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# ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

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Puzo, Mario. *The Godfather*. United States: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1969

Sekundární:

Poplawski, Paul. *English literature in context*. Cambridge University Press, 2008

Behr, Edward. *Prohibition: Thirteen Years That Changed America*. Arcade; Reprint edition, 2011

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V Pardubicích dne 30. listopadu 2023

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## **ANNOTATION**

This paper examines American Prohibition and uses Mario Puzo's novel *The Godfather* as the primary source for analysis. The theoretical part outlines information related to Prohibition, which are further reflected in the analytical part. The analytical section provides a thematic literary analysis and cultural exploration of the selected period within the novel.

## **KEYWORDS**

prohibition, alcohol, organized crime, *The Godfather*, Mario Puzo, crime literature, values

## **TITLE**

Literary Portrayal of the American Prohibition

## **ANOTACE**

Tato práce se zabývá americkou prohibicí a jako primární zdroj pro analýzu používá román Maria Puza *Kmotr*. V teoretické části jsou nastíněny informace týkající se prohibice, které se dále odrážejí v analytické části. Analytická část poskytuje tematický literární rozbor a kulturní zkoumání vybraného období v rámci románu.

## **KEYWORDS**

prohibice, alcohol, organizovaný zločin, *Kmotr*, Mario Puzo, kriminální literatura, hodnoty

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## INTRODUCTION

Only a few historical events in American history can fascinate as much as the Prohibition era of the early 20th century. It was a crucial moment in the country's social and political development, which caused a nationwide constitutional ban on the importation, manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages that was in effect from 1920 to 1933. This period still interests many people today and inspires writers to portray this period in their works.

This bachelor's thesis explores the American Prohibition period and analyzes how it is portrayed in the novel *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo. Through the narrative of this novel, the author presents an opportunity for readers to delve into this era and explore the aspects of prohibition that are present in the book.

Before examining the plot of Puzo's novel and its depiction of prohibition, it is necessary to introduce the theoretical framework that serves as a basis for the analysis. In the first part of this thesis, the theoretical site is explained, focusing on the exploration of American values that shaped the Prohibition era and laid the groundwork for its eventual repeal. By understanding American culture's moral, ethical, and social foundations during this period, a better understanding of the motivations and consequences associated with passing and repealing Prohibition can be achieved.

The next chapter explores the roots of Prohibition, which go back to the 19th century. It outlines the issues of the anti-alcohol movements, their motivations, and key figures. Additionally, the significance of the American presidential election is examined. With an emphasis on historical context, the key moment in American history was marked by the passage of the Volstead Act. This legislative landmark provided the framework for the implementation of Prohibition enforcement measures. Furthermore, the problems that the authorities faced in controlling the illegal liquor trade are revealed. Finally, the chapter discusses the reasons why Prohibition ended and why it is perceived as problematic.

The third and fourth chapters examine society during the Prohibition period of 1920-1933 and its socio-economic consequences. The period of the 'Roaring Twenties' and the economic boom was characterized by rich social life and an explosion of economic prosperity. But it also brought growing social inequalities and tensions. Immigrants and minorities were often oppressed and subjected to discrimination, leading to widening social and ethnic divides. While some individuals and groups prospered, others found themselves in desperate situations and struggling to survive in difficult conditions. The socio-economic impact of Prohibition demonstrated itself in various ways. While some people prospered thanks to profits from illegal alcohol sales and a criminal infrastructure, legal businesses such as bars and restaurants suffered losses and often had to close. This situation led to a significant shift in economic activities and business strategies that were influenced by hidden economic operations and growing economic inequalities.

The final theoretical chapter deals with the broad field of the literary genre of crime literature and offers a comprehensive examination of its evolution over time, its themes, and its lasting impact. The chapter outlines the origins of crime literature and how it is seen today. Furthermore, the chapter explores the influence of *The Godfather* on crime literature and explains how Mario Puzo left a permanent mark on the genre.

In the second part of this thesis, a detailed analysis is undertaken to answer the research question, "How is Prohibition portrayed in Mario Puzo's novel *The Godfather*?" Applying the knowledge gained in the theoretical part, these findings are illustrated through selected passages from the book. Through the analysis of characters, plot, and setting, a deeper understanding of how the theme of prohibition is treated in the work is gained.

# 1. AMERICAN VALUES

American values have a rich history that has been formed by many different factors. From the earliest days of settlement to the present, they have evolved through events, social changes, and ideas. Understanding American values and history gives a clearer picture of why Prohibition was once supported and why opinions have changed over time. This chapter will focus on the most important American values, their importance during the era of American prohibition and briefly outline the events in which these values were challenged.

As Kluckhohn states in his work *The Evolution of Contemporary American Values*, the cornerstone of American values is an emphasis on freedom and individualism, which is expressed by a firm commitment to individual rights, personal freedom, and the right to pursue one's own conception of happiness.<sup>1</sup> This persistent idea reflects a deeply held belief in individuals' natural right to shape their destiny without unnecessary restrictions. From the earliest settlers to contemporary Americans, this commitment to self-determination remains a defining aspect of the nation's identity. However, in addition to this idea, there is a degree of conservatism in American values that is rooted in religious traditions and a Puritan ethic that promotes temperance and moral integrity. Moreover, the diversity of the American population, consisting of people from countless backgrounds and traditions, has continually enriched and expanded the variety of American values, promoting both unity and discord as different groups try to define and defend their own interpretation of what truly American values are.<sup>2</sup> In essence, the combination of tradition, individuality, and diversity reflects the diverse structure of American society, which is still evident today.

Moreover, these conflicting beliefs offer insight into the different motivations behind attitudes toward Prohibition. This era represents a key moment in American history, in which the production, sale, and distribution of alcoholic beverages was banned. As D. Okrent states, on the one hand, part of the population eagerly supported Prohibition as a way to eliminate the social ills associated with alcohol consumption and saw it as an opportunity to protect public health and morality. This view was deeply rooted in the values of temperance, morality, and social responsibility and reflected a desire to promote a decent and well-ordered society. On the other hand, the opposition to Prohibition was illustrated by those who resisted government intrusion on personal freedoms. This opposition was supported by a belief in personal freedom and the principle of individual choice. In addition, the widespread denial of Prohibition laws highlighted the challenges of regulating behavior through legislation and the limitations of prohibitionist policies in achieving their intended goals. Ultimately, the repeal of Prohibition in 1933 reflected a change in public opinion and a recognition of the need for a different approach to social issues.<sup>3</sup> The Prohibition era left a lasting effect on American society, shaping attitudes towards alcohol, law enforcement, and individual rights and highlighting the ongoing tension between personal freedom and social responsibility in American culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Clyde Kluckhohn, *The Evolution of Contemporary American Values* (Daedalus 1958), 78–109. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20026440>.

<sup>2</sup> Kluckhohn, *The Evolution of Contemporary American Values*, 85.

<sup>3</sup> D. Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*, (Last Laugh, Inc., 2010) 10. [http://books.google.ie/books?id=MJbBqn3XWqAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=1439171696,+9781439171691&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs\\_api](http://books.google.ie/books?id=MJbBqn3XWqAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=1439171696,+9781439171691&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api)

Other moments in history have also significantly shaped American values. The American Revolution, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement are just a few examples of pivotal moments where the nation struggled with the meaning and application of its core values. The American Revolution, which resulted in the country's independence from British rule, emphasized principles of freedom, democracy, and self-governance. The Civil War fought over issues of slavery and states' rights, challenged the nation to confront its conflicts and strive for a better union. Similarly, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s aimed to address racial inequality and discrimination, further pushing the boundaries of American values toward equality and justice for all citizens.<sup>4</sup> These historic milestones are a reminder of the ongoing evolution of American values and the search for a more inclusive and more just society. Together, they reflect the nation's ongoing struggle to maintain its basic principles and ensure that every person, regardless of race, gender, or background, is treated with dignity and respect. During these difficult and challenging times, America continually tried to match its ideals with the reality of its diverse population, demonstrating a commitment to progress and social justice.

American values are important in the context of American prohibition because they help to understand the motives behind both the enactment and eventual repeal of prohibition. The emphasis on freedom and individualism, deeply rooted in American values, illustrates the reasons for the support of Prohibition by people who tried to address the social ills associated with alcohol consumption. Simultaneously, it illuminates the resistance to government intrusion on personal freedom from those opposing Prohibition's encroachment on individual freedoms. Moreover, the influence of crucial historical moments, such as the Declaration of Independence and the Civil Rights Movement, shows the permanent dedication to equality, justice, and the pursuit of happiness inherent in American values. In the following chapter, a comprehensive examination of the Prohibition period will be undertaken.

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<sup>4</sup> Ulrich P. Marybeth, *American Values, Interests, And Purpos: Perspective On The Roots Of American Political And Strategic Culture*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12027.3>.

## 2. Historical and Cultural Context of the American Prohibition

This chapter discusses the historical and cultural context of the American Prohibition period, one of the most critical social and political periods in American history. It was a nationwide constitutional ban on the importation, manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages that was in effect from 1920 to 1933. Many scholars and historians have focused on this period, drawing particularly on the works of E. Behr, D. Okrent, L. McGirr, and Michael A. Lerner.

The roots of the American Prohibition can be traced back to the 19th century. As outlined in *Prohibition: The Thirteen Years That Changed America* by E. Behr. It all started with a law that banned the sale of alcohol (but not consumption, personal manufacture, and storage) in 1851. This law was introduced by Mayor Neal Dow from Maine. Its purpose was to deal with drunkenness and criminality. Only alcohol used for medical or industrial purposes was allowed to be sold. By 1855, this legislation inspired several other states.<sup>5</sup> However, according to D. Okrent's insights, the law faced many challenges. The ban on the sale of alcohol encouraged bootlegging, leading to the eventual repeal of these laws in many states. By 1865, even Maine repealed the law.<sup>6</sup> The historical perspective not only illustrates the conflicts and unexpected outcomes of the first attempts at prohibition but also shows the complex and dynamic character of the entire period of American Prohibition.

As America entered a new era marked by industrial growth and social change, the late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed a resurgence of the anti-alcohol movement in the US. As D. Okrent discusses in his work *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*, this movement included diverse groups such as feminists, who saw alcohol as a contributor to domestic abuse and poverty, social reformers, and religious organizations. Many Religious Protestants believed that alcohol was sinful and that its consumption led to moral decay. However, support for legal limits on alcohol consumption extended beyond religious communities. Part of the prohibition movement was linked to a secular "social reform" initiative within the broader progressivism movement. Key organizations in this secular reform included the Prohibition Party and the Anti-saloon League.<sup>7</sup> Prohibitionists argued that alcohol was the cause of many social problems,

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<sup>5</sup> E. Behr, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years That Changed America*. (New York: 1996,) 29.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition Last Laugh*, (Last Laugh, Inc,2010), 10.  
[http://books.google.ie/books?id=MJbBqn3XWqAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=1439171696,+9781439171691&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs\\_api](http://books.google.ie/books?id=MJbBqn3XWqAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=1439171696,+9781439171691&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api)

<sup>7</sup> Okrent *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*,.21.

including poverty, crime, and domestic violence, firmly believing that its elimination from everyday life would lead to a healthier, more moral, and prosperous society.

In the work *The Political Economy of Prohibition in the United States*, Brian Goff and Gary Anderson define the beginning of the new century.<sup>8</sup> The groups supporting Prohibition tried to convince the public and political leaders through campaigns and arguments that alcohol restrictions would bring many social benefits. L. McGirr further expands on this area, stating that these efforts gained traction, especially during the Industrial Revolution, as the groups found support from factory owners. They saw Prohibition as a means to prevent accidents and enhance worker efficiency amidst increased industrial production and extended working hours. An important milestone was the US entry into World War I in April 1917. Alcohol began to be presented as a threat to national security. Soldiers were required to remain sober due to concerns about potential disclosure of wartime secrets. Later, in December 1917, the House voted to impose nationwide Prohibition and passed the Volstead Act.<sup>9</sup> This legislative measure aimed to address various aspects of alcohol-related activities, such as manufacturing, selling, transporting, exchanging, importing, exporting, serving, or pouring alcohol. While these efforts reflected the evolving societal attitudes, they also laid the groundwork for a significant shift in the nation's cultural landscape. E. Behr explains the Act in more detail and gives an overview of its subjects. Beverages were not allowed to exceed one percent of alcohol. It was also illegal to carry a flask, to take liquor into hotels and restaurants for consumption, or to receive or give a bottle of liquor as a gift. On the other hand, the legislation allowed the production of alcohol for industrial purposes - toilet products, flavored extracts, syrups, vinegar, religious purposes, and medical purposes (doctors were allowed to prescribe whisky but only a pint every ten days). It also allowed buying, storage, and in-home consumption.<sup>10</sup> The passage of the law was only a foreshadowing of what society would actually look like in the following years.

As a result of growing support for Prohibition, the legislative process moved more quickly, bringing the issue to the forefront of national politics. The Volstead Act was presented to the

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<sup>8</sup> Brian Goff and Gary Anderson, *The Political Economy of Prohibition in the United States, 1919-1933*, (*Social Science Quarterly* 1994): 270–283. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42863332>.

<sup>9</sup> L. McGirr, *The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State*. (W. W. Norton & Company 2007)

[http://books.google.ie/books?id=3ehwBgAAQBAJ&pg=PT347&dq=0393248798,+9780393248791&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs\\_api](http://books.google.ie/books?id=3ehwBgAAQBAJ&pg=PT347&dq=0393248798,+9780393248791&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api), 34-35

<sup>10</sup> Behr, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years That Changed America*

Senate the very next days, where a majority of members voted to approve it. By the end of 1918, 18 states had ratified the Act, with others following suit in the next year.<sup>11</sup>

The problems and overall journey, involving approval, ratification, and the following years constituted a highly intricate process examined by L. McGirr. A historically significant landmark was the approval of the 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1919, which prohibited the manufacture, sale, and distribution of alcohol. This Amendment aimed to deal with social issues associated with alcohol consumption. Despite an unsuccessful attempt by President Woodrow Wilson to veto the Volstead Act, a one-year gap between ratification and implementation meant that the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment came officially into effect on 17 January 1920.<sup>12</sup> As a result, the Prohibition era began, which fundamentally changed American society and created a wave of legal and cultural dilemmas. This period brought a host of problems, from the rise of illegal trade to debates over personal freedoms and government interference. It sparked significant changes in social norms and law enforcement practices and left a permanent impact on American culture and politics.

Prohibition was problematic from its beginning. It was impaired by challenges that cast a shadow over its effectiveness. The ambitious attempt to eliminate the production, sale, and consumption of alcoholic beverages in the early 1920s faced multiple issues that ultimately determined its troubled path. The goal of creating a dry nation provoked controversy and resistance, setting the stage for a complex economic and legal situation. Looking into the turbulent era of Prohibition, the problems embedded in its very foundation would shape the course of this transformative period in American history. Lerner provides a comprehensive description in his work, unfolding events and important details of the American Prohibition era. Starting in the early 1920s, the Prohibition Unit (later known as The Bureau of Prohibition) was formed. The Unit fell under the Department of Treasury and was responsible for overseeing the enforcement of Prohibition throughout the United States.<sup>13</sup> For instance, it organized raids on smugglers' houses and arrested people who were subsequently selling alcoholic beverages. However, the Prohibition Unit was destined to fail from the beginning because it lacked the necessary resources to fully enforce the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment. It had a bad reputation among the residents since its establishment, for several reasons. The agents were known for their venality. They only received small amounts of money from state, which made it easy to bribe them.

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<sup>11</sup> Michael A. Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*, (Cambridge, 2007) 68.

<sup>12</sup> McGirr, *The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State*

<sup>13</sup> Behr, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years That Changed America*

Furthermore, the corrupt agents drew attention to themselves as they did not hide their newly acquired wealth. They wore diamond jewellery and drove expensive cars that they simply could not afford out of their regular salaries. In addition to corruption, the Prohibition Unit was plagued by scandals related to high levels of aggression and inadequate training of agents.<sup>14</sup> Escalating dissatisfaction with the Prohibition Unit's shortcomings led to a general rejection of enforcement efforts, which further worsened the problems faced in controlling alcohol consumption in the country. The shortcomings of Prohibition enforcement subsequently led to a flourishing illegal liquor market as citizens looked for illegal ways to obtain and indulge in prohibited spirits.

The end of the prohibition era began in 1928 when a presidential election was held between two candidates. Both had very different views on Prohibition, which made them ideal candidates to address the issue that divided society over alcohol consumption. The Democratic Party nominated Alfred E. Smith, and the Republican Party nominated Herbert C. Hoover.<sup>15</sup> Smith openly expressed his opposition to the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, advocating for the legalization of wine and beer.<sup>16</sup> Hoover, on the other hand, believed that Prohibition was a great social and economic experiment and opposed its repeal.<sup>17</sup> Smith garnered support from Afro-American immigrants, Jews, and the working class. Further details of this aspect will be discussed in detail in the following chapters, together with the socio-economic situation and the characteristics of society at that time. The topic of immigration is also crucial for the analytical part of this thesis. Unfortunately, the support from immigrants was not sufficient to secure victory, and Hoover became the new president. This election determined the direction of Prohibition for the next four years. Although Al Smith was defeated, his candidacy expanded the Democratic Party's base, which contributed to its victory in the 1932 election.<sup>18</sup> Smith's influence, despite his electoral loss, underscored a shifting political environment, reflecting changing attitudes and demographics that would shape future American politics. His campaign's impact resonated beyond the election, setting a precedent for the Democratic Party's strategy and alliances in the next years.

The downfall of Prohibition in the United States was not a sudden event but rather the result of various and interlinked factors, which are discussed in detail mainly in the work *The Political*

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<sup>14</sup> Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*, 66-71

<sup>15</sup> McGirr, *The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State*, 167

<sup>16</sup> Lerner *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*, 239-240.

<sup>17</sup> Behr, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years That Changed America*. 229.

<sup>18</sup> Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*, 240-251.

*Economy of Prohibition in the United States* by Goff and Anderson. The first being the economic repercussions following the crash of the New York Stock Exchange on October 24, 1929. This event plunged the nation into the Great Depression, leaving millions of Americans unemployed. Consequently, there was widespread public outrage over the substantial government expenditure on enforcing the Volstead Act during a time of severe economic crisis.<sup>19</sup> The repeal of Prohibition presented an opportunity to create new jobs in breweries and distilleries, potentially benefiting farmers as well. Legalizing alcohol was also anticipated to increase tax revenues. However, the onset of the Depression had already impacted the alcohol industry. Clubs, bars, and illegal 'speakeasies' saw a significant drop in clientele, profits falling by up to 75%, and the prices of alcoholic beverages also rapidly declining. As Lerner states in his work, the economic situation, exacerbated by the failure of nearly 5,000 banks and the halt in production at many factories leading to sustained high unemployment, underscored the potential benefits of ending Prohibition.<sup>20</sup> These challenges highlighted the urgency of a comprehensive solution, with the repeal of Prohibition presenting a tangible avenue for economic recovery. By restoring legal alcohol production, the government aimed not only to stimulate industries and provide employment opportunities but also to adapt its policies in response to the changing social and economic landscape of the country, recognizing the interconnectedness of social, economic, and political factors.

Another significant factor contributing to the fall of Prohibition was the formation of a broad coalition of anti-prohibition organizations. This coalition contained a diverse array of groups, including women's organizations and influential associations formed by wealthy individuals and business leaders. Advocacy groups, such as the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment, played a crucial role in influencing public opinion and building support for the repeal.<sup>21</sup> These groups claimed that the era of Prohibition led to the rise of organized crime, as criminal organizations grabbed the opportunity to profit from the illegal alcohol trade. Additionally, the ban on alcohol contributed to unexpected consequences, such as a decline in food consumption, as some individuals turned to illegal drinking institutions known as speakeasies.<sup>22</sup> It was difficult to enforce it effectively and led to a number of social and economic problems, including organized crime, corruption, and a decline in food consumption.

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<sup>19</sup> Goff and Anderson, *The Political Economy of Prohibition in the United States*, 273.

<sup>20</sup> Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*, 271-273.

<sup>21</sup> Goff and Anderson, *The Political Economy of Prohibition in the United States*, 276

<sup>22</sup> Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*, 273-274.

An important turning point for the future direction of the 18th Amendment was the presidential election of 1932. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, representing the Democratic Party, ran against Herbert Hoover, who was the candidate for the Republican Party.<sup>23</sup> Roosevelt began to unify the party and garner support from the American people. He promised to restore America for its people and introduced his New Deal, which was supposed to help America through the Great Depression. Additionally, Roosevelt publicly expressed his stance on the repeal of Prohibition.<sup>24</sup> These ideas played a key role in securing Roosevelt's victory in the election. Through their strategic implementation and widespread support mobilization, they effectively encouraged public sentiment, garnered crucial endorsements, and rallied diverse constituencies to actively advocate his candidacy.

Roosevelt assumed the presidency on March 4, 1933. Nine days later, he requested a special session of Congress to amend the Volstead Act. His main goal was the immediate legalization of beer and wine. Congress did not oppose the proposal and passed the Beer and Wine Revenue Act, which the President subsequently signed on March 22, 1933. However, to fully repeal Prohibition, it was important to pass and ratify a new constitutional amendment.<sup>25</sup> On 5<sup>th</sup> December in 1933, the 18th Amendment was repealed by the 21st Amendment<sup>26</sup> This amendment not only overturned the prohibition imposed by the 18th Amendment but also granted individual states the authority to regulate and control the sale of alcoholic beverages within their borders. The ratification of the 21st Amendment ended the era of Prohibition, bringing about significant changes in American society and marking a unique chapter in the nation's constitutional history.<sup>27</sup> The decision to repeal Prohibition reflected a shift in social attitudes and an acknowledgment of the shortcomings associated with the ban on alcohol. The harmful consequences of Prohibition had become increasingly apparent. In addition, the repeal of Prohibition demonstrated the capacity for legal adjustments in response to public needs and highlighted the dynamic interplay between legislation, public sentiment, and economic considerations in shaping national policies.

This chapter provided insight into the historical and cultural context of the Prohibition era in America. It delved into the roots of Prohibition and traced its origins in the 19th century. Furthermore, this chapter explored the rise of the anti-alcohol movement and the multifaceted

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<sup>23</sup> Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*, 227-297.

<sup>24</sup> Behr, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years That Changed America*. 236.

<sup>25</sup> Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*, 302-305.

<sup>26</sup> Behr, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years That Changed America*. 243.

<sup>27</sup> Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*, 302-305.

problems associated with Prohibition, from the rise of organized crime and alcohol smuggling to the rise of underground speakeasies and the undermining of civil liberties. Moreover, the chapter examined the process leading to the eventual end of Prohibition. Highlighting the legislative efforts, changes in public opinion, and the final ratification of the 21st Amendment, which repealed the 18th Amendment and officially ended the era of nationwide alcohol prohibition.

In the following chapters, a deeper analysis of the post-prohibition era will be undertaken. This includes an exploration of the social impacts and lasting effects of Prohibition, ranging from its influence on law enforcement practices and criminal justice reform to its enduring legacy on American culture, politics, and public health initiatives. By focusing on these topics, subsequent chapters will illuminate the far-reaching consequences of Prohibition and its enduring significance in shaping the fabric of American society.

### 3. SOCIETY IN 1920-1933

The previous chapter discussed the overall period of American Prohibition and its historical and cultural context. In this chapter, the society from 1920 to 1933 is further discussed. This period, known as the Roaring Twenties, was characterized by a booming economy, rapid urbanization, and a shift towards consumerism. Many people enjoyed newfound prosperity and leisure time, leading to a rise in popular culture, such as jazz music, dance, and cinema. However, this period was full of social tensions and inequalities. While some Americans prospered, others struggled with poverty and discrimination.

In the work *The Roaring Twenties*, Joshua Zeitz provides a thorough and insightful analysis of the major issues and events that shaped this significant period in American history. His work offers a compelling description of the cultural, social, and political transformations that took place during the Prohibition era and provides readers with a deep understanding of the complexities and contradictions of the time. He illustrates that the 1920s witnessed a significant shift from the traditional American past and moved to a more modern era. Before World War I, the country retained strong cultural and psychological ties to the nineteenth century. In the 1920s, however, America appeared to have nostalgic connections to the recent past and adopted a more forward-looking view of the future. This period is vividly characterized by images of flappers and dance halls, movie palaces, and radio empires, as well as the enactment of Prohibition and the emergence of speakeasies. Scientific discoveries were shattering traditional notions of space and time, aviators were pushing the boundaries of human flight, and women were entering the workforce in unprecedented numbers.<sup>28</sup> The nation exuded confidence and enjoyed unprecedented wealth.

The trends that characterized the distinctiveness of the 1920s were not abrupt developments but rather the culmination of long-term trends that had been evolving over the course of several years and, in some cases, decades. Despite commonly associating the twenties with women's liberation, the era merely amplified shifts that had been gradually taking place. For example, the iconic figures of the flappers are depicted in Kenneth's work: *Prosperity's Child: Some Thoughts on the Flapper*. Flapper girls were known for their bold behavior, speech, and fashion choices; they became emblematic of the era and were celebrated in literature and film. They defied traditional gender norms with daring fashion choices, including shorter skirts and bobbed hairstyles. They frequented jazz clubs and dance halls, embracing activities once considered scandalous. The lifestyle of flappers was met with both admiration and criticism.<sup>29</sup> Despite the controversy, flapper girls left a lasting legacy as symbols of defiance and female empowerment, inspiring generations to challenge conventions and embrace independence.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that women had challenged Victorian cultural norms long before the 1920s. The culmination of the women's suffrage movement, which resulted in the granting of the right to vote in 1920, was a significant milestone in the wider struggle for gender equality. This achievement reflected the broader social pressure for women's rights and

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<sup>28</sup> Joshua Zeitz, *The Roaring Twenties*, (Google Books 2017)

<https://books.google.cz/books?id=FtbnIe103p4C&lpg=PP1&dq=roaring%20twenties&lr&hl=cs&pg=PR11#v=onepage&q=roaring%20twenties&f=false>.

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth A. Yellis, *Prosperity's Child: Some Thoughts on the Flapper*, (American Quarterly 1969): 44–64.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/2710772>.

empowerment. In addition, the process of urbanization and industrialization provided opportunities for women to enter the workforce, while changes in social norms allowed for more independent lifestyles. By the 1920s, most of the urban working women lived independently, away from parental oversight, and social conventions like dating had evolved to allow for more freedom and autonomy.<sup>30</sup>

This period is also associated with unprecedented prosperity in America, with advancements in technology and industry leading to improved living standards for many. However, as written in the book *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture*, the prosperity had its roots in earlier developments, as mechanization in factories and shops reduced the work week for urban blue-collar workers and increased real wages. With more time and money at their disposal, Americans indulged in new forms of entertainment like dance halls, movie theatres, and amusement parks while also purchasing durable goods made affordable by new production and distribution methods. The post-war period further accelerated this trend, with households spending a significant portion of their earnings on items ranging from phonographs to automobiles. Many Americans turned to credit to afford these luxuries, with a substantial portion of furniture, phonographs, and washing machines being bought on credit by the mid-1920s. Advertising played a crucial role in promoting consumerism, associating the purchase of goods and services with the fulfillment of dreams and aspirations. The widespread dissemination of this "gospel of fun" through various media channels reinforced the notion that people bought not just products but hope for a better future.<sup>31</sup>

America in the 1920s experienced a significant revolution in morals, aesthetics, and everyday life, characterized by bold innovation and experimentation. However, during this wave of change, a counterrevolutionary movement emerged to oppose the evolving culture. Leach states that despite the opposition, conservatives established missions, publishing houses, and radio stations to advance their agenda. Throughout the ongoing clash between liberal and fundamentalist ideologies, conservative forces have maintained their influence, resulting in the resurgence of fundamentalism as a dominant force in American public life for years to come. More successful in the immediate term was the Ku Klux Klan, which experienced a remarkable resurgence. By 1925, its membership had swelled to at least five million, exerting considerable political influence in key states like Indiana, Texas, Oklahoma, and Colorado. Notably, the Klan achieved a significant legislative victory in 1924 with the passage of a stringent anti-immigration law, effectively closing America's doors to immigrants for the next four decades. The Klan's ideology, although fundamentally rooted in white supremacy, expanded to target Jews, Catholics, Asians, and "new women," reflecting a broader agenda of intolerance.<sup>32</sup> Its appeal extended across urban and rural divides, drawing adherents with fundamentalist and conservative beliefs. Beyond its political activities, the Klan also engaged in acts of violence and intimidation against its perceived enemies. African Americans were frequent targets of Klan violence, with lynchings and other forms of racial terror occurring throughout the decade. Additionally, the Klan sought to impose its moral and social values on society, advocating for strict adherence to traditional Christian beliefs and opposing perceived threats to white Protestant dominance. Despite its significant influence during the 1920s, the Klan's power

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<sup>30</sup> Zeitz, *The Roaring Twenties*, 3

<sup>31</sup> William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York, 1993), 298.

<sup>32</sup> Dumeni Lynn, *Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York, 1995), 235

began to decline towards the end of the decade. Internal divisions, scandals, and legal challenges weakened the organization, leading to a decline in membership and influence.<sup>33</sup> However, the Klan's resurgence left a lasting impact on American society, highlighting the persistence of racism, nativism, and intolerance in the country's history.

Because of Prohibition, many people engaged in illegal activities. As previously mentioned, the creation of speakeasies was a direct response to Prohibition and provided places where people could indulge in illegal drinking. However, the illegal alcohol trade extended beyond speakeasies, involving various illegal enterprises such as bootlegging, smuggling, and the production of homemade liquor. During the Prohibition era, illegal activities became deeply embedded within American society, and individuals from all classes actively participated in or benefited from the illegal alcohol trade. Bootleggers benefited from the lucrative market by smuggling contraband liquor into the country, often through elaborate networks and secret routes.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, organized crime syndicates, such as the Mafia, took the opportunity to expand their influence and wealth through criminal means, including racketeering, gambling, and extortion. The allure of easy money and the high demand for prohibited goods fuelled a culture of lawlessness and corruption during this period. In essence, the enactment of Prohibition inadvertently gave rise to a shadow economy characterized by illegal activities and clandestine operations.<sup>35</sup> The widespread violation of Prohibition laws underscored the social tensions and conflicts of the era as individuals grappled with the conflicting forces of moral righteousness and the allure of forbidden pleasures.

Prohibition-era gangsters were mostly from immigrant backgrounds, with a significant number of Italians and Jews. Many of these gangsters were either brought to the United States as children or were born to immigrant parents on American soil. The wave of immigration, driven by the harsh living conditions in countries like Italy, offered the promise of a better life in the emerging and prosperous United States.<sup>36</sup> However, lacking proficiency in the English language and formal education, their prospects for securing well-paid employment were dismal. These immigrant children often struggled to assimilate into society. They faced challenges adjusting to their new environment and frequently dropped out of school when the opportunity arose. Their marginalized status within society discouraged them from pursuing higher education and lucrative careers.<sup>37</sup> As sociologist Daniel Bell observes, these young immigrants, who grew up in urban slums, received their education on the streets rather than in the classroom. Consequently, achieving social status and economic prosperity proved obscure for many. Prohibition presented a unique economic opportunity for these individuals, offering a pathway to wealth and power through involvement in prohibited activities.<sup>38</sup> With limited avenues for legitimate advancement, many turned to illegal businesses as a means to climb the socioeconomic ladder and attain a semblance of success in a society that often marginalized them.

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<sup>33</sup> Zeitz, *The Roaring Twenties*, 6

<sup>34</sup> Ian Tyrrell, *Alcohol Prohibition in the USA*, (Ian Tyrrell, 2007) [www.iantyrrell.wordpress.com/alcohol-prohibition-in-the-usa/](http://www.iantyrrell.wordpress.com/alcohol-prohibition-in-the-usa/)

<sup>35</sup> Selwyn Raab, *Five Families: The Rise, Decline, and Resurgence of America's Most Powerful Mafia Empires*, (St. Martin's Press, 2005)

<sup>36</sup> Marc Mappen, *Prohibition Gangsters: The Rise and Fall of a Bad Generation*, (Rutgers UP, 2013)

<sup>37</sup> Raab, *Five Families: The Rise, Decline, and Resurgence of America's Most Powerful Mafia Empires*

<sup>38</sup> Daniel Bell, *Crime as an American Way of Life: A Queer ladder of Social Mobility in the end of ideology*. (Free Press, 1960)

One of the most famous gangsters in history is Al Capone. For a long time, he controlled the whole city of Chicago. He gathered enormous wealth and went from being an unknown immigrant to becoming a powerful figure in the Chicago Mafia who pursued his desires relentlessly. A century on, his legacy remains strong, and the name Capone is still synonymous with organized crime and the Mafia. As mentioned in the book *Al Capone: His Life, Legacy and Legend* by Deirdre Bair, he was born to Italian immigrant parents and came to power during Prohibition when the illegal liquor trade flourished. In 1919, Capone moved to Chicago, quickly rose through the ranks of criminals, and became the city's head honcho after the retirement of his mentor, Johnny Torrio. During Capone's reign, Chicago became synonymous with organized crime, with Capone controlling liquor smuggling, gambling, and other illegal activities. His reign was marred by violence, including the infamous St. Valentine's Day Massacre of 1929. Capone's criminal empire, however, attracted the attention of law enforcement, and he was eventually convicted of tax evasion and sentenced to federal prison in 1931. The downfall of Al Capone marked the end of an era characterized by brazen criminal activity, but his legacy remains as a reminder of the extravagance and brutality that was common in the mafia during the Prohibition era.<sup>39</sup> Capone's rise and fall represented the complex relationship between Italian gangsters, the mafia, and the Prohibition movement. As a central figure in the illegal alcohol trade, he embodied both the entrepreneurial spirit and the ruthless tactics that defined the criminal underworld of the time. However, his eventual downfall also highlighted the limitations of criminal freedom and the efforts of law enforcement to combat organized crime during one of America's most turbulent periods.

This chapter examined the society in the years between 1920 and 1933, which saw a rise in nativism and anti-immigrant sentiment, as well as a backlash against the increasing influence of women in society. One of the most significant events of this period was Prohibition, the nationwide ban on alcohol that lasted from 1920 to 1933. This policy was intended to reduce crime and improve public health, but it ultimately led to increased organized crime and corruption. It also affected immigrants and communities of the poor, who often resorted to illegal activities to circumvent Prohibition laws due to economic hardship. The American Prohibition ended in 1933, marking the end of an era and the beginning of a new phase in American history. The era saw the rise of organized crime syndicates, notably the mafia, which capitalized on the demand for contraband alcohol. The mafia became heavily involved in bootlegging operations, smuggling alcohol, and establishing speakeasies, further complicating law enforcement efforts and contributing to the underworld culture of the time. These criminal enterprises wielded significant influence and power during Prohibition. One of the most famous mafia figures was Al Capone, who is still regarded as one of the greatest villains of all time. The Prohibition era's lasting impact on American culture and politics continues to be felt to this day.

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<sup>39</sup> Deirdre Bair, *Al Capone: His Life, Legacy and Legend*, (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 2016)

## 4. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF PROHIBITION

American Prohibition, introduced by the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution and the Volstead Act, was an experiment regulating social behavior and limiting alcohol consumption. Prohibition period changed various aspects of people's lives. This chapter examines the effects of Prohibition, including its impact on law enforcement, public health, the economy, and culture.

The reasons for the failure of prohibition are subject to debate. As Aaron states, many citizens openly broke prohibition laws and continued to consume alcohol as if it were not prohibited. The lack of enforcement officers made it nearly impossible to enforce the law effectively. Corruption among Prohibition agents and law enforcement officers further challenged enforcement efforts, as they were often easily bribed by gangster groups. Organized crime was blooming as criminal organizations seized the opportunity to profit from bootlegging and speakeasies. Moreover, loose monitoring of saloons provided opportunities for smuggling and other violations of Prohibition laws. However, Advocates of prohibition laws claimed that, to some extent, Prohibition was successful. They observed improvements in the physical well-being and sobriety of the workforce. In addition, individuals redirected their spending from alcohol to other goods and services. As spending on alcohol ceased to be a problem, people began to invest in practical household appliances, vehicles, and real estate.<sup>40</sup> Prohibition thus helped stabilize the spending patterns of the working class and promoted a path to prosperity.

Moreover, Prohibition had a significant impact on the economy, with far-reaching consequences that were visible in various sectors. The sudden ban on alcohol production and sales resulted in the closure of thousands of breweries, distilleries, and saloons, leading to widespread job losses and economic dislocation. Many workers in the alcohol industry found themselves unemployed and financially unstable. In addition, businesses dependent on the sale of alcohol experienced a sharp drop in revenue, which worsened their financial problems and led to a massive wave of closures. At the same time, there was a significant loss of tax revenue previously generated from alcohol sales, further burdening public finances in an already difficult economic period.<sup>41</sup> This interplay of factors underscored Prohibition's far-reaching effects on American society's economic situation.

Additionally, according to L. McGirr, Prohibition brought about a shift in social norms and behaviors. The ban on alcohol consumption gave rise to a culture of secretiveness and rebellion, with many Americans breaking the law by frequenting speakeasies and engaging in illegal drinking. This behavior contributed to a sense of rebellion against authority and encouraged a spirit of resistance to government regulation. Furthermore, Prohibition worsened social divisions and tensions within American society. The enforcement of Prohibition laws disproportionately targeted immigrant communities and marginalized groups, leading to an increase of discrimination and social unrest.<sup>42</sup> The uneven enforcement of Prohibition laws added to a sense of injustice and disillusionment among segments of the population, further undermining trust in government institutions.

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<sup>40</sup> Paul Aaron and David Musto, *Temperance and Prohibition in America: A Historical Overview. Alcohol and Public Policy: Beyond the Shadow of Prohibition*, edited by M.K. Moore & D. R. Gerstein, (National Academy Press, 1981), 127-181

<sup>41</sup> Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*, 271-273.

<sup>42</sup> McGirr, *The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State*

In conclusion, Prohibition had far-reaching socio-economic impacts on American society, shaping the nation's economy, culture, and social structure. While intended to promote public morality and reduce alcohol-related problems, Prohibition ultimately gave rise to organized crime, undermined economic stability, and exacerbated social divisions. Despite its eventual repeal in 1933, the legacy of Prohibition continues to resonate in American history as a cautionary tale of the unintended consequences of well-intentioned policies.

## 5. CRIME LITERATURE

The genre of crime literature has been popular among readers for a long time, fascinating them with its plots, characters, and thrilling stories. From classic detective stories to modern psychological thrillers, crime literature offers a rich variety of narratives that reflect social anxieties, moral dilemmas, and the human condition. By delving into the literary characteristics of crime literature and analyzing prominent works within the genre, the aim is to gain a deeper understanding of its popularity and cultural significance. This chapter will define crime literature, examine its various subgenres, and explore its evolution. More specifically, the focus will be on the popular author Mario Puzo and his work *The Godfather*.

Crime literature, often referred to as crime fiction or detective fiction, is a genre that immerses readers into the complex and often dangerous world of criminal activities, investigations, and the search for justice.<sup>43</sup> It is usually separated from mainstream literature and other genres, such as historical fiction or science fiction. Many scholars are interested in this topic and agree that the boundaries between the sub-genres may not always be clear. For example, J. Scaggs states that crime and detective fiction share a close relationship.<sup>44</sup> R. Frank claims that crime literature has a variety of sub-genres, including mystery novels (e.g., classic crime fiction), courtroom dramas, hard-boiled fiction, and legal thrillers. Crime stories mostly focus on the investigation of crimes and avoid depicting court proceedings.<sup>45</sup> Key elements such as tension and mystery are evident throughout the genre and form the basic components of all its various forms.

As Richard Bradford states in his work *Crime Fiction: A Very Short Introduction*. Crime literature mirrors society's fascination with the darker aspects of human nature and the dynamics between law enforcement and those who operate outside its boundaries. These stories explore the psyche of criminals, their motivations, desires, and the social factors that lead them to commit illegal acts. Similarly, crime literature shows the methods and challenges that law enforcement faces when trying to maintain order and uphold the law. From the precise investigative techniques used by detectives to the ethical dilemmas faced by prosecutors and attorneys, these stories offer a portrayal of the criminal justice system and its complexities. Moreover, crime literature serves as a powerful tool for exploring moral ambiguity and the area between what is right and what is wrong. Through the protagonists and antagonists, readers can visualize both sides' ethical dilemmas and motivations, forcing them to reflect on their beliefs and values. The themes of redemption, justice, and revenge are often encountered, adding depth to the stories and compelling the reader to read on.<sup>46</sup> As Martin Priest explores in his work *Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, crime literature has many forms, including novels, short stories, novellas, and even plays, each offering its own unique insights and perspectives. The genre encompasses a wide range of styles and themes, from classic detective stories and police procedurals to psychological thrillers and gritty noir tales.<sup>47</sup> Novels are the most common form of crime literature, which provides authors with a space to develop intricate plots, multifaceted characters, and immersive settings. Classic detective stories featuring clever detectives and intricate puzzles represent one of the enduring archetypes of the genre. These

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<sup>43</sup> M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Term*, (Cengage Learning, 2015), 69.

<sup>44</sup> John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, (London: Routledge, 2005), 4

<sup>45</sup> Franks, Richard. *May I Suggest Murder?: An Overview of Crime Fiction for Readers' Advisory Services Staff*, (Australian Library Journal, 2011), 60

<sup>46</sup> Richard Bradford, *Crime Fiction: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2015)

<sup>47</sup> Martin Priestman, "Introduction: Crime Fiction and Detective Fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, ed. Martin Priestman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-6.

stories often follow the investigative actions of detectives or amateur spies as they unravel mysteries and uncover hidden truths. As Scaggs claims, in addition to traditional detective stories and mystery novels, crime literature also includes psychological thrillers that deal with the darker corners of the human psyche. These narratives often explore themes of obsession, manipulation, and moral ambiguity, keeping readers on edge with unpredictable twists and turns. Noir tales represent yet another aspect of crime literature, characterized by grim and atmospheric settings, morally ambiguous hard-boiled characters, and a pervasive sense of disillusionment. It often depicts a world where moral limits are shifted, corruption is omnipresent, and the protagonists are dealing with dark ethical dilemmas while struggling with their own inner demons.<sup>48</sup>

Additionally, the rise of true crime literature, which deals with real-life criminal cases and investigations, has further expanded the boundaries of the genre and blurred the lines between fact and fiction. In recent decades, the genre has witnessed significant developments, including the emergence of female and black detectives, a shift towards police procedural stories, and the rise of spy fiction.<sup>49</sup> Film and television adaptations have played a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of crime fiction, while postmodernist writers have experimented with its narrative forms.

The origins of crime literature can be traced back to ancient tales: the biblical stories of Susanna and the Elders and Daniel and the Priests of Bell, as well as a story from Herodotus and one from the Hercules myths. Scaggs considers these narratives to be early examples of crime stories, displaying elements that continue to influence the genre to this day.<sup>50</sup> According to David Pinault, another early illustration that can be found in Arabic literature is the story "The Three Apples" from *One Thousand and One Nights*, which tells the story of a murder mystery. The story follows the Abbasid Caliph, Harun al-Rashid, as he tasks his vizier with solving the murder of a young woman found in a chest. Unlike modern crime fiction, the focus is not on investigation but on the confession of the perpetrators. Similarly, Chinese crime fiction, known as Gong'an, features judges or officials investigating crimes in Ming dynasty settings. Works like "Di Gong An" (*The Famous Cases of Judge Dee*) by Robert Van Gulik introduce supernatural elements, a large cast of characters, and philosophical digressions.<sup>51</sup> These stories often emphasize the punishment of criminals rather than the investigation process; but they are nevertheless examples of crime literature and show different cultural interpretations of the genre and its development and adaptation across different literary traditions.

However, according to Martin Priestman and many more scholars, it was not until the 19th century that the genre of crime fiction emerged. The genre is characterized by narratives focused on the investigation and resolution of criminal acts, but early examples of crime stories lacked systematic detective work, usually featuring a detective (either amateur or professional) trying to uncover the details of a crime without the involvement of police or detailed analysis of motives and methods. Priestman states that Edgar Allan Poe was the first author who invented the detective story. He introduced readers to the mysterious character of C. Auguste Dupin in stories such as *The Murders in Morgue Street* and *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt*. These

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<sup>48</sup> Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 69.

<sup>49</sup> Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 102.

<sup>50</sup> Scaggs, *Crime Fiction*, 7-8.

<sup>51</sup> David, Pinault *Story-Telling Techniques in the Arabian Nights*, (Brill Publishers 1992), 86-91.

were the first stories embracing charismatic detectives.<sup>52</sup> Through Dupin's deductive skills and keen observational powers, Poe began a new era of crime stories characterized by intricate plots, psychological depth, and suspenseful storytelling.

As explained in *Crime Fiction: A Very Short Introduction* by R. Bradford, during the Golden Age of crime fiction in the 1920s to 1954, British authors like Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers produced iconic works prioritizing intricate mysteries over character development. In the US, authors like S. S. Van Dine and Ellery Queen introduced characters with exaggerated personalities and high-class backgrounds. Following this era, in the middle of events like the Great Depression and the World Wars, the Hard-Boiled Age emerged, which was characterized by a shift to gritty realism in American crime fiction. Dashiell Hammett and James M. Cain explored themes rooted in real-world problems such as economic hardship and marital betrayal.<sup>53</sup> Mario Puzo is also considered a very important author of crime literature. He was born on October 15, 1920, in New York City to Italian immigrants and took inspiration from his childhood and surroundings to create fascinating stories. He secured his legacy with the timeless classic *The Godfather*, which was published in 1969. With the background of post-World War II America, *The Godfather* masterfully interweaves themes of family, honor, and the American Dream, offering an examination of the moral principles that are often present in the Mafia underworld.<sup>54</sup> Puzo himself states in his work *The Godfather Papers*, that one of his intentions in writing *The Godfather* was to make money. His father left the family when Puzo was only twelve years old, leaving him with fragmentary memories of their time together and suggesting a common pattern among Italian men in his community.

The novel itself is set in New York and Long Island and shows the complex structures of the mafia underworld. It depicts power struggles, family dynamics, and moral ambiguities. Puzo's attention to detail and his portrayal of the Corleone family, headed by the mysterious Vito Corleone, bring a new level of authenticity and depth to the genre. In *The Godfather*, Puzo works with themes of loyalty, honor, and the consequences of ambition, engaging the reader with a suspenseful story and compelling characters.

Mario Puzo's novel had a significant impact on literature and society for several reasons. Tom Santopietro's book *The Godfather: Changing Hollywood, America and me*, states, that its celebration of ethnic pride not only reshaped the self-perception of Italian Americans but also influenced how individuals of all backgrounds perceived their own identities and the core of the nation.<sup>55</sup> "What Puzo delivered – brilliantly – was nothing less than a disquisition on the madness, glory, and failure of the American dream"<sup>56</sup> He states that the influence of the novel extended beyond its narrative to delve into deeper philosophical spheres. According to Santopietro, Mario Puzo's work serves as an exploration of the American dream, touching on themes of madness, glory, and its ultimate disillusionment. Illustrated through characters like Amerigo Bonasera, who passionately expresses his belief in America, the novel reveals a society where the Mafia and the big business mirror each other, both corrupted, selective truth-telling, and unbridled autonomy. Moreover, the book offers a captivating narrative that

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<sup>52</sup> Priestman, *Introduction: Crime Fiction and Detective Fiction*, 3.

<sup>53</sup> Bradford, *Crime Fiction: A Very Short Introduction*

<sup>54</sup> M. Sharp, *Popular Contemporary Writers*, (Marshall Cavendish, 2006), 1141.

<sup>55</sup> Tom Santopietro, *The Godfather Effect: Changing Hollywood, America, and me*, (New York: Thomas Dunne Books), 18.

<sup>56</sup> Santopietro *The Godfather Effect: Changing Hollywood, America, and me*, 14.

illustrates the inner operations of organized crime and provides readers with an engaging look into the secret underworld of the Mafia. The rich character development of the main figures, particularly the portrayal of Don Vito Corleone, resonates with readers and offers insight into themes such as power, loyalty, and family. In addition, *The Godfather* explores themes of morality, justice, and the American Dream, leading readers to reflect on the complexities of human nature and social values. Moreover, the film adaptation of the novel has further strengthened its cultural significance, reaching to a wider audience and confirming its status as a timeless classic.<sup>57</sup> Overall, *The Godfather* remains an important literary work that continues to captivate readers with its gripping story and enduring themes.

This chapter dealt with the genre of crime literature that has long attracted readers with its plots, dynamic characters, and thrilling stories. From the classic detective tales of past years to the gritty noir tales of today, crime literature remains popular and offers readers a compelling journey into the darker side of human nature. Various subgenres were presented, and the development in literary history was traced. With a focus on the work of Mario Puzo, particularly his iconic novel *The Godfather*, the enduring appeal and cultural significance of this genre were explored. its thematic depths and narrative innovations were revealed.

The following chapter presents the analytical part of this thesis and applies the theoretical information covered in the previous section to illustrate the depiction of Prohibition within the narrative of Mario Puzo's famous novel *The Godfather*.

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<sup>57</sup> Sharp *Popular Contemporary Writers*, 1142.

## 6. PORTRAYAL OF THE AMERICAN PROHIBITION IN THE BOOK THE GODFATHER

In the analytical part of this thesis, the theoretical insights gained in the previous chapters will be used to illustrate key elements closely linked to the American Prohibition period as depicted in Mario Puzo's *The Godfather*. The focus will be mostly on Don Corleone, who lived during the era of American Prohibition. The topics examined include a broad spectrum of themes, such as immigration, the portrayal of the Italian mafia, the Great Depression, and the dynamics of organized crime, particularly corruption. The image of society and the socio-economic consequences of prohibition will also be examined. By analyzing the characters, settings, and plot of the novel *The Godfather*, the thesis aims to answer the research question, "How is the American Prohibition portrayed in *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo?"

American Prohibition was a period in United States history in which the manufacture, sale, and distribution of alcohol was banned from 1920 to 1933. This policy was enforced primarily through the 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution and the Volstead Act, to reduce crime, improve morale, and improve social stability. To analyze aspects of American prohibition depicted in the novel *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo, the focus must be placed mostly on Don Corleone. The portrayal of this character begins at the young age of 12. The book features Vito Corleone as one of the main characters in the story. He was born in the village of Corleone in Sicily, and his birth name was Vito Andolini. His father, who got involved in a conflict with the mafia, was struck by a tragedy that sealed the fate of Vito's mother and brother, leaving young Vito orphaned and defenseless at the age of twelve. Young Vito was forced to make his way across the Atlantic to the United States, seeking refuge and opportunity on the streets of New York in Little Italy.

As demonstrated in the following quote: "The twelve-year-old Vito was hidden by relatives and shipped to America,"<sup>58</sup>, Vito Corleone was an immigrant whose life story illustrates the experience of Italians who came to America during the Prohibition era. Mappen supports this notion in his book *Prohibition Gangsters: The Rise and Fall of a Bad Generation*, where he describes that most Prohibition-era gangsters were mostly from immigrant backgrounds, brought to the United States as children.<sup>59</sup> Vito portrays a typical immigrant navigating the difficulties of American society during Prohibition. His status had significant consequences for his involvement in the illegal alcohol trade and organized crime, reflecting the socio-economic challenges faced by people who were trying to make America their new homeland. As an immigrant, Vito Corleone faced general prejudice and discrimination, which made it difficult for him to access legitimate business opportunities. This limitation played a crucial role in his decision to turn to illegal activities such as bootlegging during the Prohibition era when opportunities for wealth and prosperity were seemingly more achievable in the underground economy.

Another important feature of the book's depiction of the Prohibition era is the portrayal of Italian gangsters and organized crime. Raab states in his work that the Prohibition era presented a unique opportunity for immigrants. During this time, the demand for alcohol persisted despite

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<sup>58</sup> Mario Puzo, *The Godfather*, 170.

<sup>59</sup> Mappen, *Prohibition Gangsters: The Rise and Fall of a Bad Generation*, 72.

its illegality.<sup>60</sup> This can be demonstrated by several interwoven examples throughout the book. First is the character of Fanucci, another immigrant, who is crucial for the personal development of Don Corleone. Fanucci is a typical representation of an Italian gangster who shows his wealth and power without unnecessary moral dilemmas or restrictions.

Fanucci was a heavy-set, fierce-looking Italian who wore expensive light-colored suits and a cream-colored fedora. This man was reputed to be of the "Black Hand," an offshoot of the Mafia which extorted money from families and storekeepers by threat of physical violence... However, Fanucci was also a scavenger on fellow criminals, people who illegally sold Italian lottery or ran gambling games in their homes.<sup>61</sup>

Through the character of Fanucci, the novel provides a deeper understanding of the Italian-American criminal underworld during this period. He symbolizes the opportunities presented by Prohibition for individuals involved in organized crime. His association with the "Black Hand" and involvement in money extortion activities reflects the nature of criminal groups who tried to take advantage of the lucrative bootlegging market created by Prohibition. Moreover, Fanucci's role as a 'scavenger', who targets both citizens who obey the law and criminals engaged in illegal activities, underscores the moral ambiguity and ethical compromises related to the pursuit of wealth and power during Prohibition.

Don Corleone serves as another example that demonstrates an Italian gangster who seized the black-market opportunities that arose for immigrants. By thoroughly observing Fanucci's work, he gained a knowledge of organized crime and the Italian Mafia and used it to create his own business. Mappen states that many famous Italian gangsters, such as Al Capone, used Prohibition as a chance to profit from the illegal alcohol trade.<sup>62</sup> I. Tyrrell supports this statement and adds that the prohibition of alcohol created a lucrative black market that attracted individuals who wanted to cash in on demand for illegal alcohol.<sup>63</sup> Like Al Capone, Don Corleone took advantage of the illegal liquor trade to fuel his rise in the criminal world and opened the way for him to become a proper Italian gangster.

It started casually enough. By this time the Genco Pura Oil Company had a fleet of six delivery trucks. Through Clemenza, Vito Corleone was approached by a group of Italian bootleggers who smuggled alcohol and whiskey in from Canada. They needed trucks and deliverymen to distribute their produce over New York City. They needed deliverymen who were reliable, discreet and of a certain determination and force. They were willing to pay Vito Corleone for his trucks and for his men. The fee was so enormous that Vito Corleone cut back drastically on his oil business to use the trucks almost exclusively for the service of the bootlegger-smugglers.<sup>64</sup>

This extract highlights how immigrants like Don Corleone were able to adapt to the market and use the demand for bootlegged alcohol as a means to expand their business activities. Don Corleone's decision to shift resources from his legitimate olive oil business to bootlegging operations is an example of a pragmatic approach of immigrants looking to profit from the underground economy. Although Vito had a big business importing olive oil, he used it only as

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<sup>60</sup> Raab, *Five Families: The Rise, Decline, and Resurgence of America's Most Powerful Mafia Empires*

<sup>61</sup> Puzo, Mario, *The Godfather*, 170.

<sup>62</sup> Mappen, *Prohibition Gangsters: The Rise and Fall of a Bad Generation*

<sup>63</sup> Tyrrell, *Alcohol Prohibition in the USA*

<sup>64</sup> Puzo, *The Godfather*, 187.

a cover for his other illegal activities. This not only illuminates the economic opportunities that Prohibition provided but also once again offers a view of Italian gangsters trying to succeed in the country they arrived in.

Over time, Don's activities expanded beyond smuggling as he established a network of speakeasies in various neighborhoods. According to M. Lerner, speakeasies were common during the prohibition period, offering a place for many illegal activities and alcohol trade. Immigrants could work and earn extra money as bartenders, musicians, waiters, dancers, hostesses, or cooks. Each bartender could earn two to three times more than the average worker. The club payroll did not make millionaires out of every one of them, but it did help them to survive, pay their rent and all their bills.<sup>65</sup> "He made himself the protector of the Italian families who set themselves up as small speakeasies in their homes, selling whiskey at fifteen cents a glass to bachelor laborers."<sup>66</sup> In the story, the speakeasies become an important place where characters engage in many illegal activities and provide employment opportunities for Italian communities. This reflects the general attitude toward Prohibition and the flourishing underground economy. Additionally, the presence of speakeasies in the novel highlights the social and cultural dimensions of Prohibition, as these establishments became symbols of rebellion against government regulations.

As Bair Deirdre writes in his book *Al Capone: His Life, Legacy and Legend*, the Italian Mafia controlled many criminal activities and became a synonym for organized crime. Al Capone controlled liquor smuggling, gambling, and other illegal activities.<sup>67</sup> In *The Godfather*, the connection between gambling and American Prohibition is portrayed as a symbiotic relationship, with alcohol prohibition encouraging the development of illegal gambling. Throughout the plot of the novel, it becomes evident that organized crime syndicates, led by characters such as Don Corleone, take advantage of the demand for illegal activities during Prohibition and expand their activities to include not only alcohol smuggling but also gambling. The Prohibition era created a favorable environment for the creation of underground gambling houses, known as speakeasies, where visitors could engage in various forms of illegal betting and gambling. These speakeasies served as centers of illegal activity and attracted a diverse clientele seeking the fun and excitement of gambling away from the prying eyes of law enforcement. Looking at the plot of the novel, Don Corleone and his companions used their influence and power to establish and protect these gambling places, using bribes, intimidation, and violence to maintain control over their businesses. Alcohol prohibition not only provided organized crime with a lucrative opportunity to profit from the alcohol trade but also made it easier to expand illegal gambling as a source of additional income.

As mentioned by Goff and Anderson in their work *The Political Economy of Prohibition in the United States*, the socio-economic background of the Great Depression period was important to the repeal of Prohibition. The era, characterized by widespread economic hardship and social problems, put enormous pressure on American society and led to a reconsideration of existing policies and priorities. It caused many problems and further contributed to the rise of organized crime and other illegal activities.<sup>68</sup> This event can also be examined and understood based on its portrayal in the novel. Vito Corleone's character becomes a symbol of resilience and

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<sup>65</sup> Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*, 111-112.

<sup>66</sup> Puzo, *The Godfather*, 188.

<sup>67</sup> Deirdre, *Al Capone: His Life, Legacy and Legend, the Italian Mafia*, 16

<sup>68</sup> Goff and Anderson, *The Political Economy of Prohibition in the United States, 1919-1933*, 273.

adaptability to the events of the Great Depression. He takes advantage of its effects on society for his own benefit and further shapes his mafia empire.

But great men are not born great, they grow great, and so it was with Vito Corleone. When prohibition came to pass and alcohol forbidden to be sold, Vito Corleone made the final step from a quite ordinary, somewhat ruthless businessman to a great Don in the world of criminal enterprise. It did not happen in a day, it did not happen in a year, but by the end of the Prohibition period and the start of the Great Depression, Vito Corleone had become the Godfather, the Don, Don Corleone.<sup>69</sup>

The quoted passage shows the gradual development of Vito Corleone's character, depicting his rise from a humble businessman to a powerful figure in the criminal underworld. The Great Depression was a turning point in his life journey because it helped him to further secure his position as a mafia leader. His strategic adaptation to these ever-changing circumstances shows how Prohibition encouraged the emergence of organized crime syndicates and accelerated the rise of powerful underworld figures.

Another quote from the book confirming this fact is: “The Great Depression increased the power of Vito Corleone. And indeed it was about that time he came to be called Don Corleone. Everywhere in the city, honest men begged for honest work in vain.”<sup>70</sup> The quote again highlights the impact of this era on Vito Corleone's rise to power, as the economic crisis increased the vulnerability of honest individuals seeking employment opportunities. Even in these difficult times, which meant financial problems for many people, Vito Corleone's illegal businesses helped those in need. This behavior strengthened his authority and earned him the title of Don Corleone, the title of mafia boss. The coincidence of the Great Depression and Prohibition thus points out the interdependence of socio-economic factors in shaping organized crime and ultimately influencing the repeal of Prohibition.

Regarding the rise of organized crime, mentioning the corruption that flourished during Prohibition is important. As Lerner states, it was a common practice to bribe the police, politicians, judges, and other high-profile people.<sup>71</sup> Realizing the importance of political connections, Vito Corleone skilfully formed “alliances” with influential figures and provided protection for his small secret businesses and family. The acts of bribery depicted in the book can be illustrated by the following quotes: “Don Corleone had no desire, no intention, of letting his youngest son be killed in the service of a power foreign to himself. Doctors had been bribed, secret arrangements had been made. A great deal of money had been spent to take the proper precautions.”<sup>72</sup> “But his father is a Mafia chief who has to kill bad people, sometimes bribe high government officials and in his line of work gets shot full of holes himself. But that has nothing to do with his honest hard-working son. Do you think you can remember all that?”<sup>73</sup> In *The Godfather*, corruption is vividly displayed in various situations and institutions, permeating different aspects of society, including law enforcement, judiciary, and politics. It reflects the social conditions during the American Prohibition era. The novel depicts a world in which bribes, pressure, and secret deals are common tools used by characters to advance their own interests and maintain power. For example, Vito Corleone engages in bribery to secure

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<sup>69</sup> Puzo, *The Godfather*, 187

<sup>70</sup> Puzo, *The Godfather*, 188-189

<sup>71</sup> Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*, 66-71.

<sup>72</sup> Puzo, *The Godfather*, 13

<sup>73</sup> Puzo, *The Godfather*, 105

protection for his illegal businesses, bribes doctors to ensure the safety of family members, and bribes high-ranking officials to avoid legal consequences. He moves within this corrupt sphere and uses it for his advantage to strengthen his power and influence. This depiction of corruption shows another part of organized crime that flourished during Prohibition when individuals found loopholes in the law and formed relationships with corrupt officials through bribes to escape regulations and profit from illegal activities.

For the analysis of the depiction of American Prohibition in *The Godfather*, it is also crucial to focus on features that are not present directly in the main plot.

Hagen's mother had gone blind and then died during his eleventh year. Hagen's father, a heavy drinker, had become a hopeless drunkard. A hardworking carpenter, he had never done a dishonest thing in his life. But his drinking destroyed his family and finally killed him. Tom Hagen was left an orphan who wandered the streets and slept in hallways.<sup>74</sup>

This quotation serves as a portrayal of the tragic consequence of alcohol usage. In the context of American prohibition, many people perceived alcohol as harmful to individuals and society for several reasons, which are described by D. in his work *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*. First, excessive drinking was associated with a number of health problems, including liver damage, neurological damage, and, as the quote from the book suggests, blindness. These health concerns fuelled public debate about the dangers of alcohol and contributed to the growing Temperance movement that advocated prohibition.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, alcohol abuse often led to social and economic instability, as illustrated by Hagen's father in the quotation. Although he was a hard-working carpenter, his heavy drinking resulted in the breakdown of his family and his living. This part of the story reflects the broader social impact of alcoholism during Prohibition. The visible consequences of drinking emphasized the perception of alcohol as an illicit evil that undermined social values, damaged social harmony, and led to poverty and despair. In addition, alcohol-related crime and violence were common during Prohibition, which further contributed to its negative perception.

Since most of the story takes place after American Prohibition, a thorough analysis of the socioeconomic impact of this historical period is necessary. Lisa McGirr states in her book *The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State* that American Prohibition had significant socio-economic impacts, including the rise of organized crime as criminal syndicates capitalized on the illegal alcohol trade. This period also led to the rise of speakeasies and bootlegging operations, contributing to a culture of lawlessness and corruption. Additionally, Prohibition created economic hardships for legitimate businesses in the alcohol industry, leading to job losses and decreased tax revenues for the government.<sup>76</sup> In *The Godfather*, the socio-economic impacts of Prohibition are vividly depicted throughout the book, offering insight into how this era shaped society and its economy. One of the most obvious consequences portrayed in the novel is the expansion of an underground economy fuelled by the illegal alcohol trade. The demand for alcohol exploded during Prohibition, and individuals like Don Corleone seized the opportunity to profit from this lucrative market. The underground production, distribution, and sale of alcohol not only fuelled the rise of organized crime but also

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<sup>74</sup> Puzo, *The Godfather*, 44.

<sup>75</sup> Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*, 124.

<sup>76</sup> McGirr, *The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State*

created a parallel economy that thrived beyond the law. Moreover, Prohibition deepened socio-economic differences, particularly for marginalized communities. The Prohibition of alcohol disproportionately affected lower-income individuals and immigrant populations, who relied on the alcohol industry for employment and livelihood. In scenes depicting Little Italy, the problems of immigrant families are evident. The closure of legal businesses as a result of Prohibition left many without or with poorly paid jobs, further worsening poverty and economic instability in already vulnerable communities. This fact can be illustrated by this quote from the book:

One night Vito's wife brought a neighbor, a widow, to the flat. The woman was Italian and of unimpeachable character. She worked hard to keep a home for her fatherless children. Her sixteen-year-old son brought home his pay envelope sealed, to hand over to her in the old-country style; her seventeen-year-old daughter, a dressmaker, did the same. The whole family sewed buttons on cards at night at slave labor piece rates.<sup>77</sup>

This portrays the problems of individuals trying to overcome difficult economic conditions and manage their money in hard times. The mention of children bringing home envelopes with their hard-working mother's paychecks highlights the situation people had to face. In addition, the mention of a "slave rate for a piece of work" suggests the abusive nature of the work that was available to them. Further emphasizing the harsh economic situation that Prohibition worsened. Some characters, such as Don Corleone, prospered through their activities in the illegal liquor trade during Prohibition. His power and influence grow as he becomes a key figure in the world of organized crime that flourishes as a result of Prohibition. In contrast, other figures, such as innocent citizens who become victims of corruption, poverty, and violence, suffer from the effects of Prohibition. These people may find themselves in mortal danger or lose their lives as a result of the conflicts caused by Prohibition. In this way, the fates of the characters in *The Godfather* illustrate the wide-ranging effects of Prohibition on individuals and society as a whole.

The topic of violence often reoccurs in the story. Puzo frequently illustrates the blurred lines between legality and crime and illustrates the social norms and values of the Prohibition era. The core of *The Godfather* is a story full of law-breaking activities, especially those related to Prohibition. As mentioned above, the prohibition of alcohol consumption and distribution during this period provided an opportunity for the rise of organized crime to flourish. Don Corleone's empire, built on bootlegging and illegal trade, is proof of the violation of prohibition laws. Moreover, *The Godfather* depicts moral violations and the characters' ethical dilemmas. While Don Corleone is driven by his own moral code, which prioritizes loyalty and family, his actions often require more compromises. The portrayal of moral ambiguity shows the moral decay inherent in a society that occurred with the arrival of Prohibition. In addition, alcohol prohibition created a wave of lawlessness. The depiction of violations of the law in *The Godfather* goes beyond individual offenses to include broader socio-economic consequences. The rise of organized crime, fueled by alcohol prohibition, widened economic differences and social instability and deepened social divisions that already existed in American society. *The Godfather* serves as an insightful examination of violence and its connection to American Prohibition.

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<sup>77</sup> Puzo, *The Godfather*, 182-183

In conclusion, Mario Puzo, in his novel *The Godfather*, masterfully portrayed American Prohibition and provided a deeper understanding of diverse elements associated with the era. In this analytical part, themes such as immigration, the Italian mafia, the Great Depression, organized crime, corruption, and the socio-economic impacts of American prohibition were examined to reveal the complex picture of this period. Through characters such as Vito Corleone, Puzo highlights the opportunistic rise of organized crime during alcohol prohibition and shows how corruption infiltrated various aspects of society, including law enforcement, the judiciary, and politics. Vito's strategic use of bribes to protect illegal businesses and his family underscores the influence of corruption during Prohibition. While characters like Don Corleone prospered, innocent citizens suffered damage from corruption and violence, illustrating the far-reaching consequences of Prohibition on individuals and society. Moreover, the analysis of the novel portrays the tragic consequences of alcohol use through the example of Hagen's parent's descent into alcoholism and its devastating effects on his family, reflecting the wider health and social problems associated with alcohol during this period. *The Godfather* offers a multifaceted picture of American Prohibition, showing not only the impacts and consequences of the era but also a view of what preceded this period and how the situation influenced the upcoming term. Moreover, examining the depiction of violence in the novel allows for an understanding of how violence shaped the time in which the story is set. It suggests that violence was not only a narrative element in the novel, but also a reflection of the society and historical context of the time in which the story is set. Through the lens of violence, readers can witness the social norms, cultural values, and historical events that helped shape the time depicted in the novel.

By analyzing the characters, setting, and plot of the novel *The Godfather*, it was possible to provide clarification and reflect the depiction of prohibition in the novel and thus answer the research question: "How is Prohibition portrayed in Maria Puzo's novel *The Godfather*?". Through this comprehensive examination, a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding Prohibition and its impact on American society was achieved, underscoring the lasting importance of Puzo's masterpiece in depicting this crucial period of American history.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this bachelor's thesis was to shed light on the depiction of American prohibition in a selected work, *The Godfather*, by Mario Puzza. In addition, it sought to delve into the theoretical aspects of this exploration. The theoretical part included an examination of American values that are crucial for understanding the Prohibition period, along with an examination of the historical and cultural context of Prohibition itself. It also covered the topic of society between 1920 and 1933, the socio-economic consequences of Prohibition, as well as the characteristics of crime literature, with a particular focus on the importance of *The Godfather*.

The theoretical foundation was laid in the first part of this bachelor thesis, serving as an important background for the later analytical research. The first chapter introduced the importance of American values, which play a crucial role in understanding the motivations behind both the passing and eventual repeal of Prohibition. Emphasizing freedom and individualism, American values reflect a commitment to individual rights and personal freedom while acknowledging the influence of conservatism rooted in religious traditions promoting temperance and moral integrity. The diversity of American society enriches and expands these values and encourages both unity and disagreement. The conflicting views on Prohibition reflected different attitudes toward government interference with personal liberties, with supporters seeking to address the social ills associated with alcohol consumption and opponents defending personal freedom. Understanding American values provided crucial insight into the complex period of Prohibition and set the stage for topics discussed in the following chapters.

The second chapter explored the historical and cultural context of American prohibition. The roots of the American prohibition were traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The exploration of the anti-alcohol movement delved into its motivations for the support of prohibition. Some prohibitionists viewed alcohol consumption as a societal threat that led to moral decay and, therefore, advocated prohibition as a solution to this perceived problem. Furthermore, the importance of key events, such as the American presidential election and the subsequent passage of the Volstead Act, were examined. This legislation prohibited the production, sale, and distribution of alcohol and provided the opportunity to enforce prohibition through law enforcement. This period saw the rise of organized crime and corruption. Although Prohibition was eventually repealed, its legacy continues to reverberate throughout American society, leaving a permanent mark on its culture and society.

The third chapter provided an analysis of the society between 1920 and 1933, which was characterized by a rise in nativism, anti-immigrant sentiment, and resistance to the growing influence of women in society. The central event of this period was Prohibition, which disproportionately affected immigrants and poor communities that were forced into illegal activities as a result of economic hardship. The repeal of Prohibition in 1933 marked the end of an era, but it also opened a new phase of American history that was characterized by the rise of organized crime syndicates, particularly the Mafia, which benefited from the demand for bootleg alcohol. Figures like Al Capone became iconic symbols of this era, and their influence shaped American culture and politics for many years to come.

Prohibition had significant and far-reaching socioeconomic impacts on American society that are discussed in the fourth chapter. Affecting its economy, culture, and society, the prohibition was originally intended to promote public morality and reduce alcohol-related

problems. However, it led to the rise of organized crime, economic instability, and deepening social differences. Although Prohibition was repealed in 1933, its effects still resonate in American history and serve as a reminder of the unintended consequences that can result from well-intentioned policies.

The final theoretical chapter explored the cultural significance of crime literature, from classic detective stories to modern psychological thrillers that captivate readers with intricate plots, dynamic characters, and thrilling narratives. It also delved into the genre's diverse subgenres, tracing its evolution and examining its thematic depth. Focusing on Mario Puzo's iconic novel *The Godfather*, the chapter emphasizes that this genre explores social anxieties, moral dilemmas, and the human condition. Puzo's work serves as a lens through which readers can explore themes of power, loyalty, and the consequences of ambition while reflecting on deeper philosophical concepts such as the American Dream. Through rich character development and engaging narrative, *The Godfather* resonates with readers and offers insight into the complexities of human nature and societal values. Moreover, the novel's film adaptation further enhances its cultural significance and solidifies its status as a timeless classic.

In the analytical part, this bachelor thesis aimed to answer the research question, "How is the American Prohibition portrayed in the novel *The Godfather*?" Analysis revealed that there are many examples in the book that depict American Prohibition, and thus, the novel *The Godfather* offers insight into many of the elements associated with this era. Within the analytical examination, various topics such as immigration, the rise of the Italian Mafia, the period of the Great Depression, the emergence of organized crime, corruption, and the socio-economic consequences of Prohibition are observed to reveal the complexity of this historical era. Through characters such as Vito Corleone, Puzo illustrates the opportunistic rise of organized crime during Prohibition and shows how corruption permeated various layers of society, from law enforcement to the judiciary and politics. Corleone's calculating behavior leading to the securing of illicit enterprises exemplified the influence of corruption during this period and underscored its pernicious impact on social structures.

Further analysis of the novel reveals the contrasts between the prosperity and suffering of innocent citizens and illuminates the far-reaching consequences of Prohibition for individuals and society as a whole. In addition, the exploration of the tragic consequences of alcohol abuse, depicted by the suffering of Hagen's parents and its profound effects on family, offers insightful reflections on the broader health and social crisis.

*The Godfather* presents a rich portrait of American Prohibition, exploring not only its immediate impact and aftermath but also providing insight into what preceded the period and its lasting effects. Moreover, the examination of violence within the narrative reveals its dual role as a narrative device and a reflection of the social norms and historical context of the time depicted. Through this lens, readers are offered insight into the prevailing cultural milieu, ethical issues, and epochal events that shaped the novel's landscape.

## RESUMÉ

Americké období prohibice, jedno z nejkritičtějších společenských a politických období v americké historii. Do teď inspiruje mnoho autorů k jejímu vyobrazení. Tato bakalářská práce zkoumala, jakým způsobem tuto dobu vykreslil známý spisovatel Mario Puzo ve svém románu *Kmotr*.

V První části se bakalářská práce zaměřila na teoretickou část, kterou pak následně bylo možné reflektovat v analytické. V první kapitole je představen význam amerických hodnot, které hrají zásadní roli při pochopení motivací, jež stály za přijetím i následným zrušením prohibice. Americké hodnoty, zdůrazňující svobodu a individualismus, odrážejí oddanost právům jednotlivce a osobní svobodě a zároveň uznávají vliv konzervatismu, který má kořeny v náboženských tradicích prosazujících střídmost a morální integritu. Rozmanitost americké společnosti tyto hodnoty obohacuje a rozšiřuje a podporuje jak jednotu, tak nesouhlas. Rozporuplné názory na prohibici odrážely rozdílné postoje k zasahování vlády do osobních svobod, kdy se zastánci snažili řešit společenské neduhy spojené s konzumací alkoholu a odpůrci hájili osobní svobodu. Pochopení amerických hodnot poskytlo zásadní vhled do složitého období prohibice a připravilo půdu pro témata probíraná v následujících kapitolách.

Druhá kapitola se zabývala historickým a kulturním kontextem americké prohibice. Kořeny americké prohibice sahají až do 19. století. Zkoumání protialkoholního hnutí se ponořilo do jeho motivací pro podporu prohibice. Někteří zastánci prohibice považovali konzumaci alkoholu za společenskou hrozbu, která vede k morálnímu úpadku, a proto prosazovali prohibici jako řešení tohoto vnímaného problému. Dále byl zkoumán význam klíčových událostí, jako byly americké prezidentské volby a následné přijetí Volsteadova zákona. Tento zákon zakazoval výrobu, prodej a distribuci alkoholu a poskytl příležitost k prosazení prohibice prostřednictvím vymáhání práva. V tomto období došlo k vzestupu organizovaného zločinu a korupce. Ačkoli byla prohibice nakonec zrušena, její odkaz se stále odráží v celé americké společnosti a zanechává v její kultuře a společnosti trvalé stopy.

Třetí kapitola přináší analýzu společnosti v letech 1920-1933, která se vyznačovala nárůstem nativismu, proti imigrantským nálad a odporem vůči rostoucímu vlivu žen ve společnosti. Ústřední událostí tohoto období byla prohibice, která neúměrně postihla přistěhovalce a chudé komunity, jež byly v důsledku ekonomických potíží nuceny k nelegální činnosti. Zrušení prohibice v roce 1933 znamenalo konec jedné éry, ale zároveň otevřelo novou etapu amerických dějin, která se vyznačovala vzestupem syndikátů organizovaného zločinu, zejména mafie, jež těžila z poptávky po nelegálním alkoholu. Postavy jako Al Capone se staly ikonickými symboly této éry a jejich vliv formoval americkou kulturu a politiku po mnoho dalších let.

Prohibice měla významné a dalekosáhlé socioekonomické dopady na americkou společnost, o nichž pojednává čtvrtá kapitola. Prohibice, která ovlivnila její ekonomiku, kulturu a společnost, měla původně podpořit veřejnou morálku a omezit problémy spojené s alkoholem. Vedla však k nárůstu organizovaného zločinu, hospodářské nestabilitě a prohloubení sociálních rozdílů. Ačkoli byla prohibice v roce 1933 zrušena, její důsledky stále rezonují v americké historii a slouží jako připomínka nezamýšlených důsledků, které mohou být důsledkem dobře míněných politik.

Závěrečná teoretická kapitola se zabývala kulturním významem kriminální literatury, od klasických detektivek až po moderní psychologické thrillery, které čtenáře zaujmou spleťmi

zápletkami, dynamickými postavami a napínavými příběhy. Zabývala se také různými subžánry tohoto žánru, sledovala jeho vývoj a zkoumala jeho tematickou hloubku. Kapitola se zaměřila na kultovní román *Maria Puza Kmotr* a zdůraznila, že tento žánr zkoumá společenské úzkosti, morální dilemata a lidský stav. Puzovo dílo slouží čtenářům jako objektiv, jehož prostřednictvím mohou zkoumat témata moci, loajality a důsledků ambicí a zároveň se zamýšlet nad hlubšími filozofickými koncepty, jako je například americký sen. Díky bohatému vývoji postav a poutavému vyprávění *Kmotr* rezonuje se čtenáři a nabízí vhled do složitosti lidské povahy a společenských hodnot. Filmová adaptace románu navíc ještě zvyšuje jeho kulturní význam a upevňuje jeho status nadčasové klasiky.

Analýza ukázala, že v knize je mnoho příkladů, které zobrazují americkou prohibici, a proto román *Kmotr* nabízí vhled do mnoha prvků spojených s touto dobou. V rámci analytického zkoumání jsou sledována různá témata, jako je přistěhovalectví, vzestup italské mafie, období velké hospodářské krize, vznik organizovaného zločinu, korupce a socioekonomické důsledky prohibice, která odhalují složitost této historické epochy. Prostřednictvím postav, jako je Vito Corleone, Puzo ilustruje oportunistický vzestup organizovaného zločinu v době prohibice a ukazuje, jak korupce postupovala různými vrstvami společnosti, od orgánů činných v trestním řízení až po soudnictví a politiku. Corleonovo vypočítavé chování vedoucí k zajištění nelegálních podniků je příkladem vlivu korupce v tomto období a zdůrazňuje její zhoubný dopad na společenské struktury.

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