Abstract
The concept of the underworld is a central feature in popular histories of crime and criminal behaviour but one that has tended to be dismissed by academic historians as somewhat nebulous and indefinable. This article seeks to bridge this gap by suggesting that the construction of a chronological history or model of the underworld can further understandings of societal attitudes towards crime and criminality. Drawing on case studies and snapshots of deviant cultures and behaviours from the eighteenth century to the 1960s the discussion highlights the role of the underworld and its relationship with social panics and social network theories in the development of criminal justice.

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