEbert.com, accessed January 26, 2021 <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-st-valentine-s-day-massacre-1967>.

¹⁵² *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre*, directed by Roger Corman, (Los Altos Productions, 1967), 0:33:20.

year earlier, in 1967 (the same year *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* was released), it already lost its power.¹⁵³ This is agreed by Simon Hitchman, a film scholar, who claims, in his article on American New Wave Cinema, that the crucial year for the changes consequently leading to the New Hollywood was 1966 with the appointment of Jack Valenti. In other words, in the year 1967, it was already achievable, as claimed by Hitchman, for the movie makers to display their rebellious spirit.¹⁵⁴ With the new alphabetical rating system which was implying the appropriate age, it was possible to approach movies and, for this thesis crucially, films with gangsters in a different way.¹⁵⁵ The movie portrayal of the gangster era found itself at a crossroads with Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* representing the new way to go.

Before comparing these two movies, it must be claimed that although the movie makers mainly tried to be precise and to recount the story precisely, the influence of the 60s is obvious even in *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre*. Besides its primarily biographic, or as Roger Ebert puts it – “semi-documentary” qualities, the movie also contains number of action scenes full of violence, shooting, blood and killing which were definitely different to the ones in the previous films. The highlight of the movie and the scene all viewers are waiting for is without question the one with the killing in Moran's warehouse. The depiction is perhaps influenced by the 1960s tendencies as it is arguably one of the most violent scenes it was encountered with during works on this diploma paper as it, for example, includes close-ups to the dying men weeping blood.¹⁵⁶ It is true that this picture of the event might be perceived as being in accordance with the more violent trend of late 1960s, but contrary to this, the film cannot hide it took inspiration mostly from the past. Although there is no critical title in the prologue, the gangsters are, similarly to *Al Capone*, shown only as the bad ones. The director, Roger Corman, took a restrained approach showing the violence committed by brutal men who are totally different to ordinary people.

In contrast to this, *Bonnie and Clyde* are characters which draw viewers into their story. The film was famously criticized for containing too many violent scenes and also for creating a myth with Penn supposedly romanticizing the figures of the two gangsters, who were, from a historical point of view, only outlaws, robbers, and killers. However, this approach towards the movie is criticized by Paul Glushanok who suggests Penn has created the myth purposefully, as to destroy one myth, it is inevitable to create another one. Glushanok argues Penn wanted to

¹⁵³ Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration*, (Columbia University Press; Illustrated edition, 2009), 334.

¹⁵⁴ “Part Three: New Hollywood (1967-1969),” New Wave Film, accessed January 27, 2021, <http://www.newwavefilm.com/international/new-hollywood.shtml>.

¹⁵⁵ Doherty, *Hollywood's*, 334.

¹⁵⁶ *The St.*, 1:29:05.

show “violence is nothing but violence – senseless pain, destruction, humiliation and death.”¹⁵⁷ It could seem that the film differs from the rest of the movies discussed so far, but Glushanok explains that the gangster formula is in *Bonnie and Clyde* present and the “gangster” situation is established presenting the pair as “hopeless, desolute” types. Even though the movie did not, similarly to the previous films, answer the question as to why the pair found themselves in such a chaotic situation, Glushanok suggests that here it contributes to the desired perception of the characters.¹⁵⁸ They are, unlike the characters in *Al Capone* or *The St. Valentine’s Day Massacre*, people the viewers could relate to. It is moreover argued that Penn’s ambition was not to glorify violence because if he wanted to do so, he would depict the two characters as they really were – as murderers. Under such circumstances, however, “audience of middle-class Americans”¹⁵⁹ would not feel their lives and their deaths as tragic. To communicate the message against crime with power, Glushanok argues, Penn made Bonnie and Clyde likeable people it can be identified with.¹⁶⁰ Something in a contrast with the previous trend.

Penn’s movie surely had enormous influence on the depiction of gangsters, but it needs to be mentioned that not all films taking place in the city of Chicago, during the gangster era are since 1967 done from the perspective of gangsters people may identify with. In 1980s, there is a significantly different movie, which again works with real representatives and events of the Chicago underworld, but which is made from the perspective of a federal agent and his superior team. The aim of this subchapter is to show the gangster movies have a message, an educating character and that they show viewers that crime does not pay. However, the difference between them and *The Untouchables* is that De Palma’s movie did not need to highlight this using a title in the prologue or epilogue, or a narrator who would set things straight; it is simplified instead. To some extent, it could be perceived as being in opposition to *The Godfather* series. You, as a viewer will get no idea how does organized crime or the Mafia works and there is certainly no glorification of it. The only impression it leaves is that you should choose a different path. *The Untouchables* is, according to Neale’s text, an example of “the cops-and-robbers formula”.¹⁶¹ The characters are only “good” or “bad” and, from the beginning, it is easily apparent which of these sides is the one which should be followed.

It needs to be noted that the agent Elliot Ness and his team are not only setting the right example by fighting crime and Al Capone, but the film also covers the topic of prejudices about

¹⁵⁷ Paul Glushanok, “BONNIE AND CLYDE,” *Cinéaste* 1, no. 2 (FALL, 1967): 15.

¹⁵⁸ Glushanok, “BONNIE AND CLYDE,” 14-17.

¹⁵⁹ Glushanok, “BONNIE AND CLYDE,” 15.

¹⁶⁰ Glushanok, “BONNIE AND CLYDE,” 14-17.

¹⁶¹ Neale, *Genre*, 74.

crime and particular ethnic groups. It was already established in the first part of this paper that criminal activity was ascribed primarily to the so called “hyphenated Americans” with mainly Polish, Italian, and Irish gangs represented in the statistics. One of the consequences then was, as also mentioned, there were anti-Italian feelings in the contemporary society. Consequently, gangster characters in a fair number of the selected movies consisted of Italians. However, *The Untouchables* went a different route as one of its intentions was to show representatives of the ethnic groups in a different light to, for example, *Scarface*.

Just the presence of George Stone, or Giuseppe Petri if using his original Italian name, might be seen as an example of opposing the belief that Italian-Americans should be associated with criminality. The appeal against the deep-rooted prejudice is apparent from the fact that the character decided to change his Italian name to an American one to avoid negative connotations. Some critique of the prejudices has already been mentioned in the previous movies, for example *The St. Valentine’s Day Massacre* and its scene in which one of the characters states that it is difficult to find a decent job having a foreign accent, but the appeal resulting from Petri forging his identity seems to be stronger. The message is not only against crime, but the film also tries to communicate not every Italian-American has to become a gangster. In the simplified “cops-and-robbers” world, it is also attainable to be a “cop”. And it is similar with Jimmy Malone and the possible prejudices against Irish-Americans. Jimmy is Elliot Ness’s right hand and an Irish-American, as Roger Ebert mentions.¹⁶² He did not have to change his name to fit in the society, but he is a representant of another ethnic group associated with crime. Both characters may be then perceived as creating an opposition to Al Capone, who is a hyphenated American as well. The gangster boss is the one who misinterpreted the idea of the American Dream, the one who wanted too much, while the two characters, Petri, and Malone, are the ones whose example was to be followed. In other words, the film was also fighting against the prejudices associated with European immigrants, which is a continuing problem.

Going back to the type of films, which are shot from the perspective of the “bad ones”, at the start of the 21st century, another movie set in Chicago gangster era was done. However, in a stark contrast to *The Untouchables* and the older gangster movies, *Road to Perdition* seeks understanding for the main hero. Michael Sullivan was a man viewers could relate to. The main topic of Mendes’s film is perhaps the question of morality and the dilemma if the end justifies the means and *Road to Perdition* gives viewers the option to create their own opinion about the main character. This conviction stems mainly from the start of the film in which Sullivan’s son

¹⁶² “The Untouchables,” RogerEbert.com, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-untouchables-1987>.

offers the viewers both points of view saying that his father was by some people perceived as a “decent man”, but there were others who believed that “there was no good in him at all.”¹⁶³ The story of Michael Sullivan is set in 1931, i.e., during the Great Depression. Although the reason why he became a mob enforcer is not evident, as the film does not trace his career, it is plausible that the reason could be the unfavorable situation during the period.

The beginning of *Road to Perdition* is based on it with the movie attempting to create unpleasant atmosphere to show the hopeless situation focusing on industrial premises and poor workers.¹⁶⁴ In contrast to this, there is the family of Sullivan, that is living a harmony, not being affected by the crisis. Michael Sullivan with his family do not have to deal with the problems of unemployment and uncertain income other people are facing simply because their livelihood is not influenced by the economic downturn. It was just the opposite; the gangster era provided the main hero with the opportunity to acquire a better status for himself and for his family by working for the people who were in this period thanks to other circumstances richer than ever before. Michael is not the gangster individual mentioned before as he does not want to achieve success to reach his personal fulfillment; he does it for his family. Due to this, it is possible, to some extent, sympathize with Michael as he is sustaining primarily his family and “putting food on plate”.¹⁶⁵ The result is that his tragedy in the loss of his relatives and his own life is, again, something that happened to someone who the viewers may relate to. Thus it makes the message, as it is partly following the trend started by Penn’s *Bonnie and Clyde*, powerful.

2.3. Folk heroes and scapegoats

Talking about the gangster characters people might sympathize with, it can be as well continued with the portrayal of the real characters of the gangster era. It has already been proposed in the films about gangsters, there are characters that are, to a certain extent, heroized to make them more relatable and to make the message against crime more powerful and also those which are shown simply evil. The target of the following lines is hence to compare these two completely different approaches. *Road to Perdition* is not a good example. Although Paul Arthur wrote the movie was based on a novel, which is “a pulp cartoon in which Depression society and real historical figures are blithely melded into superheroic spectacle”, the only character that might be possibly used for an analysis is Al Capone, who is only talked about and stays off-screen.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ *Road to Perdition*, directed by Sam Mendes, (DreamWorks Pictures and Twentieth Century Fox, 2002), 0:01:35.

¹⁶⁴ *Road to Perdition*, 0:02:21.

¹⁶⁵ *Road to Perdition*, 0:19:21.

¹⁶⁶ Paul Arthur, “FILM REVIEWS: Road to Perdition,” *Cinéaste* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 34-35.

Therefore, if looking for a modern interpretation of a real gangster's life, who is connected with Chicago during the gangster era and could be used for an analysis (comparing his real life with his film portrayal), it must be moved forward. In 2009, Michael Mann directed *Public Enemies*, a movie about John Dillinger, a notorious bank robber who is surrounded by such a legend, that he is comparable with Bonnie and Clyde. John Toland outlined the myth in the following words:

No badman since Jesse James had won such widespread sympathy. He robbed banks – not people – and had become to many a sort of Depression Robin Hood. The dash and derring-do of his escape, his impudence to those in authority, and his occasional chivalry during a robbery made them see him as a folk hero.¹⁶⁷

With such reputation, it was inevitable the movie makers would approach an adaptation of Dillinger's story differently. He could not be the gangster people despise; he must be the one it is possible to sympathize with. And that is exactly what was done. Peter Travers in the review on the website of the magazine *Rolling Stone* suggests that Depp's performance acknowledges "how Hollywood romanticizes gangster life in contrast to the bruising reality".¹⁶⁸ Christopher Orr from *The Atlantic* then claims that Dillinger is in the movie mostly depicted as the character "of popular myth, the handsome charmer out to have a good time".¹⁶⁹ And it must be remarked it is not only the case of *Public Enemies*, because it was not the first attempt to make a movie about Dillinger. In 1973, John Milius came with his film about the notorious bank robber and it ended up similarly. Roger Ebert in his review of the film alleges that Dillinger "comes off as a fairly decent man".¹⁷⁰ It is true that the two movies also have the character of Melvin Purvis, a "G-man", who is the one representing the "good" side, the one to be followed with Dillinger being the "bad" one. Yet, due to the police not always being shown superior and in accordance with moral values, their duel on the screen is not so straightforward and the contrast is nothing like the one in *The Untouchables*. Both directors decided to build up on the Arthur Penn's idea instead and they portrayed Dillinger as a character of the popular myth, in order to destroy the myth of romantic violence.

The gangster's biographies would definitely look different if everything was taken into account. His early years, for example, are not in the film and there is perhaps a good reason for

¹⁶⁷ John Toland, *The Dillinger Days*, (New York: First Da Capo Press edition, 1995), 260.

¹⁶⁸ "Public Enemies," *Rolling Stone*, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://www.rollingstone.com/movies/movie-reviews/public-enemies-248911/>.

¹⁶⁹ "The Movie Review: 'Public Enemies'," *The Atlantic*, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2009/07/the-movie-review-public-enemies/68988/>.

¹⁷⁰ "Dillinger," *RogerEbert.com*, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/dillinger-1973>.

that. Dillinger was not the type of a delinquent as described earlier in the paper and from what is available about his life, he was not even a victim of some misfortune. He should not be the one whose Dream was shattered by the culture which would be hostile to him. If there was more about his early life, it would ruin the joke. Dillinger was, according to the book by John Toland, born in “a middle-class residential section” of the city of Indianapolis. He was not poor as it is stated that his father was “relatively well-off”, but still, his delinquent nature was evident from a young age. By the time he was in the sixth grade, Toland states in the book, Dillinger was a leader of a neighborhood gang specializing on stealing coal from Pennsylvania Railroads. Just a few years later, Dillinger being sixteen years old, already having experience with Juvenile Court and being said his mind was “crippled” by the judge, his father became seriously worried about his son’s getting “out of hand” and therefore they moved to Mooresville, to live at a farm. Dillinger senior, it is further claimed, believed his son would live a healthier life outside the “temptations of Indianapolis”. Still, in September 1924, being 21 years old, he took inspiration in Wild West stories about his favorite hero Jesse James and robbed a grocery store for which he was sent to prison for ten to twenty years.¹⁷¹ Until now, Dillinger had been just an outlaw, a rebel without a cause.

But nothing from his early life is in the films about him. The director of *Dillinger*, John Milius, only made a movie which maps what followed as he claimed:

I'm not at all concerned with showing his early life or explaining how he got that way. What I'm interested in is the legend. That's what this movie is, that's exactly what it is. It's not a character study or a Freudian analysis; it's an American folk tale.¹⁷²

A very similar situation is outlined in 2009 *Public Enemies* with Christopher Orr stating that in Mann’s movie “Dillinger has no backstory, no subtext, no real psychology, ...”.¹⁷³

This way of depicting Dillinger, of course, has its opponents. It is because such portrayal could be misinterpreted that the 1974 movie contains a message from J. Edgar Hoover. The FBI chief who was leading the organization from 1924, i.e., during the “Dillinger days” was perhaps afraid of the way gangsters’ lives are shown in movies.¹⁷⁴ It is claimed in *The Ultimate Book of Gangster Movies* that Hoover’s outrage was so huge he sent the producers of *Dillinger* a letter of protest demanding a revision of the script. Despite, it is claimed, no changes were introduced,

¹⁷¹ Toland, *The Dillinger*, 5-14.

¹⁷² “Dillinger (1973),” Turner Classic Movies, accessed January 28, 2021, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/24347/dillinger#articles-reviews?articleId=1279655>.

¹⁷³ The Atlantic, “The Movie Review: 'Public Enemies'.”

¹⁷⁴ Toland, *The Dillinger*, 37.

Milius agreed to add Hoover's words of disapproval. To avoid misinterpretation and excessive heroization and idealization of the main character, after the final credits, the following statement is given:¹⁷⁵

Dillinger was a rat that the country may consider itself fortunate to be rid of, and I don't sanction any Hollywood glamorization of these vermin. This type of romantic mendacity can only lead young people further astray than they are already. And I want no part of it.¹⁷⁶

Dillinger is in the American filmography simply a character of the imagination, keeping with what Warshow suggested. It is not clear where he came from, the movie does not trace his early life and it might be argued he charms the viewers mostly with his status of an outsider as when the Dillinger character in *Public Enemies* says he was abused by his father.¹⁷⁷ He did, in accordance with what was earlier suggested in the text by Warshow, not believe in the "normal" way of achieving happiness and success. It is mentioned in the review on *The Atlantic*, Dillinger was in *Public Enemies* longing for "those nice clothes and fast cars require the kind of money you can only find in a bank".¹⁷⁸ He is the embodiment of what Robert Warshow believed that the true gangster character portrays. He is the individual who people want to be if they were not afraid of what would inevitably follow, an antihero.

But if film makers use Dillinger to make the impact of the gangster era and the message against crime more powerful by exploiting the popular myth, the character of Al Capone is the exact opposite. The first movie from the selection made for this paper which may be considered as taking inspiration from the real-life of the Chicago "underworld" boss is *Scarface*. Although the main character does not bear the same name, it is claimed in Roberts's text that the director of the film, Howard Hawks, admitted Tony Camonte is based principally on Al Capone.¹⁷⁹ This is further confirmed by Neale, who asserts *Scarface* is generally believed to be depicting the life of Al Capone.¹⁸⁰ But Tony, as it is suggested by Roberts, is not only a portrayal of the real gangster, the character also reinforces ethnic stereotypes. It is maintained that "Tony seems to lack social graces and taste as he is the child of lower-class immigrants". The text also works

¹⁷⁵ George Anastasia, Glen Macnow and Joe Pistone, *The Ultimate Book of Gangster Movies: Featuring the 100 Greatest Gangster Films of All Time*, (Running Press, 2011), Dillinger.

¹⁷⁶ Anastasia, et. al., *The Ultimate*, Dillinger.

¹⁷⁷ *Public Enemies*, directed by Michael Mann (Universal Pictures, 2009), 00:31:26.

¹⁷⁸ The Atlantic, "The Movie Review: 'Public Enemies'."

¹⁷⁹ Roberts, "Scarface," 71.

¹⁸⁰ Neale, *Genre*, 55.

with the view that this xenophobic depiction of the main character offered viewers a *scapegoat*, which could “absorb blame for the Depression and the failure of Prohibition”.¹⁸¹

The problem is that if the movie makers wanted, they would surely be able to depict the gangster in a different light as it happened to John Dillinger. If Dillinger’s character could be based on his “occasional chivalry”, then it would be undoubtedly possible to portray Al Capone in a different way. For instance, the movies could show him as the “Robin Hood-like” character from his baptismal reception at the Mount Carmel School during the Great Depression as he was described in a book on organized crime by Lombardo.¹⁸² And there are other examples, in the article by Smithfield, it is referred to the winter of 1931 when Al Capone opened a free soup kitchen for unemployed people. Moreover, it is remarked that he was known for his generosity to strangers and Italian immigrants and he was consequently respected by people of Chicago with some of them going as far as believing that he did more for common people than the state Illinois itself.¹⁸³ He could be a folk hero as well.

Yet Capone’s role in the film history is to embody evilness. The movie portrayals often tend to omit the features which would help to perceive him as a human, they focus only on his crime and wickedness. He is, in the movies, the total opposite of Dillinger. Capone’s movie depiction is, as it was previously mentioned by Warshow, narrowed to brutality that becomes more or less his entire personality. While with Dillinger, that was not the case as the film makers tried to exploit the myth surrounding him, the Capone’s character is in this respect limited only to his crimes, brutality, and violence. He is not the film gangster recognized by Warshow; he is in American filmography rather being depicted as the real criminal of real cities. In the article about *Al Capone*, the movie from 1959 available on the website of *Turner Classic Movies*, the following description is offered:

The spectacle is not in the scope of the sets or locations, but in the brutal blasts of violence and the larger-than-life incarnation that Steiger brings to Capone on his rise from loyal, ambitious, opera-loving thug to the top dog in the Chicago syndicate, ruling the South Side with fear, intimidation and machine gun diplomacy.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Roberts, “Scarface,” 72.

¹⁸² Robert M. Lombardo, *Organized crime in Chicago: beyond the Mafia*, (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 183.

¹⁸³ “During the Great Depression Al Capone started one of the first “Soup Kitchens” for the unemployed,” The Vintage News, accessed February 19, 2021, <https://www.thevintagenews.com/2016/06/06/gangster-al-capone-started-one-of-the-first-soup-kitchens-during-the-great-depression-for-the-unemployed-2/>.

¹⁸⁴ “Al Capone,” Turner Classic Movies, accessed February 18, 2021, <https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/26633/al-capone#articles-reviews?articleId=338696>.

Surely, there is also a hint of another face of the gangster which is demonstrated by the subplot in which Capone desperately tries to be liked and respected by the widow of one of his victims, as noticed in the same text, but that does hardly earn him sympathies.¹⁸⁵ It only shows Capone's attempt to relieve his conscience as an almost pathological need to be liked. *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* brings about a very similar situation with Al Capone not only being shown as the man behind the murder of seven members of the enemy gang, but he is once again depicted as a brutal and violent character as in the scene with the baseball bat.¹⁸⁶ Finally, there is the last film from the selected filmography depicting the crime boss – *The Untouchables*. In the contemporary movie review published in *Desert Sun* newspapers struck the attention of the reviewer primarily the violent parts of the film. It is remarked Capone is “eliminating banquet guests with a baseball bat” and that Robert De Niro plays him with “the right amount of voltage and viciousness”.¹⁸⁷ It is true that *The Untouchables* also offers a different view on Al Capone. This time it is the scene from the beginning of the film in which he is joking with journalists.¹⁸⁸ Still, in general, it might be agreed with the review on *The Hollywood Reporter*, in which it is suggested that “as Al Capone, Robert De Niro is mesmerizingly intimidating”, and with Sheila Benson's review written for *Los Angeles Times*, in which she claims that what makes the movie exciting are the moments with “murderous Capone”.^{189 190}

¹⁸⁵ Turner Classic Movies, “Al Capone.”

¹⁸⁶ *The St.*, 1:37:11.

¹⁸⁷ “Desert Sun, 4 June 1987,” Center for Bibliographical Studies and Research, accessed February 19, 2021, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=DS19870604.2.164&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----1>.

¹⁸⁸ *The Untouchables*, 0:03:50.

¹⁸⁹ “The Untouchables’: THR’s 1987 Review,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, accessed February 19, 2021, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/untouchables-review-1987-movie-1009205>.

¹⁹⁰ “MOVIE REVIEW : CRIME AND CORRUPTION IN ‘THE UNTOUCHABLES’ : ‘THE UNTOUCHABLES’,” *Los Angeles Times*, accessed February 19, 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-06-03-ca-2628-story.html>.

3. CONCLUSION

No matter what the depiction of Chicago gangster era in Hollywood movies is, it is safe to say that it was a rough period beginnings of which may be traced back to the Great Chicago Fire in 1871. The reconstruction and rebirth of the city in the next years has attracted great numbers of people searching for their fortune who could be divided into two groups. In the first group, there were the “elite” individuals including writers and architects who were captivated by the changes happening in the city, while the second group consisted mostly of unskilled people from Europe who were both separating and being separated from the majority society. The fact these people stayed in their communities resulted in cultural pluralism and even further detachment from the majority society. The already unhappy situation was later even more complicated by the Great Depression which turned the city, which economy was based on industrialism, to even bigger despair with its inhabitants experiencing tough times.

The frustration of the inhabitants whose American Dream had turned into a nightmare then led to the social pathology and delinquent behavior in the areas which were heavily hit by the immigration. Based on what was established, an urban environment proved to be a perfect place for additional problems to unfold because it gave the frustrated citizens the possibility to profit from being different as they could rebel against the majority society that rejected them. The result was delinquent behavior which might be associated primarily with boys’ gangs from the poor neighborhoods. These children of often Polish, Italian, or Irish immigrants were caught between two different worlds as they were cut from their roots and, at the same time, they were not accepted by the wider society. They suffered from disorganization and cultural decadence and it was ganging what gave them hope. They did not have to attempt to achieve respect or acceptance in the majority society because they had their own social world that promised them a shortcut to a satisfaction of their dreams. They found out that the activities they were enjoying could become their source of livelihood and the criminal “tradition” that had developed in those areas of low economic status only engaged them not to live a law-abiding life.

With the society failing to provide resistance to the situation getting worse, members of these boys’ gangs often became involved in organized crime. To associate the gangster era with a raise in crime in general would definitely be a wrong assumption as what makes the period of 1920s and 1930s so infamous was the unprecedented interconnection between gangsters, on the one side and public officials, on the other. The 20s and 30s can be additionally perceived as the gangster era due to the spectacular crimes which included killing of innocent people, gangsters, and policemen in significant numbers. In an opposition to this, there were Chicago newspapers

referring about the gangsters and demanding changes. It was alleged the Midwestern metropolis found itself in medieval conditions with gangs threatening and leading the city. This incredible influence of the gangs in the city was then only possible by the reason of a perfect organization, cooperation with politicians and police and also due to the introduction of the 18th amendment giving raise to bootlegging.

And it must be said that the early gangster movies taking place in the city really reflect this reality. Chicago is depicted as being rotten, even on the silver screen. In *The Public Enemy*, the city is established as having an important influence on the character. The tentacles of the city and the contacts the main hero, Tom, maintains during the time he is growing up proved to be the aspects that were partly responsible for the fact that he became a gangster. Other findings from the introductory part are reflected in *Scarface*. This time the film makers decided to show Chicago as a violent place. The setting of the film was again established as one of its characters. Yet this is as far as it goes, because moving forward, it was found out that the social critique in *Al Capone* and in the even newer *The Untouchables* is notably simplified. These are arguably the only after WWII films from the selected filmography that were paying attention to Chicago, but the focus is only limited to depicting the city as being under the total influence of Al Capone in both cases, with no particular consideration of the social situation leading to that. Therefore, concerning the city depiction, based on the analysis, it could be concluded that there is clearly a huge difference between the movies which were filmed during the gangster era and the ones that were done with the benefit of hindsight. While the first group of films tends to authenticity, the second one is characterized by overall simplification.

The selected movies also debate crime as a possibility to achieve the Dream. As much as it was arguably the goal of the movie makers to depict the urban environment in *The Public Enemy* precisely, it was also their aim to fight the situation. The film clearly contains a message against crime, but it was argued that the power of the message is limited as *The Public Enemy* also incorporated a critique of a common life and, more crucially, conventional tries to achieve the American Dream by presenting the character of Mike. The second movie from the selection, *Scarface*, then showed the social appeal could also be present in the amount of violence which, however, overshadowed the original message. *Al Capone* from 1959 is surely another example of the fight against gangsters. Yet, both this movie and *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* could be seen in opposition to the new approach, which was started by Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde*. It is argued the tendency to display criminals as people the viewers might relate to is not a way to glorify them, but Penn and other movie makers who adopted this approach do it as an attempt to communicate the tragedy and, more importantly, the message of their story with more power.

It is, however, important not to construct the picture of the 20s and 30s Chicago only from films done from the perspective of gangsters. It would definitely be untrue to think that since *Bonnie and Clyde*, every movie has been depicting the gangster era in the city portraying more “human-like” characters of the outlaws than was the tendency before. Contrary to, for example, *Road to Perdition* that is seeking sympathies for the gangster character, there is *The Untouchables* which fought crime by presenting a simplified cops-and-robbers formula with an emphasis on the idea that to be an immigrant does not mean one has to become a “robber”.

Discussing films, it must not be forgotten that some aspects could be “Hollywoodized”. This could be perhaps best illustrated on the film depiction of two notorious representatives of the gangster era. John Dillinger was surely an outlaw, a bank robber, but his portrayal in *Public Enemies* and even in *Dillinger* is distant from the reality. The film makers romanticize his life story and take advantage of the myth that the public established of him. His movie portrayal is based on his “occasional chivalry” resulting in Dillinger being depicted as a 20th century Robin Hood. Contrary to this, there is the film character of Al Capone who is present in almost every movie selected for this diploma paper, and in all of them, he is apparently the ultimate villain. His movie portrayals, starting with *Scarface*, which only took inspiration in Al Capone’s life, and ending with his portrayal in *The Untouchables*, have something in common – they present a simplified picture of the Chicago “underworld” boss which is based on his brutality.

To conclude this thesis, the idea that was put forward at the beginning was, on the basis of the analysis of the selected filmography depicting Chicago gangster era, proved right – there is much more to be hiding behind gangster movies. Moreover, it goes as a rule that the further back you look, the better idea of what did the city of Chicago look like you get. While there are films such as *The Public Enemy* and *Scarface* strongly appealing for a change and showing the alarming situation, the movie makers filming in a retrospective do not give too much attention to this situation or they do not touch the topic at all. Concerning the approach of movie makers, it was proved there are two major ways of discussing this topic. The older films tended to take an uncompromising attitude to the gangsters with the situation being forever changed by Arthur Penn’s *Bonnie and Clyde*. This idea was moreover elaborated in the last part of the paper which showed the enormous power in the hands of Hollywood film makers who deemed one gangster representative to the role of an antihero, while there is also the second one whose objective is to embody the ultimate evilness.

4. RESUMÉ

Cílem této práce je analyzovat filmový obraz Chicagské gangsterské éry a obhájit tezi vyřčenou v úvodu práce, tedy že se za filmovým obrazem tohoto období skrývá mnohem více než se zdá. Nejdříve je předložen teoretický základ pro další analýzu. V první kapitole se tato práce zabývá historií Chicaga počínaje Velkým požárem roku 1871, přes znovuzrození města až po sociální problémy související s Vekou hospodářskou krizí, a především pak nárůstem evropské migrace na začátku 20. století. První kapitola práce si také klade za cíl představit sklony k zobrazování města v literatuře pomocí úryvků z děl autorů jakými byli Mark Twain, nebo Carl Sandburg. Druhá kapitola věnující se sociologii je rozdělena na tři podkapitoly, ve kterých jsou postupně diskutovány problémy vyplývající z vývoje situace v Chicagu. První z podkapitol představuje sociology tzv. Chicagské školy, kteří pojali toto město na středozápadě Spojených států jako „sociální laboratoř,“ ve které zkoumali sociálně patologické jevy. Za jejich nejvýznamnější období jsou považovány roky mezi koncem první světové války a Velkou hospodářskou krizí, kdy docházelo k důležité migraci do velkých průmyslových měst. Sociologové, mezi kterými nechyběli např. Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess nebo Frederick M. Thrasher si kladli za cíl zkoumání lidské přirozenosti v městském prostředí s důrazem na úpadek a zločinnost.

A právě výsledky tohoto zkoumání jsou náplní následujících dvou podkapitol. V pořadí druhá podkapitola navazuje na historický kontext popsany v první kapitole a pátrá po příčinách vzniku delikvence. Na základě tvrzení vybraných sociologů bylo zjištěno že kriminální chování je spjato s městským prostředím, a především pak těmi částmi, které trpí neuspořádaností. Tato neuspořádanost, nebo dokonce chaotičnost, má pak za následek vznik tzv. chlapeckých gangů. Bylo doloženo, že utváření těchto skupin bylo typické zejména pro etnické menšiny, které byly izolovány z většinové společnosti. Pokud jde o národnostního složení těchto gangů, v citované statistice se jednalo především o polskou, italskou a irskou menšinou. Jejich delikvence je pak dávana za následek např. skutečnosti, že jejich rodiče, tedy první generace, strávila velkou část života v odlišném prostředí a jejich potomci tak nebyli připraveni na to žít v metropoli se všemi výhodami i neduhy, které jsou s takovým místem spjaty. Často tak byli odsouzeni k tomu, aby strávili život v těch částech města, které byli od organizované, většinové společnosti, odděleny zdánlivě nepřeklenutelnou mezerou. Část této podkapitoly byla věnována také dalšímu etniku, Afroameričanům. I přes to, že se ve filmových zobrazení gangsterské éry vyskytují jen velmi málo, a v hlavních rolích jsou Italské a Irské gangy, k dokreslení situace bylo třeba zmínit že i jejich migrace byla motivována stejnými sny a měla podobné následky, co se kriminality týče. Tyto problémy se ale příliš často netýkaly té skupiny, která je sociology označována jako „bílé

rodilí“ Američané, a to především díky tomu, že jejich život nebyl ovlivněn již dříve zmíněnou neuspořádaností a vypořádáváním se s novým prostředím. Bylo zjištěno, že trávit čas v gangu bylo pro mladistvé lákavé nejdříve jako vzrušující způsob, jak využít volný čas a později je motivovala především možnost vydělat na kriminálních aktivitách. Další kriminalizaci jim pak usnadňoval především fakt, že delikvence byla v inkriminovaných částech města zakořeněna. Tyto poznatky byly následně také doloženy na příkladech ze studie Shawa a McKaye.

Třetí kapitola byla zaměřena na to, jak situace mladistvých delikventů přerostla v jedno z nejvýznamnějších období v historii zločinu. Důvody pro používání pojmu „gangsterská éra“ byly vysvětleny a stejně tak faktické důvody pro to, že se období významně zapsalo do dějin. Dle vybraných zdrojů šlo především o provázanost gangsterů s veřejnými činiteli a celé situaci se také dostávalo podstatně větší pozornosti díky rozvoji žurnalistiky. Mezi další skutečnosti, které umocnily vážnost situace v meziválečném Chicagu pak patřil také 18. dodatek ústavy, tedy zavedení prohibice, avšak současně bylo zdůrazněno, že zločin ve městě zahrnoval i jiná odvětví než nelegální výrobu a distribuci alkoholu, mezi nimiž nechyběly loupeže, vydírání nebo únosy. Obří vliv chicagského podsvětí byl následně ilustrován na impériu Johna Torria, přezdívaného „pivní král“, který si za díky dodržování několika pravidel podmanil celé město. Z tohoto exkurzu nebyl vynechán ani Al Capone, pravděpodobně ten nejznámější představitel gangsterské éry. Práce se zabývala i významem gangů pro společnost. Gangster byl obzvlášť pro obyvatele nejchudších imigrantských čtvrtí někdo, kdo se postupně vypracoval a povedlo se mu dosáhnout Amerického snu i přes to, že měl na startu stejně nevýhodnou pozici. Zločin tak díky nim působil jako snadná cesta k výdělku, na které lidem, kteří se pro něj rozhodli, nepřekážely ani výčitky. Problém pro ně totiž nebylo spáchat zločin, ale nechat se za něj chytit. Poslední podkapitola této části také zmínila problematiku s nápravou zločinců a jejich návratem do společnosti. Závěrem tohoto zkoumání je výsledné konstatování, že gangster je produktem svého prostředí stejně jako je ctihodný občan výsledkem toho svého.

Třetí kapitola první části se věnovala gangsterům ve filmografii. Nejdříve byl rozebrán text Roberta Warshowa, který se věnoval postavám gangsterů. Spojení gangsterů a městského prostředí bylo dále upevněno a stejně tak se text zabýval jejich nejčastějším osudem a také tím, co tyto postavy představují pro filmové diváky. Dále byl učiněn stručný průřez historií filmu s důrazem na zobrazování zločinu, násilí a kriminality obecně. Tato podkapitola nevynechala první filmy, mezi které se řadí např. *The Great Train Robbery*, ale hlavní důraz byl kladen na gangsterské filmy, počínaje jejich „klasickou érou“ ve 30. letech, přes různé tendence filmařů v dalších letech a neopomněla ani představení nejvlivnějších snímků až po současnost.

Jádrem diplomové práce pak byla analýza vybraných filmů, které zobrazují chicagskou gangsterskou éru. Cílem první kapitoly praktické části bylo zjistit, jak vybrané filmy zobrazují město Chicago. Pro tuto část práce byly použity filmy *The Public Enemy*, *Scarface*, *Al Capone* a *The Untouchables*, přičemž každý z těchto snímků na Chicago ve 20. a 30. letech 20. století nahlíží trochu jinak. V *The Public Enemy* jde především o vliv prostředí na jedince, který byl diskutován již v teoretické části. Filmaři *Scarface* pro změnu zobrazili Chicago jako město plné násilí. Oba tyto filmy se přitom snaží, podobně jako dobový tisk, apelovat na veřejné činitele, aby zakročili. *Al Capone* a *The Untouchables*, tedy filmy natočené s odstupem, pak kladly důraz především na zkorumpovanost města, opět skutečnost, která je známá z první části práce, a snažily se komunikovat skutečnost, že zodpovědnost za nastalou situaci nenesl nikdo jiný než Al Capone. Závěrem bylo k obrazu města ve vybraných snímcích stanoveno, že existuje zcela zásadní rozdíl mezi filmy natočenými již během gangsterské éry a snímky z pozdějšího období. Zatímco první dva zástupci vybrané filmografie pracují s prostředím města značně, ty snímky natočené po druhé světové válce už mu věnují jen značně omezenou pozornost, zjednodušují situaci, a hlavně pak upouští od apelu na změnu.

Cílem druhé kapitoly praktické části je analyzovat přístup filmařů k zobrazení gangsterů a k zobrazení zločinné dráhy jako cestě k dosažení Amerického snu. Bylo stanoveno, že většina vybraných filmů se snaží činit morální apel na diváky. V meziválečných, i poválečných filmech je tak konáno jak skrze varování v titulku před i po filmu, tak i odstrašujícími hlavními hrdiny. Jako problém se však ukázalo, že postavy zůstaly divákům vzdáleny a varování před zločinem tak postrádalo potřebnou sílu. Trend byl změněn v 60. letech 20. století díky zcela zásadnímu filmu Arthura Penna *Bonnie and Clyde*. Tento film se nesnažil glorifikovat zločin, ale naopak apelovat skrze hlavní hrdiny, s jejichž tragickým osudem se můžou diváci více ztotožnit. Tento trend následně promluvil i do moderních filmů, jako například do snímku *Road to Perdition*. Práce ale zároveň diskutovala i jiný žánr zastoupený filmem, který zobrazuje gangsterskou éru z opačného pohledu – *The Untouchables*. V tomto filmu také dochází ke kritice zločinu jakožto způsobu, jak dosáhnout Amerického snu. Bohužel ale pomocí postav gangsterů, které divákům pro svoje zjednodušené zobrazení zůstávají vzdáleny.

Třetí a poslední kapitola praktické části pak ukazuje vliv filmařů na obraz historických osobností gangsterské éry. Na příkladu Johna Dillingera a Al Caponeho a jejich zcela rozdílným portrétům v americké filmografii byly doloženy rozdílné tendence filmařů zmíněné v předchozí kapitole. Zatímco je Dillinger díky své pověsti hrdiny z lidu předurčen k tomu být v americké filmografii zobrazován jako „antihrdina“, role Al Caponeho je jiná. Dost možná ten nejznámější představitel Chicagského podsvětí je ztělesněním ultimátního zla.

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