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Social science research, for better or worse, is at its most convincing when looking backward. Most social science disciplines try to explain what has taken place, and the repercussions of past decisions and events. Predictability is in many ways more art than science. When it comes to the study of organized crime, history becomes a potent tool. Because research on current events and trends is so difficult, history offers a good lens by which to trace the grand patterns of organized crime. The literature on organized crime tends to be divided in two camps, those that believe that the threat is serious and real (for example, Garyaud 2008), and skeptical scholars who suggest that the rhetoric serves political ends (for example, Beare 2003). The two views are irreconcilable. Looking backward does not solve the debate, but it does help make sense of organized crime as a social phenomenon.

For this essay, we review two books that study the history of organized crime in North America. Stephen Schneider's *Iced: The Story of Organized Crime in Canada* presents four hundred years of Canadian organized crime history. David Critchley's *The Origin of Organized Crime in America: The New York City Mafia, 1891-1931* focuses more narrowly on the American mafia's formative years when, it is often argued, American-Italian organized crime came of age. What do these two books tell us about organized crime? How do they inform our reading of Canadian and American history? The two books present a nuanced view of organized crime, neither exaggerating nor diminishing the political, economic or social role of organized crime. The authors challenge existing conventional views pertaining to Canada, the United States and the role of organized crime in the history of the two countries. Schneider argues that organized crime has played an important role in shaping Canada, dispelling the myth of a peaceful and law-abiding nation. Critchley, on the other hand, suggests that American mafia history has generally been overplayed—the reality does not match the purported image. The books are, in fact, a nice contrast. Schneider brings organized crime into Canadian history while Critchley does partially the opposite, reconsidering the place of the mafia in American history. Clearly, history is never as simple as it first appears.

We review *Iced* and *The Origin of Organized Crime in America* in turn, prior to comparing how each treats the prohibition era, a time period covered by both studies. We conclude with some general remarks on the books' strengths and weaknesses.

Iced

Schneider's thesis is simple: Canada has been shaped in many ways by organized crime. Canada is clearly not the product of organized crime, but the latter has been present throughout Canadian history and has at times affected the course of events. Though it should not be overstated, Canadian history and organized crime are intertwined.

Schneider's account is chronological from early colonial times to today's headlines. Canadian organized crime emerges as a homegrown phenomenon with specific characteristics. Most importantly, Canadian organized crime has its own actors and a particular focus on transnational trade.

Canada, it is generally argued, is a trading nation. Globalization is said to have facilitated the rise of transnational organized crime. Canadian organized crime has always been transnational. Canadian organized crime came to be and continues to live through smuggling. Canadian geography provides plenty of opportunities for illicit trading in goods, people and money. Pirates roamed the seas in early colonial time, looting, and trading seized shipments destined both to the United States and Europe. Furs were often traded illegally. The Canadian West had organized groups involved in horse thieving, cattle rustling and whiskey trading, which all led to the creation of the Canadian Mounted Royal Police. Schneider offers multiple stories of Canadian bootleggers during the US prohibition era. Canadian organized crime remains today centered on trade. What is smuggled and how it is smuggled has partially changed from fish, loot, furs and horses, to liquor stills, drugs and individuals, etc. Canadian organized crime now plays a predominant role in the global drug industry. Schneider points, for instance, to the fact that Colombian drug cartels during the 1980s transited cocaine to Canada to facilitate import and access to the American market. Schneider observes that trading relationships have shifted. With the rise of the Chinese triads and Asian street gangs, trading relationships have shifted westward mirroring what is taking place in the licit economy.

In *Iced*, Schneider traces the history of Canada's main criminal organizations: the North American mafia, the bikers (especially the Hells Angels), the Colombian drug cartels, and the Chinese triads. Schneider shows how power among these groups has shifted over time. The North American mafia was dominant throughout most of the twentieth century though that dominance is coming to an end. The book concludes with the arrest of Vito Rizzuto, Montréal's all-powerful Mafioso. Since the 1980s, the Hells Angels have

become an important criminal organization in Canada, with membership and activities stretching from coast to coast. Law enforcement's constant surveillance of the Hells, regular busts, and the arrest and conviction of Mom Boucher, the Hells leader in Québec, have damaged the organization. The Colombian cartels, as a global phenomenon, have largely been disbanded with the threat now mostly emanating from Mexican groups. The latter appear somewhat less involved in Canada, in part because they have direct access to the American marketplace. The Chinese triads are also big players in Canada's underworld, though they are being challenged by violent street gangs of South Asian origins. Schneider concludes his chapter on the triads by noting that these organizations are now setting the standard for transnational organized crime. The North American mafia is the past; Asian organized crime, in all its variants, is the future. Schneider, unfortunately, does not elaborate on the implications of this important shift from the standpoint of Canadian society, except the mentioned above concurrent shift in trading patterns, or on the practices and norms of organized crime.

Schneider illustrates Canada's violent past, showing that the country's birth and growth have been at times rather bloody. If the argument was simply that Canada has a violent past, or that organized crime is inherently violent, it would be somewhat trivial. Schneider's argument, though not clearly stated, is that this violence has partly defined Canada. The growth of more formal criminal organizations in the twentieth century revolves around both brute force and money. The 'strange and terrible Canadian saga', to employ the chapter's name, of outlaw motorcycle gangs provides a good example of the thuggish nature of organized crime. Schneider outlines the biker war waged in Québec in the late 1990s and notes the extent to which it expanded outside the criminal world and into mainstream society.

Above and beyond the violence, corruption is usually said to be a main component of organized crime. In North America, corruption may have been at its most glaring during the first part of the twentieth century. In Montréal and Vancouver (Schneider highlights these two cities in particular), police and municipal authorities purposefully ignored or were in cahoots with organized crime, especially as it pertained to the operation of gaming houses. Montréal became for a short while after the Second World War the gaming capital of North America. Schneider further suggests that Canadian authorities closed their eyes to bootlegging activities during prohibition. Organized crime only appears to have been taken seriously in Canada long after the mafia had already rooted itself firmly on Canadian soil. That being said, Canadian organized crime appears largely to focus on economic activities—trade, gambling, counterfeiting and fraud—it does not appear to have clear political objectives, unlike what can be observed elsewhere like, for instance, in Italy.

The Origin of Organized Crime in America

Critchley's main objective is to counter the established myths about the early days of the mafia in America. Among many refuted myths, Critchley contests the Americanization thesis in which an Italian phenomenon becomes an American one. Italian-American organized crime was not subservient to the Italian mafias, and it did not liberate itself during the time period under study. There were links with Italy, but they were of an individual and personal nature. The author suggests that organized crime during the early parts of the twentieth century was local, petty and thuggish.

To support his thesis, Critchley pays particular attention to the actors, the individuals involved, and the families of interest. There are charts throughout the book detailing the relationships between family members and across families. Critchley notes that the Black Hand, groups that sent letters requesting money, intimidating and threatening Italian immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century, was not very organized. The Black Hand operators were thugs often taking advantage of rather vulnerable individuals. Critchley then moves on to note the rise of the first family, that of Giuseppe Joseph Morello. The family fell from grace once its leaders were arrested and convicted for counterfeiting, one of the family's central business activities. The author also notes the rise of the Bonanno family during the 1920s. Joseph Bonanno became larger than life and led the New York Mafia for more than thirty years. During the formative years, families remained relatively small, not willing to expand above and beyond kinship. They only did so when needing to add individuals with particular skills, such as counterfeiting press operators.

Critchley nuances claims pertaining to how the mafia came of age in America. The politics of prohibition, for instance, are usually said to have facilitated the rise of the New York City mafia. Prohibition encouraged smuggling, but its lasting impact should not be overstated. The Castellammare War (1929-31), to have been waged between rival factions, is also said to have led to the establishment of a formal organization headquartered in the City. Critchley contests this assumption, and in fact, suggests that the War may not have been as devastating as is usually portrayed. The death toll stood at nine in New York City, with one innocent bystander killed, and another five murders potentially linked to the conflict in the rest of the country. This is a far cry from the dozens and dozens of deaths normally associated with the Castellammare War. Italian-American crime was violent, but during this period at least, it was contained.

Critchley's research should not be read as a one-sided attempt to re-interpret history. The study demonstrates that the mafia underwent a period of transformation and professionalization during the early decades of the twentieth century. The Black Hand was fairly disorganized. The counterfeiters were more organized, membership was more open and business was rolling.

Prohibition and bootlegging saw a further professionalization. The Bonanno Family further established the organization. Critchley does not support the Americanization thesis, yet as the story goes along, the New York City mafia further separates itself from groups back home in Italy. Mafiosi were now born in America, sons of immigrants for sure, but they had lived their whole life in New York City. The experience and memory of the old country was diminishing. The evolution of the New York City Mafia in its early years, thus, is still of interest.

The Prohibition Era

Iced and *The Origin of Organized Crime in America* do not necessarily allow for a clear cut comparison of the history of organized crime in Canada and the United States. The former presents a broad historical portrait while the latter focuses on a narrow time period. Comparison is clearly easier when looking at the early parts of the twentieth century which is covered by both books. The difference in the depiction of the prohibition era is striking. Schneider depicts a 'nation of bootleggers'. He spends a lengthy chapter detailing the trading patterns and routes, the actors and their successes. He acknowledges that the prohibition era was a sort of anomaly, and when the period ended, many organizations dissolved and individuals returned to more normal lifestyles. The end of prohibition, he also notes, led to Canadian organized crime becoming subservient to American organized crime for the following few decades. Prohibition is an important part of the story for Canadian organized crime.

Critchley also spends a full chapter on the prohibition period. He underplays the importance of this period noting that the structure of organized crime in the Northeastern United States did not fundamentally change as a result of prohibition politics. Bootlegging was an activity that required a certain level of organization, though he suggests that by the mid-twenties, there was overcompetition and that enforcement was having the desired effect. Moonshining became the predominant source of illegal liquor in the United States. Quoting a Mafiosi, Critchley notes that there must have been in New York City, 'two or three stills per block' (Critchley 2009: 143). Thus, the author spends little time on bootlegging. Canada is barely mentioned; it is certainly not an important part of the story. There is no reference to the connection that came to exist between the New York mafia and Canadian operators. Critchley either purposefully ignored the ties between American and Canadian Mafioso, or it just was not as important as is often assumed. Might it just be that the prohibition era came to define Canadian organized crime more than it did its American counterpart? Such a thesis would seem to warrant serious consideration.

Remarks

The review essay began by noting the disconnect that exists in the organized crime literature between those who believe that the threat is real and quite dangerous, and those who believe that organized crime is inherently political. *Iced* and *The Origin of Organized Crime in America* do not directly enter into the fray, and they are not going to resolve the dispute. The analysis of both books is contingent upon the subject, organized crime in North America, and different conclusions would necessarily have to be drawn if other parts of the world (Italy, Albania, Turkey, China, etc.) were studied. Nonetheless, the two books do shed some light on the history of Canada and the United States, as well as on the nature of organized crime. Taken together, Schneider's and Critchley's contrasting accounts provide a nuanced view of organized crime. Schneider notes the extent to which organized crime has been integral to the history of Canada. Critchley challenges the myths about the New York City mafia's early years.

There are glaring weaknesses in each of the books. Schneider presents the story of organized crime in Canada in isolation. There is not a lot of contextualization relating to the broader history of the country. The descriptions and details are plenty and at times goring. The actual impact of organized crime on Canadian society throughout history is underdeveloped. The book does not contain a lot of analysis, nor does it seem to directly engage with other academic works, either in the history or organized crime fields. The author does not provide many avenues for further reflection. There are reasons to believe that the book is geared towards the general public. The book is inexpensive (around \$20) and it has drawn plenty of publicity from the mainstream press. Yet, the approach creates some serious problems. The endnotes and the bibliography are nowhere to be found in the book. They are found on the book's website. The endnotes are not actually listed in the text. Matching an endnote with its proper location in the text requires quite a lot of hard work and patience. The scholar who wants to pick up on Schneider's research could have some difficulty doing so. The book is already hefty, 500 pages written in a very small font, which makes you wonder just how many Canadians are going to take the time to read it, above and beyond the field specialists. The endnotes and the bibliography would have made this book even heavier. That being said, there had to be a way to include them into the book, at least in an abridged form without sending the reader to a website. How long will the website stay up? The book is presented as the comprehensive history of organized crime in Canada, the first really of its kind. Schneider, however, does not necessarily break a lot of new ground, though what is novel in terms of information and what is not is hard to determine. Schneider did an incredible amount of research for this book. The strength of the book lies in bringing so much research and information together in one place. All in all,

Schneider tells a good story; the rest, at least in the way that it is presented, appears secondary.

Critchley, on the other hand, contextualizes everything, especially in light of previous research and scholarship. *The Origin of Organized Crime in America* assumes that the author knows the story and that it does not need to be retold. To follow along, the reader needs to be informed and aware of the myths, the players, and what has been written previously both in the popular press and in academia. This is not a book for the general public; it is clearly geared towards active researchers in the field. Whereas Schneider focuses on the story, Critchley forgets the story to emphasize details of all types.

In a field, the study of organized crime, where good research is often hard to come by, Schneider and Critchley demarcate themselves through their assiduous work. Despite their faults, (no research is perfect), the authors deserve a lot of credit, and their books are worthy of attention. They offer and help address, directly and indirectly, fundamental questions pertaining to Canadian and American history, and the place of organized crime in North American societies.

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