Narrativity and Music

An analysis of music in *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders*



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Index

1. The introduction 5
   - 1.1 Research Question 5
   - 1.2 Outline of the thesis 6
2. The theoretical framework 7
   - 2.1 Narrativity and storytelling 7
   - 2.2 Historical accuracy 12
   - 2.3 Authenticity and aesthetics 13
3. The background Information 16
   - 3.1 *Boardwalk Empire* 16
   - 3.2 *Peaky Blinders* 21
4. The method 26
   - 4.1 Data collection 26
   - 4.2 Data analysis 27
   - 4.3 Research quality indicators: Reliability, Validity and Transferability 28
5. The analysis 30
   - 5.1 Reviews and Reddit 30
   - 5.2 Wedding scenes 31
   - 5.3 Party scenes 39
   - 5.4 Gun fight scenes 43
   - 5.5 Recapping the analysis 49
6. The conclusion 51
   - 6.1 Narrativity, storytelling and multimediality 51
   - 6.2 Historical accuracy 54
   - 6.3 Answering the research question 56
7. The discussion 58
   - 7.1 Authenticity 58
   - 7.2 Limitations 59
   - 7.3 Personal Preference 59

8. The references 60

9. The appendix 62

9.1 Quotes from reviews 62

9.2 Reddit discussions 64

1. The introduction

Television series have become an intricate part of modern society and entertainment. New television series are released almost on a weekly basis that cover many different subjects, events or time periods. Two television series, which will be the focus of this thesis, are *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders*, produced by HBO and the BBC respectively. Both are period dramas set in the 1920s. *Boardwalk Empire* follows an American gangster during prohibition, and *Peaky Blinders* does the same thing, but set in the United Kingdom, where it follows an English gang. The United Kingdom never experienced a prohibition, but in *Peaky Blinders*, prohibition in the United States still has a substantial effect.
Even though these two television series are set in the same time period, and are roughly about the same subject, they are very different. The main difference this thesis will focus on is the use of music. *Boardwalk Empire* relies on the use of music that was created in or inspired by the 1920s, whereas *Peaky Blinders* uses modern music and hardly uses age specific music from the 1920s. This thesis will analyze the use of music in both television series, and will further analyze and try to explain how music adds to narrativity. The problem that will be dealt with in this thesis is how music is related to historical storytelling. Can a historical period be presented and depicted by music that is not time specific? The goal of this thesis is to find out what role music plays in historical television series.

1.1 Research question

Based on this short introduction, I phrase the following main research question:
"How does the use of music in historical television series create and aid a narrative?"

This research question will be answered with the use of data gathered from existing literature, and an analysis of the two television series *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders*. In order to fully answer the research question, two sub questions are needed. The first sub question is **"How does music in television series add to narrativity?"** This sub question is about the progression of the story and how the two television series evolve. Narrativity is a concept that returns in every film, book, television series and video game. Music can be a

big part of narrativity. By answering this sub question, a clearer understanding should arise of why certain music has been chosen for a certain scene, and how music adds to the plot. The second sub question will be **"How can television series create historical accuracy?"** This sub question is a more general question, but an important one to answer, because this is where the two television series differ. As said, *Peaky Blinders* does not use age specific music, but it still represents a gang in the 1920s. This means it relies on other factors to establish the fact that the events in the television series are set in the 1920s. By answering this sub question, there should be a better understanding of how the two series take different approaches, but get to the same outcome, which is a historical period drama.

1.2 Outline of this thesis

In the second chapter, I will go through the key concepts and provide a clear and vital definition of those concepts. The third chapter will provide background information on the two television series, and consists of an overview of the stories of both *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders*. In the fourth chapter I will move onto the methodology, where I will describe the analysis and my methods for the analysis. The fifth chapter contains the analysis consisting of reviews and discussions found on the internet, as well as episodes from both television series. The sixth chapter will conclude the analysis and try to answer the sub questions and the research question. After the analysis, I intend to have enough knowledge from both the scenes and the information I gathered on the internet to provide a clear description of narrativity and the use of music in television series. I will end the thesis with a discussion regarding the research I have done, in the seventh chapter.

2. The theoretical framework

Based on the research question, this thesis requires multiple definitions of terms that are used in the analysis. This chapter will be about defining those terms in the most coherent way possible, based on the literature used in this thesis.

2.1 Narrativity and storytelling

The concept of narrativity is central to this research. Narrativity is the way a medium tells a story. It is how the story is represented through the use of media, whereas storytelling is about presenting the story. In recent decades, there has been a shift in the definition of narrativity and the narrative. It used to only relate to literature, where a story would be told in a certain timeframe. In this story, there would be events, and those events have an impact on the story. Another very important aspect of narrativity is that the story should have a beginning, a middle and an end, which would form an autonomous whole (Ryan, 2014). Ryan argues that a narrative creates a world, and that world is coherent and intelligible. In the present day, where television and film are two of the most used media in the world, narrativity has changed. It is no longer just about telling a story from beginning to end, and about the events that happen throughout the story. Narrativity has transformed into 'communicating with the audience' (Wolf, 2003). This means that the visual aspect is now used to tell the story as well. The concept of multimediality arises, because the narrative is about the medium telling a story. To understand multimediality, a foundation needs to be made. This means that a media or medium needs to be explained first. A media or medium is an individual type of way to convey certain information, feelings or story. Examples of media are sound, music, visual aspects, text or images.

Multimediality, transmediality and intermediality are three main concepts (Kattenbelt, 2008). Multimediality means that multiple media are co-existing at the same time. Kattenbelt argues that multimediality consists of two levels, the level of sign systems and the level of different disciplines recognised as cultural practices or actions. The level of sign systems is about how one utterance consists of multiple different signs (letters, words, sounds.) The level of different disciplines relates to the combination of different media in order to get to one medium. Kattenbelt mentions that by using this definition of multimediality, only theater can be regarded as multimedial, because it is the only medium

where one discipline does not fade to the background because of its combination with other media. The second concept Kattenbelt discusses is transmediality. This concept is about the combination between art and communication. Transmediality means moving from one medium to another. Examples could be a film based on a book, or book based on a film, because a film and a book are both individual media. When the book or film gets "translated" into the other medium, there is a movement from one medium to another.
The third concept is intermediality. Kattenbelt argues that intermediality is a combination of trans- and multimediality. Intermediality is about coexisting media that have influence on each other, but do not force a change to the coexisting media like transmediality does. The coexisting media have effects on each other and work together to form an intermedial artwork. I believe that television series are multimedial, as they use different media like visual aspects, dialogue and music to create a narrative. The different media co-exists besides one another, but do not have influence on each other. Music can be the medium that tells the story in one scene, while the next scene might rely more on the dialogue or the visual aspects. That means that the different mediums do not have to combine into one new medium in order for the story to be told.
According to Wolf, narrativity now has three different functions (Wolf, 2003).

1. The 'experiential function' of narrativity, which relates to the conscious perception of time in the story, which helps create the foundation of the human experience. This human experience is about the perception by the audience that the characters are actual living human beings.
2. The 'philosophical function' of narrativity, which relates to the ability of providing a logical explanation of the experience in the story, in a meaningful way.
3. The 'communicative function' of narrativity, which relates to the ability of communicating, representing and storing important sequences of experience in the story.

Film and television series are able to have all these different functions and do it in many different ways.
In the past, narrative was used solely to describe different genres of stories. Storytelling was basically what the narrative was all about. Nowadays, the concept of narrativity turns out to be applicable in all discourses of human life. A narrative can now be analyzed in fields like law, human interaction, biology, etcetera. This is called the 'narrative turn' (Kreiswirth, 2005). Before this narrative turn, a narrative was merely a form of art that was used in a

way of storytelling. After the narrative turn, narrativity turned into a way of thinking. But to truly explain the concept of narrativity, some dissection is needed. I follow the scholar Marie-Laure Ryan, who argues that to correctly describe narrativity, the concept needs to be dissected into four dimensions. The spatial dimension, the temporal dimension, the mental dimension and finally the formal and pragmatic dimension (Ryan, 2010).

The spatial dimension of narrativity is about the characters in the narrative work. In the world that is being built by the narrative, there need to be individual characters that "live and breathe" (Ryan, 2010). This means that the story must be about individuals, rather than about an entire group of people, like the entire human race, the atom or the brain.

The temporal dimension of narrativity is about two characteristics. *The first* is that the world that was created in the narrative, must be situated in time and go through significant changes throughout the story. Ryan argues that the world cannot be a static one, where changes are not noticed, which would mean that the description of the world would be static as well. This means that the changes throughout the story must have a timeline, and must have an impact on the world the story is set in. For example, when creating a narrative about World War II in Europe, the narrative must include the timeline of events, and the impact time has on the world during World War II. This means that from the start of World War II until the end, many different events occurred. Of course not all events need to be included in the narrative, but the events that are included need to be related to the state of the narrative world that was built. Time is important to justify certain events. *The second characteristic* is that transformations in the narrative must be caused by non-repetitive physical events. Repetitive physical events are things like getting up in the morning, having breakfast, brushing teeth, etcetera. These events do not have a transformative impact on the narrative world. They can be part of a story, but it is background information. Because they are repetitive, one can assume they happen "everyday" in a story. Therefore they need not be mentioned more than once. For example, when writing a story or creating a film, showing a character getting up in the morning, having breakfast, brushing teeth, getting dressed, are physical events used quite frequently to introduce the story. But after having introduced the character or the story, these events should not return and the story should move onto the actual impactful events that shape the narrative.

The mental dimension of narrativity consists of two characteristics. *The first characteristic* is that in a story, there must be intelligent agents who have mental capacities and are able to

emotionally react to the state of the created world. This means that in a story there must be at least one character that has the ability to think and be affected mentally by events in the story and events that have an impact on the world that was created by and for the narrative. For example, if there is a story that includes things like hurricanes or forest fires, there must be a character who is emotionally affected by the events for the events to be qualified as part of the narrative. *The second characteristic* is about the actions the intelligent agents take. There must be actions taken by the intelligent agents, and those actions must be taken on purpose. This point explains how a narrative cannot be solely about the mental life of an intelligent agent, or character. The narrative must also include problems that require actions by the intelligent agents to be solved. There must be a conflict in the narrative world that requires solving by actions taken by the intelligent agents. Examples of these kinds of conflicts are unfulfilled desires, betrayal, revenge, etcetera. *The formal and pragmatic dimension* is the final dimension and consists of three points. *The first point* is that the sequence of events in a story must cause a unified causal chain that leads to closure. This means that first and foremost, the events that take place in a narrative, must relate to each other in a causal relationship. The narrative cannot be about random unrelated events that lead to nothing. The causal events need to build up to an ending of the narrative. *The second point* is that at least some of the events in the story need to be a matter of fact. This means that for the narrative, some of the events need to actually happen in the story. They cannot all be hypotheses, commands, or advice. An example would be a stonemason explaining how to make a stone, without actually doing it. For it to be a matter of fact, means that there needs to be a stone at the end of the story, therefore the stonemason needs to actually physically make a stone. *The third and final point* is that the story must convey something meaningful to the audience. This is a bit of a controversial condition as it becomes quite subjective. According to Ryan, a story must have some kind of information that the audience picks up, or finds useful, for the narrative to be significant. This is arguably the most difficult condition to explain, because of its subjectivity. The explanation would be that the story that is being told needs to have some sort of information that is explained. The story cannot be something like ‘Paul was lonely, so he got a friend, now he is no longer lonely.’ According to Ryan, this is not narrative, because it does not convey useful information to the audience. There are no events that are significant enough for the audience to consider it a significant narrative. Ryan does acknowledge that

these conditions are a bit subjective, and fuzzy, because different people hold different values to what narrativity is (Ryan, 2010).

Storytelling is a term that has been mentioned briefly before, but needs some further explanation. Storytelling comes from the traditional form of orally communicating a story to an audience. The more contemporary form of storytelling has, just like narrativity, a much deeper root in the current techniques used to communicate, or entertain. With the ability to share stories across many different people, by using the new forms of communication (Anderson, 2010). This means that storytelling is now no longer something that is limited to a certain group of people, or people who were able to listen to a story orally. The emergence of all the digital media platforms has allowed storytelling to grow much larger, and transform into a whole new form of communication. Storytelling and narrativity go hand in hand, as they both refer to the act of telling a story in a particular way. Storytelling refers to the techniques that are used to tell the story. Narrative on the other hand is about how the story is constructed by the mediums that are used.

There are two basic types of storytelling in television series; the stand-alone series and the continuous narrative (Garcia, 2016). The former basic type of storytelling in television series means that every episode has an individual plot, and by the end of the episode, this plot is finished. The only aspects that are brought over to the next episodes are information regarding the characters, relationships, settings and other information that is not part of the individual plot in one episode. This does not however mean that the plot that ended in an episode is completely “forgotten”. It is more about the audience, and them being able to follow each episode without needing the information from the previous episodes.

The latter basic type of storytelling in television series is the continuous narrative. This is more in line with both *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders*. It means that a series builds on the episodes in chronological order, and allows for much more complex and stretched story lines and character arcs that develop over a long period of time (Mittell, 2007). This means that over time, the audience will need to store all the information and piece together the world that is built by the narrative (Ryan, 2014). It requires a larger attention span and more effort from the audience to remain “up to date” with everything that is happening in the story. Missing one episode leads to plot holes, which at that point makes following the series almost impossible.

Garcia (2016) argues that in television today, it is almost impossible to find clear examples of one of these two basic forms of storytelling in television series. He argues that series that traditionally have that stand-alone type of storytelling, where the plot is resolved in one episode, often make use of a partly continuous narrative. Garcia gives crime television series like the many *CSI* varieties as an example of how it occasionally will use multiple episodes for a plot, or different plots are left open and later picked up again.

What has developed, however, is a new type of television series that combines the two basic forms of storytelling, which Garcia calls "miniseries-series". This means that series like *American Horror Story* (FX, 2011), *True Detective* (HBO, 2014-), *Fargo* and *American Crime* (ABC, 2015-), which Garcia argues are the most successful examples, have created a whole new idea of storytelling. These television series consist of multiple seasons, but every season has the stand-alone type of storytelling. This means that after the plot is resolved, and a season is over after eight to ten episodes, the plot is left behind and the next season starts over from scratch. Individual seasons are still built on the continuous narrative structure.

2.2 Historical accuracy

Historical accuracy in relation to television series is about how the creators of the series portrayed the historical time period, and how accurately they did it. Historical accuracy is something that is held in high regard by critics, when it comes to period dramas, as they are supposed to be a representation of the past for the audience (Kelly, 2004). The audience is looking for a "window" to look through and see the world as it used to be decades ago. Television series and films that are set in a different time period, especially the past, are judged and criticized based on how well the creators were able to present that "window", or in other words, how historically accurate it is (Kelly, 2004). The fact that films and television series are judged and criticized based on this historical accuracy can result in problems. It often means that films and television are too quickly disregarded by critics because they supposedly are not accurate to the time period they are set in. This takes away a large possibility that the creators of a specific film or series have some right ideas, or wanted to create something that is more about entertaining than being accurate. This is something filmmakers and historians have conflicts about regularly (Kelly, 2004). There is not much

room for filmmakers or television makers to play around, and sometimes this means that they stray off from factual history. This results in criticism from historians. This pressure on both historians and film- and television makers increases even further when society turns to popular culture for their historical information instead of written literature (Cufurovic, 2018).

Authenticity is a term that comes into the picture with period dramas, or historical fiction. History sometimes does not allow for all facts to be presented. In this case this is where authenticity plays an important role. When filling “gaps” in history, creators of historical fiction require to turn to alternative ways of portraying what happened, or in other words, what could have happened. This is where the importance of authenticity comes in (De Groot, 2016). This also means that the criticism gets more subjective, because the “gaps” being filled are mere interpretations of history. The only thing left to criticize is the authenticity of certain scenes. This does mean, however, that the use of accuracy becomes a bit of a gray area (Saxton, 2020).

Authenticity as a concept relates to how the audience experiences certain aspects. In film, but most importantly in television, authenticity depends on many different factors. Aspects like the use of music, the use of props, the set design, the costume design, are all categories that aid authenticity. A writer of a period drama will need to assess if the character truly fits in the period presented in the work. The author’s interpretation of history could be factual and as close to real history as possible, but the characters he creates also need to fit in the period, which concludes to milieu, dress, speech, and customs (Saxton, 2020). All of these traits create an accurate portrayal and a sense of believability for the audience that the characters in a period drama are as close to real characters from that period.

2.3 Authenticity and aesthetics

Authenticity and aesthetics relate strongly to historical accuracy, as they are part of the foundation for that accuracy in period dramas. Aesthetics in turn supports authenticity. When analyzing a scene in a period drama, some aspects immediately come to mind when focusing on authenticity. Aspects like speech, music, make-up, art, interior or exterior decorating, architecture and costume design play much bigger roles than just background details. Aesthetic aspects like people having a conversation, the use of language and the

way the characters pronounce words, or the dialect they have are all part of authenticity. The clothes the characters are wearing adds to the aesthetics.

Aesthetics in the context of films or television series relates to the experience of those different aspects by the audience. Aesthetics require perception by an audience, and usually relates to a positive experience. The aesthetics of a piece of visual art is about the way certain aspects shown on screen fit within a certain framework that the scene in question is about. Relating this to *Boardwalk Empire* for instance, it means that the creators of the series have chosen to go for a certain aesthetic in their portrayal of the 1920s. History shows us how the 1920s looked, but to make an adaptation in current society means relying on visual aspects to show the audience what the stylisation of the 1920s potentially looked like. It is then up to the audience to determine whether the aesthetic choices made by the creators actually give them the experience of the 1920s.

The analysis of *Boardwalk Empire* and its aesthetics will follow later, but some things can already be discussed. 1920s, prohibition, gangsters, the roaring twenties. Historical contexts that have been analyzed both fictionally and non-fictionally. As an audience, there is a historical context that is linked to these concepts, and the audience has ideas about what it should look like. We have an idea what the roaring twenties looked, and sounded like. We might think of upbeat jazz music, parties, fancy clothes, dancing, and consuming alcohol. It is then up to the creators of *Boardwalk Empire* to make aesthetic decisions that mirror those expectations, in order to give a sense of authenticity. This means that the audience will, hopefully, experience a scene or a period drama as an authentic portrayal of what the roaring twenties looked and sounded like. It is up to the audience to decide whether a period drama is authentic to them and whether they are satisfied with the way the creators portrayed the period that the drama is about (Cardwell, 2013).

Costume design is important to authenticity, because it is a detail that is not directly referred to in the plot. Costumes, and the way characters look, are visual facts that are there no matter what happens in the plot. They are necessary for the audience to perceive the story as a period piece, and will be noticed right away. After some time has passed, especially in television series, these factors will be noticed less, because the audience will get more used to the way characters are dressed and how they look, meaning they are fully immersed in the “window” into another time period.

The same applies to the props that are seen on screen. Props are hardly trivialities in period film production (Frey, 2018). The way the environment in a period drama looks has a very large impact on the authenticity of the piece. Furniture, paintings, wallpaper, floors, utensils, anything seen on film helps with creating the sense of a certain time period. If not done properly, criticism will arise. Examples of mistakes that are very famous and often criticized are Jack from *the Titanic* being from a town that was founded years after the character supposedly died, the guitar Marty McFly has in *Back to the Future* was a model that had not been released yet in the year the movie was set in, or going back even further to *Spartacus* (1960), where Kirk Douglas' character wears a wristwatch while it is set during the ancient Rome period. These small details are noticed by the audience, even though some details can only be spotted by people with extensive knowledge of certain events or items, (like the guitar in *Back to the Future*), but once revealed to the public, the immersion will decrease (Frey, 2018). That is why creators and directors of period dramas hold authenticity and the aesthetics in such high regard, because it can basically "make or break" the whole work.



Marty McFly's guitar from the future (Back to the Future.)

3. The background information

In this chapter, I will provide some background information on both *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders*. I will also go through the stories of both series briefly, in order to give a sense of what the two series are about.

3.1 Boardwalk Empire

Boardwalk Empire is a crime drama television series set mostly in Atlantic City, United States, during the Prohibition Era. During this era, the United States had laws in place that banned the consumption and the distribution of alcohol of any type. It lasted from 1920 until 1923, wanting to put an end to the "Roaring" aspect of the "Roaring Twenties". It was a time just after the First World War, and life was looking up for many people. This time is often described as one big party, and the government wanted to end this. They did it by banning the substance that resulted in most of this behavior, alcohol.

This resulted in what can perhaps be described as the most famous case of organized crime in the United States. Because many gangsters like George Remus, Charles Luciano, Alphonse Capone and Dean O'Banion saw and took their opportunity to go from small-time gangster to kingpin in the world of organized crime. It was due to the basic theory of economics. You have a product that many people like and want, so the demand is high, but now all of a sudden this product becomes very scarce, because of its illegality. This means that the prices skyrocketed.

This event in history is the basis of *Boardwalk Empire*. It features all of the biggest names in organized crime at that time, with one character in the center; Enoch "Nucky" Thompson, who was largely based on the real Enoch Lewis "Nucky" Johnson. The character portrayed in the series has been altered, so that the creators could change certain events to make it more entertaining, but they still tried to stay true to the actual turn of events surrounding Enoch Johnson and Atlantic City. All the other characters in the series that were based on actual people do stay fully true to their history.

'Show creator Terence Winter elected to portray a fictionalized version of Johnson, to give the writers creative license with history, and to maintain suspense. One great difference between the real Johnson and the fictional Thompson is that the real Johnson is not known to have killed anyone personally, as the fictional Thompson does; there is also no evidence that Johnson ever ordered someone to be killed. Also, Thompson is portrayed as running his distillery for bootlegging and competing directly with real-life gangsters for distribution on the East Coast, whereas the real Johnson took a cut of all illegal alcohol sold in Atlantic City but was never known to engage in competition or turf wars. He has been described as running his empire "with a velvet hammer." Johnson did not remarry until 1941, long after his wife's death in 1912; in the show, Thompson remarries in 1921. Thompson is Irish Catholic, while Johnson was a Methodist whose parents were from two of Atlantic County's oldest families.' ("Enoch L. Johnson", https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enoch_L._Johnson, accessed 2021).

The series was created by Terence Winter, who has worked on many other prominent pieces of television and film, such as *The Sopranos* and *The Wolf of Wall Street*. He worked with Martin Scorsese, Mark Wahlberg, Tim Van Patten, Howard Korder and Stephen Levinson, all of which were among the known writers and producers for popular production company *'HBO Entertainment'*. Winter wrote many episodes for *The Sopranos* from 2000 until 2007, and then moved onto *Boardwalk Empire* a few years later, from 2010 until 2014. He is mostly known as a screenwriter, and creator of episodes, but in 2007, he also directed for *The Sopranos*. Besides being a writer, he was an executive producer for the three television shows he wrote, being *The Sopranos*, *Boardwalk Empire* and *Vinyl*. His success came mostly with the immensely popular show *The Sopranos*, which is also where he won four 'Emmy' awards for 'Outstanding Drama Series' and 'Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series'. *The Sopranos* is still one of the most watched shows in history.

The main character, Nucky Thompson, is played by well-known actor Steve Buscemi. Buscemi has been a very prominent actor for decades, with famous parts in Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), *Pulp Fiction* (1994), and the Coen Brothers' *The Big Lebowski* (1998), *Fargo* (1996), and many more. He started working with the creator and writer of *Boardwalk Empire,* Terence Winter, when he played Tony Blundetto on *The Sopranos* from 2004 until 2006. That is where Winter decided that he would want to work with Buscemi again, and specifically asked and wrote *Boardwalk Empire* with Buscemi in

mind as the main character. Buscemi was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1957, and worked as a firefighter in New York City, before becoming a full time actor. He still is very much engaged with the firefighters in New York, and famously got back to it during 9/11, to help with the chaos and work in Manhattan at that time. Buscemi has very famous characteristics, mostly his appearance, as he has very distinct eyes and crooked teeth. He often jokes that dentists offered him to "fix his teeth", but that he was afraid to lose one of his most well-known attributes, which often results in work. These appearances often ensure him roles of weird and quirky characters. In *Boardwalk Empire*, however, it became part of his seriousness and had a terrifying look as one of the hardest criminals in the United States. Besides Buscemi, there were multiple other recurring cast members in *Boardwalk Empire*, with Michael Pitt (James Darmody), Kelly Macdonald (Margaret Schroeder, later Thompson), Michael Shannon (Nelson van Alden) and Shea Whigham (Elias Thompson).

The series consists of five seasons. Season one takes place between January and November of 1920, and shows the very beginning of prohibition in Atlantic City. Nucky Thompson (Steve Buscemi) hatches a scheme to generate a large sum of money over the course of a few years during prohibition, and enters a collaboration with Arnold Rothstein (Michael Stuhlbarg) and Charlie "Lucky" Luciano (Vincent Piazza). They become bootleggers and supply Atlantic City and New York City with plenty of liquor to keep on partying like they did in the "Roaring Twenties". Nucky meets Margaret Schroeder (Kelly Macdonald) who is at that time married to an abusive unemployed husband, and is pregnant. Jimmy Darmody (Michael Pitt) has also returned from fighting in World War I, and is looking to get back on track as Nucky's protégé. Nucky then meets a prohibition agent called Nelson van Alden (Michael Shannon) who is determined to take Nucky down. During the first season, many more characters arise who pave the way for an action packed season of betrayal, loyalty and money. Nucky gains enemies that want to take him down and Nucky fights them off. At the end of the season both Jimmy Darmody, and Nucky's own brother Elias Thompson (Shea Whigham), are resentful towards Nucky and hatch a scheme to take him down from the inside, which leads to season two.

In season two, taking place between February and August of 1921, Nucky fights an internal and external fight against Jimmy Darmody, and Nucky's brother Elias Thompson, as they want to take over Nucky's empire. At a certain point, Nucky appears to be fully pressed out of business in Atlantic City, and hatches a scheme to supposedly step down as County

Treasurer of Atlantic City, which was his official position in the city, but was merely a front. This comes after a failed attempt to assassinate him by Jimmy Darmody and Elias Thompson. Nucky pretends to feel lucky and that he is done with being in the spotlight. This is actually a scheme to flee to Ireland, where he trades weapons for top quality Irish Whiskey. At this time, Ireland is at war for independence with England, so they want the weapons. Nucky then takes this top quality liquor, and sells it in Atlantic City for a cheaper price than Jimmy Darmody's liquor which is also of poorer quality. At the end of the season, Elias Thompson blames everything on Jimmy Darmody, and begs Nucky for forgiveness. Nucky spares him and kills Jimmy, even though that is very difficult for him to do, because Jimmy was like a son to Nucky. During this second season, Margaret and Nucky also get married.

In the third season, it appears that everything is going well for Nucky and his new wife Margaret. The season starts on New Year's Eve 1922, and ends in June 1923. In this season, a new foe is introduced in the form of Gyp Rosetti (Bobby Cannavale), who is a hot headed, easily offended gangster from New York City, who works under Joe Masseria (Ivo Nandi). Masseria is a real character in history, and controlled the entire world of organized crime during that time. Gyp Rosetti gets angry at Nucky, because Nucky refuses to sell any alcohol to him. Rosetti then decides to get into the way of Nucky, by controlling a small town along the route that Nucky's trucks take to New York City. It is the only road available and Rosetti makes sure Nucky's trucks cannot pass through. Nucky turns to Al Capone (Stephen Graham), leader of the mafia in Chicago, and Albert "Chalky" White (Michael Kenneth Williams), leader of the black people in Atlantic City, to fight the war against Joe Masseria and Gyp Rosetti. Nucky strikes a deal with Masseria, through Arnold Rothstein, and Masseria calls his troops back, leaving Rosetti alone. Nucky then has Rosetti killed, bringing back the peace. During this season, the marriage between Nucky and Margaret strands, as they both become unfaithful to each other, but they do not officially get a divorce.

The fourth season takes place between February 1924 and January 1925. This season features a lot of the black community in Atlantic City, and its leader Chalky White. For helping Nucky in season three, Nucky promised Chalky White to give him his own club on the boardwalk, which was at that time not accepted, because it would be a black club on a white boardwalk. Remember that at this time, segregation was still very much alive. A new foe gets introduced, in the form of Doctor Valentin Narcisse (Jeffrey White), a black kingpin

from New York City, who demands the ability to invest in the club in Atlantic City, after one of Chalky White's men kills one of Narcisse's men. Chalky White refuses, which leads to a war between the black communities in Atlantic City and New York City. In Chicago, things are starting to take place as well, as Al Capone becomes more powerful, and loves being the center of attention. Nucky himself tries to stay away from all the wars, and heads to Florida, where he decides to take part in a large new smuggling operation, smuggling rum from Cuba. He brings Meyer Lansky (Anatol Yusef) and Charlie "Lucky" Luciano into the arrangement, after them expressing the feeling to start their own business, having worked under Joe Masseria and Arnold Rothstein, but they do it behind their backs. Charlie gets recognised by one of Masseria's men, and is forced to smuggle heroin besides the rum for Masseria. Nucky finds out and starts a war. Nucky and Chalky White join forces once again, but lose. Nucky is forced to give up Atlantic City and Chalky White, who then runs from Atlantic City. This is where the season ends, and it is the first season where Nucky does not come out on top. Nucky does broker the peace, however, and the war is over. Nucky is now left to do his business in Florida and Cuba.

In the fifth and final season, we jump forward in time a little bit. It takes place between April and October of 1931, during the great depression. It also features flashbacks to Nucky's youth, where we see how he came up in Atlantic City. In Cuba, Nucky walks into Meyer Lansky, and shortly after, there is a failed attempt on Nucky's life. Nucky does not believe that it was a coincidence and goes back to Atlantic City. Shortly after his arrival, Joe Masseria is killed and it is revealed that Meyer Lansky and Charlie Luciano are behind the attack. They want to take control of the entire mafia, and have just killed the boss. They want to get rid of the old generation, and Nucky is next. At the end of the season, the alliance that Charlie and Meyer have created is too strong, and Nucky is forced to retire for good. Nucky luckily made huge splashes on the stock market, so he has the money he needs to retire. He leaves his office on the boardwalk but is greeted by a young boy. The boy shoots Nucky three times, after revealing that he is Tommy Darmody, Jimmy's son. That is the end of Nucky Thompson, and all of his money goes to Margaret, presumably, since they are still married. Throughout the season, we also see a lot of flashbacks to Nucky's childhood, where he grew up in a very poor household with an abusive father. He starts to work for the Commodore (Dabney Coleman) when he is about ten years old, the Commodore is also seen in the first two seasons. The Commodore is the person who built

Atlantic City, before Nucky took over. Nucky later becomes the sheriff, and works his way up in the ranks. We also see his wife, who committed suicide after losing their baby a week after is has been born. This is, in a very condensed form, the summary of the entire series. The final part of *Boardwalk Empire* is the music, which is of great importance to television shows. In *Boardwalk Empire*, the music used in the actual series is exclusively music from the 1890s to 1920s, which helps add the sense of looking through a window into a different world, set in the 1920s. There is one outlier though, which is the theme song. The theme song, *Straight Up and Down* by The Brian Jonestown Massacre, is a bit out of place amongst the other works that are included in the series. The Brian Jonestown Massacre is a band from San Francisco, United States, and started in the 1990s. Their music is described as psychedelic rock, progressive rock and blues rock, and has a very different sound than the music that "belongs'' in *Boardwalk Empire*. *Straight Up and Down* features a heavy guitar section and loud drums, and fits in better with a contemporary show than a show about bootleggers in the 1920s. But writer Terence Winter, actually chose this track and this band on purpose. He has said that "I wanted something unexpected, I didn't want to do some Charleston, which didn't really kick in until 1924 anyway, and everything I heard from the period had people doing the Charleston. I had been a fan of the Brian Jonestown Massacre, so we tried it, and I said to the editor, that really works for me. It's a show set in 1920 seen through a different perspective, not a literal look at the 1920s. Some people find it jarring to see 1920s clothes and hear contemporary music. I look at it as, it's a 90-second intro and then you have all the 20s you want." This does bring an interesting approach to the main theme, especially since it is the complete opposite of what the series intends to do, which is to stay as true as possible to the actual time period in which it is set.

3.2 Peaky Blinders

The second television series is *Peaky Blinders*, which is set in Birmingham, England. *Peaky Blinders* follows a British crime family, which is working its way up in the crime world. They come from Birmingham, which at that time was a lower-class city, with mostly factories and working-class people in small houses and with a low income. *Peaky Blinders* is loosely based on the gang with the same name that was active from the 1890s until the 1920s. *Peaky Blinders* was created for the BBC, by Steven Wright. Wright is a British film director and screenwriter, who is mostly known for writing the screenplays for *Dirty Pretty Things* and

Eastern Promises. He also is one of the co-creators of the worldly popular television programme *Who Wants to Be A Millionaire?*. As for *Peaky Blinders*, Wright was a writer, executive producer and the creator, yet he did not direct the series. *Peaky Blinders* has several different directors, which changed throughout the series. In the first season, there were two directors, Otto Bathurst and Tom Harper. Otto Bathurst won a *BAFTA Television Craft Award* for his directing in the first season, and is the only director of *Peaky Blinders* to do so. The second season was directed by Colm McCarthy, the third season by Tim Mielants, the fourth season by David Caffrey and the fifth season by Anthony Byrne. *Peaky Blinders* is currently at the end of filming season six, which is also directed by Anthony Byrne. Creator Steven Wright has also announced that season six will be the final season of *Peaky Blinders*. The main character in the television series is Tommy Shelby, who is portrayed by Cillian Murphy. Murphy is best known for his roles in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight Trilogy* and *Inception*. Murphy was born on 25 May 1976 in Cork, Ireland. He started as a singer and songwriter for his band The Sons of Mr. Green Genes, but turned down a record deal in the late 1990s to focus on acting. That is when he started working on smaller independent films. Besides Murphy, there are several other recurring cast members in *Peaky Blinders*, most noticeably Paul Anderson (Arthur Shelby), Helen McCrory (Polly Gray) and Sophie Rundle (Ada Shelby.)

The series currently consists of five seasons; all of the seasons only have six episodes, which is considerably less than *Boardwalk Empire*. The first season acts as a foundation of the dynamic of the different members of the *Peaky Blinders* gang. During this season, we see how Tommy Shelby takes an opportunity to get the gang up in the criminal world, by stealing a crate of high-powered weapons, destined for the military. We learn that the men in the gang have all recently returned from World War I, and have severe problems due to fighting in that war. We learn that Tommy had one of the hardest roles in the military, being a tunneller. A tunneller was someone who would dig narrow tunnels underneath the battlefield, to flank the enemy. Many tunnels collapsed, leaving it to be a very demanding task both physically and psychologically. After having stolen the crate of weapons, Inspector Campbell (Sam Neil) is sent to Birmingham to recover those weapons, and becomes obsessed with taking down the Peaky Blinders. At the same time, Tommy Shelby is trying to take over the horse races in the area, and starts a war with current owner of the races Billy Kimber (Charlie Creed-Miles.) Inspector Campbell brings in an undercover agent by the

name of Grace Burgess (Annabelle Wallis) who is assigned with making Tommy Shelby fall in love with her. She fails, as she falls in love with Tommy Shelby as well, leaving her in doubt of where her loyalty lies. She chooses Tommy, but comes clean to him that she has been working for Inspector Campbell.

Season two takes place two years after season one, which means that it takes place in 1921. After having established a solid position in Birmingham, the gang is set on expanding their reach to the North and to the South. They are set on expanding to London, where a crime boss by the name of Darby Sabini (Noah Taylor) controls the crime world. The *Peaky Blinders* start a war with them, being backed by the Jewish crime family, which has Alfie Solomons (Tom Hardy) at the helm. Half way through the season, Grace Burgess returns to England, having married a rich American man. It becomes clear that the feelings between Tommy and Grace have not disappeared, but Grace is married, so cannot do anything. At the end of the season, Tommy wins the battle in London and successfully takes the Peaky Blinders gang to the next level in the criminal world.

The third season is set in 1924, so again two years after the last season. Tommy Shelby and Grace are reunited and get married, after Grace's husband committed suicide. In this season, Tommy is forced by a Russian Duke to do his bidding, and commits many crimes. Tommy tries to get out of the business, but has a very difficult time. Tommy then robs the Russians and steals valuable jewels, not knowing that they are "cursed". He turns one of the jewels into a necklace which he gives to Grace. Grace is then shot at a party, but the bullet was destined for Tommy. Tommy believes it was his fault, and blames himself. The gang and family fall out, because many of them are arrested, because of Tommy. Tommy is left all alone at the end.

Season four starts on Christmas 1925, where we see that after most family members had been arrested in season three, they have spent six months in jail. This is the moment where the whole family has fallen out, and hates each other. They have all moved away and are trying to go their own way, when they all receive a letter from a new enemy who is planning on taking them all out in revenge for something the *Peaky Blinders* gang did in season three. This results in the family being forced to come together again, but no one wants to actually be together. They agree that they have the best chances of surviving if they work together. In this season, the *Peaky Blinders* suffer their first big loss in the whole series, they lose one

of their brothers, John Shelby (Joe Cole). In the end of the season, the *Peaky Blinders* persevere, and win the battle against the enemy.

The fifth season is set in 1929, during the crash of wall-street. This means that this season takes place much later than season four, and a lot has happened in the meantime. Tommy Shelby has stepped away from the crime world, and is now a politician for the socialist party. He has been recruited by another politician, to form a National-Socialist party, or in other words, become one of the leaders of the early form of the Nazi movement in the United Kingdom. The gang has also moved a large part of their business to the United States, and has an office in Detroit, where Michael Gray (Finn Cole), the youngest and brightest member of the gang, is in charge of their funds. Due to the crash, the *Peaky Blinders* lose a large part of their funds, and are forced to go back to their criminal ways, by disdain of all the family members. They decide to work together with a Chinese gang, who are smuggling Opium. The *Peaky Blinders* are then attacked by a new gang from Scotland, who are also working together with the politician who is forming the National-Socialist party, which forces the *Peaky Blinders* to work together. They come up with a plan to get rid of the Scottish gang, and the Politician at the same time, but everything goes south, and the plan fails, ending the season on a big cliffhanger.

When it comes to the music used in the show, Peaky Blinders uses a very different approach than *Boardwalk Empire*. Where *Boardwalk Empire* only uses modern music for the opening theme, *Peaky Blinders* uses modern rock and indie rock music exclusively. The soundtrack is a massive list of heavy rock and pop bands, and the music creates a very different atmosphere than the music in *Boardwalk Empire*. The opening theme is *Red Right Hand* by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds. Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds are a rock band from Australia, and *Red Right Hand* was included on their eighth studio album. What makes it interesting, is that the lyrics of the song fit very well to *Peaky Blinders*, but the song was not written for the show. The song has a very mysterious aspect to it, and is somewhat industrial, which also makes it very fitting to the lore of *Peaky Blinders*, and 1900s Birmingham. Steven Wright, the creator of *Peaky Blinders*, has stated that "the lyrics conjure up our industrial landscape and the 'tall handsome man' could, of course, be Tommy Shelby. Over the series we've played with what the '*Red Right Hand*' could be. The words have played over communists shaking hands, and over the reveal that Sam Neill's Chester Campbell has connections to the fighters from Ulster." The statement is in relation to Wright's choice to

use the song as the opening theme, after the initial idea was to use it as a song in the first episode, because it would relate to the events in the first season. The song has actually been covered by multiple other rock bands, and those versions have also been used in the television series.

The music in *Peaky Blinders* has a very different effect on the aesthetics of the scenes, because it gives a very different feeling. The heavy rock music is often paired with slow motion scenes, which makes many of the scenes in *Peaky Blinders* very “superhero-esque”. The music is chosen by composer and music director Anthony Genn. He wanted to create more of a gritty feeling to the series, since it is a very dark and gritty show set in one of the darkest and grittiest places in the United Kingdom in the 1920s.

4. The method

4.1 Data collection

In this thesis, the focus is on the television series *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders*. For answering the main research question, three types of data will be used. The first type of data consists of reviews written by both professional and non-professional critics. These reviews are found on a popular website called *Rotten Tomatoes. Rotten Tomatoes* is a website where every single television series and movie is reviewed. *Rotten Tomatoes* has become a staple of reviews, and the "score" a work gets on the "tomatometer" holds a lot of value to the reception of works. It does not just show scores, but it is also a website that includes reviews from both the audience as well as professional critics. When looking for reviews for a specific work, there is a page where the professional reviews are briefly summarized, and a score is given by each review. Underneath the short summary, the link to the original review is provided. *Rotten Tomatoes* does not have their own professional critics, but they become a database for reviews, by collecting all professional reviews about movies and television series. This means that for the professional reviews, *Rotten Tomatoes* is a third party. For the non-professional reviews it does become a place to review movies and television series, as the general audience is able to leave reviews on the pages of different movies and television series on the website. This means that *Rotten Tomatoes* will be the starting point for collecting reviews to analyze and summarize to create that foundation of knowledge for the analysis. The website has a handy function that allows the visitor to read audience reviews, or the critics reviews. For both *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders* three professional reviews, and two non-professional reviews have been selected. These reviews are selected based on a certain depth. The review must go into depth on both series, and review elements like visual aspects, costume design, set design and, most importantly, music. The reviews are read, and selected based on the content in the review. There must be some mention of the use of music for the review to be relevant to this thesis.

The second type of data is found on *Reddit*. It consists of discussions and posts on the designated *subreddits,* which are designated forum-like pages specially made for a specific topic, regarding both television series. To find relevant discussions regarding the use of music, which is central in this thesis, on the *subreddits* of both television series, Reddit allows users to search keywords in the designated *subreddits.* This means that by typing 'Peaky Blinders vs. Boardwalk Empire' in the *Boardwalk Empire subreddit*, it will show discussions about the two series. By adding keywords like music, costume design, immersion, etcetera, many discussions can be found about the topic. Some of these discussions have been gathered. This is done to show what people talk about in a more casual atmosphere, without trying to review the series to others, but more to have discussions about what people liked and why they liked it, with each other. It is more of a two-way street than the reviews, because with reviews, the person who writes the review often does not engage in discussions with the audience. This batch of data will provide a general sense of how the audience experienced the two series and what they thought was good and what was not. These discussions and conversations allow me to support certain claims regarding the atmosphere and immersion.

The third type of data comes from both television series themselves. Three scenes from both television series have been selected and analyzed. The selection of the scenes is done by choosing similar scenes in both series, as that allows for a comparison between the use of music, visuals, dialogue for the narrative and the storytelling. Preferably, the selected scenes consist of music, but even when there is no music in a scene, that can still mean a lot. Therefore, the first criteria for selecting the scenes is that in order to be able to compare *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders,* there has to be music in at least one of the two scenes in the comparison. The scenes are selected by looking for events that happen in both series.

4.2 Data analysis

The actual analysis will consist of a close reading, watching and listening analysis of the scenes that have been selected. The analysis will feature a thick description of what is being shown in the scene, like visuals, characters, dialogue, music, expression, etcetera. The thick description is not only about describing what takes place, but also about one's interpretation of what is being presented. (Geertz, 2008.) It means to provide a detailed

description, including comments and interpretation, so that it becomes clear what one sees and how one makes certain claims. This is to get a sense of what elements are used in the selected scenes, and how those elements help the narrative and the storytelling progress. It is important to provide this thick description, as part of the narrative and storytelling also has to do with multimediality and aesthetics, as mentioned in the theoretical framework. After close watching, reading and listening and providing the thick description, the thesis will move onto trying to expose and explain links between the different aspects in the scenes. This means linking music, dialogue or text, visuals to each other and to storytelling and the narrative. The atmosphere will be included as well, as the music, dialogue and visuals have a big influence on how the atmosphere is perceived by the audience.
Finally, the analysis will make a comparison between the two series, as they approach storytelling and music in different ways. This comparison is important for answering the research question, as it is about how music helps with storytelling. This is where the analysis will use the data that came out of the close reading, watching and listening and providing a thick description, to show how Boardwalk Empire approaches storytelling and the narrative, and how Peaky Blinders does it. Both television series obviously are able to tell a story, otherwise there would not be several seasons. But they approach the use of music and especially the sense of historical accuracy in very different ways. This will become clear after the thick description of the scenes, and the analysis of what music is being used where.

4.3 Research quality indicators: Reliability, Validity and Transferability

Reliability of the research is about whether the research, when repeated under the same conditions, can reproduce the same answers that this research has given. This means that if another party would do the same things that were done in this research, with the same background knowledge, the same data, and the same scenes, would come to the same conclusion as the conclusion in this thesis. In this case, the reliability should be in order, as there have been a number of statements made explaining why and how certain choices were made, and therefore, why and how a certain conclusion is made. What has to be noted however, is that the thick description that was provided, is an individual interpretation of what is being shown in the scenes. Another party could then interpret those scenes differently, leading to a different outcome. For the thick description, transparency is key:

the choices leading to the thick description and my comments and interpretations are presented in a transparent way.

Validity of the research is about if the research methods that are used are the correct methods to use in order to conduct the research. In other words, does the method provide an answer to the research question? In this research, combining two methods is done in order to provide a clear answer to the research question. The thick description allows for me to interpret what I see in the scenes, with the scenes being central to the research as that is what is being analyzed. Combining that with the discussions on Reddit and the reviews, it becomes not just my interpretation, but also a certain frame of reference by a third party, that being others on the internet. By doing this, the research becomes detached from just my interpretation, and therefore, being able to give a meaningful answer to the research question.

Transferability is about the research providing something to science. In other words, do the findings in this research help with understanding the use of music and how the use of music can help storytelling and the narrative in a historical context. In the case of this research this is true. After this research, I will be able to add a little bit to how we can understand using music in a narrative, and how music can shape authenticity in scenes. Of course, to provide a more polished answer, and a bigger piece to the science of narrativity and intermediality, more scenes need to be analyzed in a bigger context, but this research is a step in that direction.

5. The analysis

In this analysis, I have two types of data. I will start with summarizing reviews and Reddit discussions, to provide an idea of what a small part of the audience says and thinks of both television series. After doing this, three scenes from both *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders* are selected and analyzed with a close reading, watching and listening approach in order to provide thick descriptions of the scenes. As mentioned in the method chapter, the scenes are selected based on certain criteria, most importantly, that the scenes are similar in content in both television series in order for the analysis to make an easy comparison, where the two scenes are about the same topic, or a similar event happens in both scenes. For each scene, there will be a short description of where the scene fits in the story, and what events preceded the scene, and what happens after the scene. This will explain further how the scene aids storytelling and is part of the general narrative. For each scene, I will describe what is seen and heard, after which I will describe what music is playing and when it is playing. After providing this thick description, I will make a comparison between the two television series, to show the differences between the two. Before I provide the thick description for the scenes, I will now summarize reviews and Reddit discussions. The full reviews and discussions can be found in chapter nine, the appendix.

5.1 Reviews and Reddit

Boardwalk Empire is a show for the popular HBO network. HBO is known to be very attentive to details in its television series, and *Boardwalk Empire* does not miss, according to reviews. I have pulled five professional reviews through *Rotten Tomatoes* and there seems to be a consensus amongst the five. The attention to detail is miraculous. Everything is done correctly. From costume design to decors, everything looks and feels like the 1920s. One critic even goes as far as to say the attention to detail is overwhelming, resulting in a distraction of the story and narrative. Every scene is carefully crafted to look and feel historically accurate to the 1920s, and that means that a lot of the viewer's attention goes

to that, but it still means that that attention to detail has been executed really well, according to the reviews.

For *Peaky Blinders* critics are a bit more divided, and there is less of a consensus reached. Just like for *Boardwalk Empire*, I have pulled five reviews from *Rotten Tomatoes*. Two reviews were more negative, two were a bit indifferent, and one was positive. Even though the five reviews are so different in tone and opinion, there is a red thread through all of it. The music is different from most historical dramas. They call the music "anachronistic", which means that the music does not fit the time period. The negative reviews say that the critics found it hard to be immersed in the story, because the characters seem like "comic-book characters" and the music does not allow for a full immersion into the 1920s setting. One of the negative reviews does say that maybe it is good to move away from the realism from time to time. The neutral reviews leave their judgment more in the middle. It says that it is very possible to dislike the show, because it does not truly stick to historical accuracy, but feels more like a dream. They say that every person will figure out for themselves if they like it or not. Finally, the positive review calls all elements powerful and cleverly done. They say that the decor, costume design and cinematography goes well with the "mystical" music choices and allows for a well-made story.

The discussions on Reddit follow the thread and the differences between the two stories. Many people feel that the use of modern music in *Peaky Blinders* limits their immersion, and with *Boardwalk Empire* they feel more like they are watching actual history. Some discussions about the cinematography show that people liked the first few seasons of *Peaky Blinders* because it was different. Just like one of the reviews said that it is good to move away from realism from time to time. But after a few seasons, that excitement rubs off and it just becomes "too much" in the series. People also argue that *Boardwalk Empire* feels slower, and tends to get more boring than *Peaky Blinders.* This shows that there are many differences of opinions on Reddit, which is backed by the reviews. Some people like it, others do not.

5.2 Wedding scenes

Wedding scenes are amongst the most used scenes in drama series or films. Especially if there is some kind of love story in the entire narrative of the work. In some works, these scenes are short and do not really have much depth to it, and do not really have an impact

on the narrative. In other works, like *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders*, these scenes have more impact. The two wedding scenes in *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders* are different in many ways, and have a different impact on the narrative.

Starting with the *Boardwalk Empire* wedding scene in the second season, episode twelve. The wedding scene is between the two main characters of the series, Enoch Thompson and Margaret Schroeder. The two characters have been together for some time, and are living together, even though Margaret knows that Enoch had her ex-husband killed to cover up a liquor heist in the past. When finding this out, she leaves Enoch temporarily. She quickly realizes, however, that by leaving Enoch, she would go back to being poor, and does not have a way to provide for her two children. At the same time, Enoch is facing serious indictments for racketeering, bootlegging, ordering murders, and other illegal practices. The investigators are also forcing Margaret to testify against Enoch for ordering the murder of her ex-husband. Margaret debates this for a brief moment, but then realizes that being with Enoch will be better for the future of her children, and they decide to get married to get out from being able to testify against Enoch. Before they do this, however, she wants to make a full confession to the church, because Margaret is a devout catholic. This is where the scene starts.

1. *What is being shown and heard?*

The scene starts with Esther Randolph, an attorney who is opposing Enoch. Throughout the scene, she is getting dressed in a bedroom, while speaking the entire time. She is practicing her plea against Enoch. During the entire scene, cuts go back and forth between Esther getting ready and practicing her plea, and the other events. The plea is heard while the other events occur. Esther Randolph's timeline is the first of three timelines in the scene that happen in close proximity as each other or at the same time. The scene then shows Margaret in a confession booth, wearing a veil. She talks, but we cannot hear what she is saying. This is the second timeline, which is the actual marriage between Enoch and Margaret. In the confession booth we see Father Brennan, who will be performing the marriage ceremony later. Once Father Brennan starts the ceremony, it is the first time that we hear something other than Randolph's speech. He is turned away and nods, so you cannot see his emotions while hearing Margaret's confession. The camera cuts back and forth between Margaret and Esther. The camera then cuts to two of Enoch's henchmen getting out of a car in front of a building. The third timeline starts here. They are wearing a

cap and a hat and are wearing suits, looking quite menacingly. They are on their way to take care of some of Enoch's business. While we see them walking, we hear Randolph's speech where she mentions James Neary, a former employee of Enoch who will testify against him. After some back and forth between the ceremony and the henchmen, the camera cuts to Neary. He is having sex with a woman on a desk. There is an old telephone, a lamp and some utensils on the desk. The camera is facing them, so they are on the opposite side of the desk. The camera starts at their feet, we see Neary's pants around his ankles, and then the camera pans up, showing who is having sex. The woman is unknown. In the background we see a double door, and an American Flag. The two doors open. The henchmen enter, and take out a pistol and aim it. The camera is facing the two men, so we do not know who he is aiming at. The camera rotates, following the direction of the pistol and we see Neary from the backside. He turns around and is startled. The camera rotates to the man with the pistol again, he walks closer and urges the woman to leave. In the background we see the other henchman still holding a pistol and aiming it towards Neary. The woman runs off. We go back to the church where the ceremony progresses. There is a short period where the camera cuts between Randolph's speech and Brennan's ceremony until it cuts to Neary using a typewriter while sitting at a desk. There is a hat next to him, which can be recognised as the hat that one of the henchmen was wearing. The camera pans up to the face of the henchman, who is talking. He is telling Neary what to write. The camera rotates and shows that the other henchman is holding a pistol to Neary. He looks scared, and his chest is wet from sweating. They tell Neary to sign the letter, and after he does, the henchman standing next to him turns around and puts on his hat. Neary is being sarcastic and comments on them forcing him to alter his confession. The henchman pats Neary on the shoulder, telling him it was not just a confession, and the other henchman tells him it was a suicide note. Neary gets scared, and within a second, the other henchman grabs him and puts his pistol in his mouth. He pushes Neary back in his chair, and shoots. Blood is splattered on the wall. The camera cuts back to the church, with a close-up of Enoch and Margaret, who turn to each other. They kiss. The camera cuts Randolph, who is standing in front of a mirror looking at herself. The camera rotates around her, she is still talking. She turns around and the camera follows where she is looking, she finishes her plea. The camera shows a man sitting in bed in his underwear, smoking a cigarette. It is her co-worker. He

starts clapping, smiling and nodding. Cuts to the three timelines are interchanged throughout the scene.

2. *What music is playing in the scene?*

The scene starts out with Franz Shubert's *Moments Musicaux no 3 in F minor. (D. 780, op 94),* played by Seymour Lipkin. The original by Schubert was published in 1824. This piece is playing while Margaret is making her confession, and in the beginning of Randolph's speech. The piece is instrumental and only features a piano. This piece adds a bit of "lightness" to the start of the scene, with minor and major keys combined. It adds the feeling that it is casual, and breezy. The music later changes into another piece by Franz Schubert, also played by *Seymour Lipkin.* This piece is *Impromptus, D. 935 (Op. 142): Impromptu No. 1 in F Minor. Allegro Moderato*, which was originally published in 1839, after Franz Schubert had passed away. It is an instrumental piano piece. This piece starts playing when the two henchmen are walking through the hallway towards the office of the former employee. This piece is "heavier", meaning that it has a menacing tone to it. It immediately becomes clear that the two henchmen are on their way to do something bad. The piece is more up-tempo, and sounds more drastic, bombastic and serious than the first piece. This piece is not placed here without purpose, as the serious actions are underlined by this heavier piece. The murder, Father Brennan reading from the bible, the moment where Enoch and Margaret are officially married, and the end of Randolph's speech. The use of these pieces can be explained by the use of chronology. The lighter piece is used "before" bad things happen, and Margaret is making her confession. It means that her soul is now "clean", and therefore the lighter, breezier piece. Then the bad things start to happen, and Margaret ties her soul to someone whose soul is very bad already. Margaret accepts that soul into her life, and Enoch's soul only gets worse. This is where the heavier, darker, and more serious music adds to the narrative.

3. *Notes*

Boardwalk Empire's wedding scene is in line with very classical church scenes in Gangster films. One of the most famous scenes from the Godfather, which is parodied and has inspired many other scenes, is the scene where Michael Corleone denounces all evil during the baptism of his godchild. At the same time, brutal murders take place, ordered by Michael Corleone. *Boardwalk Empire* nods to that classic scene from the Godfather, but is its own thing, meaning, the scene is not a copy, but heavily inspired by it.



Timeline one: Esther Randolph practicing her plea.



Timeline two: the wedding between Enoch and Margaret.



Timeline three: the henchmen taking James Neary out.

In the *Peaky Blinders* wedding scene, which comes from season three, episode one, the wedding is between the main character, Thomas Shelby, and a former main character in the first two seasons, Grace Burgess. In the first season of *Peaky Blinders*, Grace was sent to infiltrate Thomas' gang for the police. At the end of the first season, Thomas realizes that she is working undercover, but not after they fall in love with each other. In the beginning of season two, set two years after the first season, we find out that Grace had left the country, and is now married to a man from the United States, and lives there. She returns to London to see a fertility doctor, because she and her husband are not able to get pregnant. Thomas finds out she is in London. They meet up and have sex. Thomas wants Grace to tell her husband the truth and come back with him. Later Grace searches for Thomas, tells him that she still loves him, but is now also pregnant with his child. At the start of season three, which is two years in the future again, Grace and Thomas now have a child. They get married, and buy a house, which is possible due to the suicide of Grace's ex-husband. He

committed suicide because of the affair Grace had with Thomas. The scene starts at the wedding between Thomas and Grace.

1. *What is being shown?*

The scene starts in a church with benches on either side opposing each other. In the back of the church is a small altar, with many candles. The benches are full of people. On the left side, all people are wearing red army uniforms, which means that that is Grace's side of the family and friends, because she has an Irish army background. Her side is being quiet and civil. On the right side, all people are wearing dark Tweed suits, which is Thomas' side of the family, and his friends in the gang. They are being loud and are making a commotion. We see a young boy in traditional catholic attire handing out sheets of paper to Thomas' side of the church. The camera comes to a halt at the final person sitting on the bench on Thomas' side, aunt Polly. She is sitting quietly and reading a book. She refuses to take the sheet of paper from the young boy. The camera cuts to a close-up of Arthur Shelby, Thomas' brother, who is standing in front of Thomas, meaning he is the best man. The camera cuts to a stagecoach with a man in a red army uniform and another person dressed in dark blue sitting next to him. The camera cuts back inside the church to a hallway, where we see Jeremiah, a black priest with dreadlocks, walking around a corner into the church. He is wearing a traditional robe and carrying a bible. In the background we see candles and flowers. The camera rotates towards Grace's side of the church where people look with disdain at the black priest. He stares back at them. The camera switches to John Shelby, Thomas' other brother. He makes a comment about Grace's side of the church, and looks impatient. It cuts to the opposing side, where the army men are waiting patiently, after which it cuts back to John, who makes a resenting face. He is referring to the cavalry, which for soldiers in World War I, was very hated because they would always turn up late for battle. The camera cuts back to the hallway at the entrance, where the man in the army uniform and the person in blue come walking in. The man is holding his hat, and the other person is holding a bouquet. The man in the army uniform joins the rest of the men while Thomas and Grace hold hands at the altar. Thomas takes off the veil, showing Grace's face. She smiles. They turn towards Jeremiah. He starts the ceremony. The camera cuts to a house, and then a portrait of Grace, Thomas and their son. A maid is walking down the stairs underneath the painting. A large number of maids are preparing the house for a dinner celebrating the marriage. They are talking and giving orders. The camera cuts back to the

church where Jeremiah is giving his ceremony. We see Jeremiah smiling and Thomas and Grace turning to each other. They laugh and kiss. The camera cuts to Thomas' side of the church where all of the family members and friends of Thomas are clapping, yelling, laughing. The camera then cuts to Grace's side where people are just smiling and softly clapping. The camera cuts to the close-up of Thomas, Grace and Jeremiah, who are now facing the church. The camera cuts to a shot from above outside, where a few women are catching the bouquet. They are almost fighting over it. Arthur is gathering everybody and calls over a photographer. The camera cuts to a side angle of a menacing looking man with Thomas in the background. The camera focuses from the man to Thomas who looks at the man. Thomas walks down the steps in slow-motion while staring at the man. The camera cuts back to the man who is now also staring at Thomas. The camera cuts back to the close-up of Thomas and Grace, Grace is being happy, and Thomas gives her his coat. They leave the church in the carriage, and the rest of the guests prepare to go to the house. This is where the scene ends.

2. *What music is playing in the scene?*

At first, with the opening shot, we hear church bells celebrating the event. The bells fade away and we hear the *Peaky Blinders* theme: *Red Right Hand* by Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds. (Released in 1994.) This is the song that is used at the beginning of every *Peaky Blinders* episode, and therefore also with this scene as it is at the beginning of an episode. It has a sinister and dark feeling to it, but at this time it only signifies that it is a *Peaky Blinders* episode. The song fades away when the carriage is arriving at the church and the church bells come back. The bells stop and the boys choir accompanied by the organ start playing. The choir stops, and Richard Wagner's *Bridal Chorus* starts playing. This piece is the classic classical piece that is used for weddings. It was published in 1850 in the Opera *Lohengrin.* There have been hundreds if not thousands of wedding scenes with this music playing in television series and films. It is so incredibly popular that it immediately signifies a wedding and can not possibly signify anything else. The music stops as Grace reaches the Altar. It is quiet for a moment and when Thomas removes the veil, *Breathless* by Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds starts playing. The song was released in 2004. It is a happy and romantic tune that reinforces the feeling of happiness that Thomas and Grace have and are about to have when they are married. It is a true love story and event. When Nick Cave starts singing we see the house and the maids setting everything up, anticipating the arrival of the couple that leave

each other *"Breathless"*. The music fades a bit to the background when the couple says 'I do', and kicks up when they kiss. The music fades for a brief second when Thomas spots the man, when a low and heavy church bell rings once. The kind of bell that often goes hand in hand with death. The music fades back in as the couple leaves the church.



The setting of the Peaky Blinders wedding. People on the left side of the picture are Grace's side, the right side is Tommy's.

The comparison

In short, *Boardwalk Empire* chooses to use music as part of the aesthetics and accuracy in the scene, whereas *Peaky Blinders* decides to only use it for storytelling. They both succeed with making the story progress, and they both use the music to shape the narrative. The music plays a vital role in both scenes. When it comes to authenticity and aesthetics, *Boardwalk Empire* went a step further and wanted to make sure the music adds to the notion of creating that "window" to look into the 1920s. *Peaky Blinders* decided not to do this, and therefore a claim can be made that the immersion into the time period is less. What you see is not what you feel. When watching the *Boardwalk Empire* scene, there can be more of a feeling that you are part of the story and part of society in the 1920s, because *everything* is correct. In *Peaky Blinders*, you can feel more like watching a story.

Besides the use of music, the *Boardwalk Empire* scene has more depth to it. That is because there are three completely different events happening at the same time. The story progresses through the use of these three different events, and they have to be placed like

this in the narrative in order for the narrative to take shape. *Peaky Blinders* is more linear, only having the set-up at the house and the wedding ceremony, and those two events go hand in hand. Claims could be made that the set-up at the house is not even a part of the narrative, as it does not add anything to the story of Thomas and Grace's wedding. What does add to the story are the small shots of the picture frame, and the mysterious man with the bell. Only there is not a real focus on those two events. In a way, *Peaky Blinders*' wedding scene is much more traditional, with it being about love and nothing else, than *Boardwalk Empire*'s wedding scene, which is more about survival above anything else.

5.3 Party scenes

Boardwalk Empire is set in the 1920s in the United States. These years are described as golden years for the people. People were drinking, partying, dancing to music and overall having a good time. This is why the years after World War I have been named the "Roaring Twenties". It was a short period though, as on 17th of January 1920, the United States government banned the consumption and sale of all alcohol in the entire country. *Boardwalk Empire's* first episode starts on the night before prohibition goes into effect. The main character, Enoch, makes a speech to his employees regarding the government's decision to ban all alcohol. However, they are not sad about it, they are ecstatic. They have figured that by banning alcohol, they will be able to keep on selling alcohol for increased prices. This means that they will be making a fortune. After this, the party in the nightclub they are at, officially starts, which is where the scene starts. This scene comes from the first episode of the first season.

1. *What is being shown and heard?*

The scene starts with a panning camera across multiple couples of men and women. They are wearing formal clothes such as tuxedos and ball gowns. Some of them are holding a glass of champagne, others are smoking cigars or cigarettes. They are counting down from ten to zero. They look happy and excited, it almost seems like it is New Year's eve. The camera stops at Enoch, who is holding his girlfriend Lucy, followed by a short shot of a clock striking midnight. The camera cuts to a band on an elevated stage, where the trombonist starts playing something, and a violinist is standing next to him. In the background down on the floor, we see a big audience waiting in anticipation. The musicians are also wearing tuxedos. The camera cuts to a closeup of the audience, people are raising their glasses. The

camera cuts back to the band, where the trombonist is still playing something by himself. The camera cuts to Enoch and Lucy, who are hugging and kissing. The camera goes back to the band, where the violinist shouts 'Prohibition!', after which the entire band kicks into gear and starts playing rapidly. The audience shouts and raises their hands, they are celebrating and laughing. The camera cuts to a shot of a woman wearing a tuxedo and a tophat, she opens a bottle of Champagne and sprays it everywhere. The camera cuts back to the band, and we see confetti and black balloons coming down from the ceiling. The camera cuts to the audience who are now covered in black balloons. The camera cuts to a young man, not wearing a tuxedo who lights a cigarette. The man is Jimmy Darmody, Enoch's henchman to be in later episodes. He looks annoyed, and gets even more annoyed when the balloons hit him. He slaps them away with his lit match, and hits one of the balloons on purpose, causing it to pop. The camera cuts to Enoch and Lucy, who are dancing and being happy. The camera pans over the audience, where we see people drinking and some even crying. More black balloons fall down from the ceiling. The camera pans through the audience to Enoch and Lucy, who are doing some kind of animalistic dance. They grunt and pretend to be tigers. Jimmy walks past them and Enoch asks him what is wrong as Jimmy annoyingly is trying to walk away from the party. Jimmy makes an excuse while Lucy tries to keep dancing with Enoch, who succeeds after Jimmy leaves. Lucy keeps intensifying her dance, and all Enoch can do is take a step back and observe. He stops dancing and looks confused, as Lucy raises her skirt while dancing. The scene ends with a shot of a trumpet being raised in the air.

2. *What music is playing in the scene?*

The first music that is played, is played by just the trombonist. He plays the '*Taps'* Bugle call that is used at military funerals. In *Boardwalk Empire*, this signifies the "death" of alcohol due to prohibition. This means that by playing *'Taps',* it is their moment of respect and sadness to the disappearing of alcohol. After the trombonist is done playing the first chorus of *'Taps',* the real party music starts. The song that the band starts playing is called *Tiger Rag* and was originally performed and released by The Original Dixieland Jazzband in 1917. This song is a classic Roaring Twenties song, and a Jazz standard. It is very up-tempo and allows for the dancing that people wanted in the 1920s.



A still image from the "prohibition party" in Boardwalk Empire.

The party scene in *Peaky Blinders* is done quite differently, and comes from season three episode two. The scene comes shortly after Tommy and Grace, the two main characters, are married, and they are organizing a banquet. Tommy is in trouble with Russians he is working for, and a corrupt priest in charge of a boys orphanage where he abuses the boys. The banquet itself does not have that much value, but what does have value is what happens at the end of the banquet. At the end of the banquet, Grace gets shot and killed by a bullet that was meant for Tommy. What is significant is a large blue gemstone that Tommy received from the Russians, which he gave to Grace.

1. *What is being shown?*

The scene starts with Grace getting ready for the banquet in her room, with the help of a maid. The room is dark and features a lot of props. She puts in earrings while the maid zips up her dress. The maid is wearing a dark maid costume, while Grace wears a bright, shiny dress. The camera cuts to a closeup of Grace and the blue gemstone. The maid puts the necklace on her. Grace looks at the stone and smiles, as she is happy that Tommy gave it to her. The camera cuts to outside where Grace is waiting in a car, she wears a fur coat. Tommy can be seen leaving the building and entering the car. They kiss and smile, and the car drives off. The camera cuts to a panning shot of a room filled with people. They are dressed in the well-known Roaring Twenties style clothing. We see John and Arthur, Tommy's brothers, walking through the audience, wearing tuxedos and drinking Champagne. The camera cuts to Tommy's aunt Polly, who is standing in front of a mirror looking at herself. She is wearing a white dress. She compliments herself in the mirror. She

smiles and turns around, and starts walking into the venue. She smokes a cigarette and smiles at people. She takes a glass of Champagne from a butler and continues walking. The camera follows her through the crowd, and starts moving away from her. We leave off with an overview of the party, with men in tuxedos and women in ball gowns standing scattered across the floor. We see a marble floor, Art Deco styled patterns on walls, the floor, and a staircase. We see big bouquets on pillars at the side of the room. End of the scene.

2. *What music is playing in the scene?*

This scene only features one piece of music, and plays throughout the entirety of the scene. It fades away at times, but other than that, it is there constantly. The song that is playing is *This is Love* by PJ Harvey. The song was released in 2000, and features a hard guitar riff combined with lyrics about PJ Harvey feeling that she loves someone or something. In this scene, the song signifies love in two ways. It starts when Grace is getting ready and puts on the necklace Tommy gave her. It signifies how much Tommy loves Grace, and how much she loves him back. The second time the song signifies love is when Aunt Polly is looking at herself in the mirror. She loves herself, which is something she has not done in a long time. But she does not only love herself, she is wearing the dress she was wearing while a man was painting her. She is also in love with that man, and the dress reminds her of him.



A still from an overview of the Peaky Blinders party.

The comparison

Boardwalk Empire uses music that would be played in the period the scene is set in. *Peaky Blinders* does not. For *Peaky Blinders*, the song is solely part of the story, and not of the world it creates for the narrative. *Boardwalk Empire* uses the music as part of the world the characters live in. The audience hears what the characters in *Boardwalk Empire* hear as well. This is called 'Diegetic' music. When music is diegetic, it becomes part of the reality that the scene represents. (Heldt, 2013). In *Peaky Blinders*, the characters do not hear music or hear different music, which means that *Peaky Blinders* uses 'nondiegetic' music. Nondiegetic music can be described as music that is part of the background, or incidental. It is something that the audience hears, but is not part of the reality that is portrayed in the scene. (Heldt, 2013). In the party scene in *Boardwalk Empire*, the music that is being played does not add anything to the story. There are no lyrics that have value to the story, and the music itself does not add anything to it. What it does add is a sense of historical accuracy, and creates a window into what a party would have looked and sounded like in 1920. We are merely observers of the whole. In *Peaky Blinders*, the music is part of the narrative. It tells the story. The story of love, but also the story of secrets. There is something going to happen with the gemstone, and we know it does. Later in the episode, one of the Russians Tommy has been working for tells him that the gemstone is cursed and that she would not wear it in a million years. Tommy panics, and for good reason, as Grace is shot and killed at the end of the party. Tommy blames himself for it, as he is the one who gave her the cursed gemstone. Then there is the aunt Polly storyline, where she finally allows herself to take down her walls. Something that is also in the lyrics of PJ Harvey's song. This means that PJ Harvey's song is what tells the story, as the scene is not relying on dialogue.

5.4 Gun fight scenes

Both *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders* feature a lot of violence. Both series are about gangsters and criminals in the 1920s, which means fistfights, shootouts and murder. To start with *Boardwalk Empire* again, the scene comes from season three, episode eleven. When competing gangster Gyp Rosetti tries to take over Enoch's criminal enterprise in Atlantic City by force, Enoch is forced to hide out in his suite in the Ritz Carlton. Episode ten ends with Enoch's bodyguard Owen being "delivered" in a wooden crate in the middle of the night to Enoch's suite. They open the crate and find Owen's body inside. Margaret, who has been

having an affair with Owen and is pregnant with his baby, wakes up from all the noise and sees Owen's body. She breaks down and Enoch finally understands what has been going on. (Enoch has not been a loyal husband either.) Margaret takes the kids and leaves the suite. Episode eleven starts with the scene.

1. *What is being shown?*

The scene opens with a dark shot of a rocking horse tipped over and a man wearing a suit lying in a chair. The camera cuts to a hallway where we see three men carrying the crate with Owen's body. They make struggling noises while carrying it away. We see Enoch's butler Eddy standing in front of a set of double doors. He tells a man watching the three men to keep watch at the double doors. Eddy enters the room, we see that he is wearing a dark three-piece suit with a light tie. He has a mustache and small round glasses. In the background we see wooden decor and a large bookcase. Eddy explains that the crate has been taken away and the camera cuts to Eddy's point of view. We see Enoch sitting at his large desk, facing away, staring into the distance. Behind Enoch, we see two windows with curtains with some flower patterns. The desk is made of decorated wood in an Art Deco style. Besides the desk is a small table filled with carafes of liquor, and crystal whiskey glasses. On the desk stands a gold desk light, a crystal ashtray and an old time phone. Enoch responds by asking Eddy if Margaret left. Eddy says that she has left. Enoch rotates his chair towards Eddy and looks at him, his expression is both sad and angry. He asks Eddy if he knew about the affair Margaret was having with Owen. The camera cuts to a close-up of Eddy who explains that he did not know. The camera shows Enoch processing what Eddy says, and he urges Eddy to leave as it is not safe and people are coming to kill Enoch. Eddy walks closer to the desk and says that he wants to stay. Enoch picks up a silver revolver from the desk and checks the magazine. The camera shows Eddy hastily pleading to stay with Enoch. Enoch is quickly picking something from the desk while telling Eddy to call Enoch's brother Eli. Eddy picks up the phone, and puts the receiver to his ear. Enoch gives Eddy instructions of where to call, but Eddy looks confusedly at the phone and that the line is dead. The camera zooms into Enoch who looks shocked. The camera cuts to the hallway outside where the elevator opens and three men carrying guns exit. The guard outside the double doors reaches inside his suit jacket for his gun, but is shot and killed by the men from the elevator. The men start walking towards Enoch's office. They open the door and enter. The camera cuts to a shot of the phone on the desk, with the door out of focus in the

background. One by one the men enter the office, guns at the ready. They walk up to the desk and get into focus, looking confused but determined. They look to the right of the camera, and we see more double doors. At the other side of the doors we see the rocking horse rocking back and forth, indicating that somebody just walked by and accidentally hit it. The men look at it and enter the room. One man makes a gesture and the other man leaves towards a different room. The camera cuts to behind one of the men opening a door, we see that it is a bedroom. On the bed we see a white dog who is barking at something on the other side of the bed. The man enters the room and starts walking towards the dog. From behind the door, Enoch emerges and aims his revolver at the man. He shoots him in the head, after which he falls backwards. Enoch quickly walks over to the body, lays his revolver on the bed and picks up the shotgun the man was carrying. Eddy emerges from behind the bed carrying a revolver and points to something. The camera cuts to behind Enoch, who walks towards the door of the room. Through the door we see another man approaching with a gun. Enoch kicks the door so it closes and readies the shotgun. He shoots at the door twice, creating two large holes. The camera cuts to the outside of the door, we see Enoch's face through one of the holes. He approaches the hole and looks through it. The camera shows a point of view of what he sees and we see the man that was approaching them crawling on the floor towards his gun. The camera cuts back to the exterior of the door where we see Enoch sticking the shotgun through the hole and firing the shotgun. The camera cuts back inside and we see a man quickly walking towards the door from the side and grabbing the shotgun, which is still half through the hole. A struggle between the last man and Enoch starts. Rapid cuts of both perspectives start and we see both of them struggling to gain control over the shotgun. Enoch manages to gain control and pulls the trigger, killing the last man. He walks towards the bed, throws away the shotgun and picks up his revolver. He looks worryingly at Eddy and asks if he is alright. Eddy nods and stands up. They walk through the exterior of the suite and we see more dead bodies, which were the men Enoch hired for security. They walk outside and regroup next to Enoch's light blue car. Eddy says that everybody knows that the car is Enoch's and that they will recognize it. They see another car and a man walks towards the car. They approach the man and Eddy points his gun at the man. Enoch quickly grabs his arm and lowers the gun, asks the man if he knows who he is. The man, wearing a light brown three piece suit and a cap, is carrying a lunchbox and a car key. Enoch is counting some money, and offers it to the

man in exchange for the car. The man looks behind the duo, seeing dead bodies. The man throws his car keys and runs away. The duo quickly enter the car and drive off. End of the scene.

2. *What music is playing in the scene?*

In this scene, there is no music playing. Because there is no music playing, it intensifies the severity of the events. Enoch's life is in danger, and he will literally have to fight for his life. By this scene not having music, all weight of the narrative is put on the dialogue and the visual aspects. This scene shows Enoch's darkest hour. He found out his wife was cheating on him, even though he was doing it as well. His best bodyguard has been murdered, and with it, his plan has failed. He realizes men are coming to kill him. The scene not having music increases the severity of the situation. It creates tension, because the viewer knows that, especially when the telephone line is dead, that something bad is going to happen.



The men coming to murder Enoch Thompson in the gunfight scene in Boardwalk Empire.

The gunfight in *Peaky Blinders* could not be more different from the one in *Boardwalk Empire*. The scene comes from season five, episode five. The gang has made a deal with a Chinese gang to smuggle opium and other drugs into the country. Arthur and Aberama, who is a henchman of the gang, together with some other gang members, head to the docks to pick up the shipment of narcotics. The gang has been fighting with an Irish gang, and

because of that battle, Arthur's wife has been shot. She survived, but it made Arthur even angrier than he already was. The scene starts when the gang arrives at the docks.

1. *What is being shown?*

The scene is at night, so it is very dark. It opens with Aberama, the henchman, walking towards a building. We see red Chinese lanterns hanging outside the building, and a small fire. Aberama is wearing a dark suit and a hat. The camera follows him and we see more Chinese lanterns on the street. The camera zooms out and we see all gang members that came with them, including Arthur. Arthur asks where the Asian man is, no one answers. He commands the rest of the gang. They are all wearing dark suits and ties. They walk through the street and we see more Chinese lanterns. One of the gang members is carrying something that is covered in a blanket. One of the gang members stops, looks around, points at something and says that the asian man is there. At that moment sparks start flying and bullets start impacting the street where the gang is standing. They get startled and run for cover. Arthur shouts commands at them. They take out their pistols and start firing in different directions. We see an Asian man dressed in a suit sitting in a corner. He is bleeding. They start firing at men that start approaching the gang's position. They are surrounded. The camera closes up on Arthur who shouts that if the enemies are police, they should stop shooting. He asks the Asian man what happened, who says that they did not look like police and that they took the Opium, which the gang was coming to pick up. Arthur asks if they were Italian, and the Asian man responds by saying they were Irish. Arthur asks the other gang members for his rifle, after which he picks up a large automatic rifle that was covered by the blanket. He explains that the enemies were good soldiers in the war. He puts the strap of the rifle around his neck and prepares the gun to shoot. He starts to get angry and confident, and says that he was a good soldier as well. He screams, gets out into the street and starts shooting. The camera cuts to a slow-motion shot from behind Arthur. We see many sparks on the walls, street and buildings surrounding the street. Arthur keeps shouting and shooting in slow-motion. Everything is blowing up and getting hit with Arthur's bullets. The slow-motion stops, and Arthur keeps shooting and screaming. He stops shooting, but continues shouting. Aberama comes outside to the street and grabs Arthur. He shouts that he needs to stop firing and that the enemy is gone. Arthur stops shouting and looks very angry and intense. He catches his breath, throws away the rifle and shouts to the enemies

that are still alive that they should not mess with the gang. Arthur opens his arms in a daring way and starts laughing maniacally. End of the scene.

2. *What music is playing in the scene?*

At the start of the scene, there is no music. The eeriness of the silence signifies that something bad is going to happen. The gunfight starts and once Arthur gets ready to start fighting back with the rifle, *Divide and Conquer* by the Idles starts fading in. The song is a heavy Punk Rock song that was released in 2017. It is a very aggressive and high tempo song with a lot of screaming. In *Peaky Blinders*, it signifies the anger Arthur has for the Irish gang, because they caused his wife to get shot. Arthur feels very powerful with the large rifle and enjoys shooting at the Irish gang. He also screams a lot, just like the song. Besides this, the song does not add anything to the story. There are not many lyrics, and if there were, you would not be able to hear them over the sound of the gunfire. In this case, the song is just there to create a sensation of anger and enjoyment to shoot at the Irish gang.



Arthur Shelby fighting back against the attackers in the gunfight scene in Peaky Blinders.

The comparison

After analyzing both scenes, it is clear to see that both series approach violence in different ways. *Boardwalk Empire* chooses not to have any music in the fight scene in order to create severity and intensity of the events that transpire. *Peaky Blinders* does the opposite,

creating a superhero-esque moment with slow-motion shots, sparks, heavy rock music, screaming and the idea that Arthur is invincible. What is interesting is that both choices are made in order to create certain feelings. It means that the music, or lack of music, is not done to aid storytelling. It is about aesthetics in these cases. It is about creating a certain feeling for the narrative, not about progressing the narrative.

5.5 Recapping the analysis

After analyzing both the reviews and *Reddit* discussion, and the scenes, three points come forward. Firstly, there is a difference in the perception and reception of *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders*, according to the audience. The reviews have shown that *Boardwalk Empire* tries to remain as true as possible to the historical accuracy, which can sometimes cause an overstimulation of the senses, resulting in having a harder time following the story. *Peaky Blinders* can be hard to enjoy, because the music does not fit the historical period, and therefore creates difficulties for the immersion into the story. This can however also be perceived positively, because one of the reviews states that the lack of historical accuracy and immersion might also be a welcome change in an entertainment world where everything has to be completely correct.

Secondly, after analyzing the scenes, big differences in the use of music emerge. *Boardwalk Empire* uses a mix of Diegetic and Nondiegetic music, and switches back and forth between the two. Diegetic means that the music the audience hears, also is the music the characters in the fictional on-screen world hear. Nondiegetic music is the complete opposite. It refers to the music the audience hears being separate from the fictional world. *Boardwalk Empire* is able to use both, because it features music that existed in the time the television series is set. The creators have the ability to play with the different techniques as they see fit. *Peaky Blinders* chooses to use Nondiegetic music, and therefore chooses to use music that is not part of the fictional world it builds.

Thirdly, there are differences in the purpose of the music between the two series. In *Boardwalk Empire*, the music serves a mostly aesthetic purpose. The music is there to create moods and give a certain feel to a scene. It creates an atmosphere and allows the audience to feel immersed in the feelings of the fictional characters and their emotions. In *Peaky Blinders*, the music serves way more as part of the narrative. It features music with lyrics

that are in some way relevant to the narrative at that particular time. In the next chapter, these differences will be described and explained with the use of the theoretical framework.

6. The Conclusion

This chapter will focus on answering the sub questions and the research question. To do that, I will combine the theory from the theoretical framework with the analysis of the data. This will provide a structured step-by-step breakdown of what the analysis revealed and how it adds to answering the sub questions and eventually the research question.

6.1 Narrativity, storytelling and multimediality

The first sub question that I will focus on is **how music in television series adds to storytelling.** Narrativity is a term that describes the way a story is told. A narrative creates a fictional world in which characters live, and progress their lives (Ryan, 2014). By using different storytelling techniques in one work, a multimedial work is created. Multimediality means that different techniques coexist in the same work, and the combination of the different techniques leads to one new medium. (Kattenbelt, 2008). Besides the narrative being the way a story is told, it also is about communicating with the audience (Wolf, 2003). Films and television series are able to rely on the audience to think along with the events that are happening on screen. The narrative and story can progress by just visual aspects or audio.

Wedding scenes

Storytelling by the use of multimedial techniques is seen in *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders.* In the wedding scenes, both television series make use of dialogue, visual aspects and music to come to the whole narrative. In *Boardwalk Empire* three different timelines are shown. The wedding in the church, the prosecutor practicing her plea and the henchmen taking care of business. The scene heavily relies on the dialogue, both by Father Brennan performing the wedding ceremony, and Esther Randolph practicing her plea. The dialogue combined with visual aspects like set design, costume design, facial expressions and events tell the story. In this scene, the music is not part of the story, but adds to the aesthetics and atmosphere, which I will get to later. This means that there are three individual techniques in this scene: the music, the visual aspects and the dialogue. The story progresses by the use of the visual aspects and the dialogue, with the music being used to set the tone of the scene and the events shown on screen.

The wedding scene in *Peaky Blinders* is different. Instead of giving the dialogue a central role, the focus is more on the music. There is limited dialogue in this scene, the only important dialogue is the start of the wedding ceremony. The focus quickly shifts to the music, as a modern song about two people who are deeply in love starts playing. What is "written" in the song is the most important dialogue in this scene, combined with visual aspects like costume design, set design, and most importantly, events and actions shown on screen. The big difference between the two is therefore the use of music, as it has a big impact on the story. This means that the music is capable of changing the perception of the dialogue and visual aspects. If the music had been different, with using a song about two people that hate each other for instance, the scene would not tell the same story.

Party scenes

In the party scenes, both *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders* do not use dialogue as much. The use of music is different as well. *Boardwalk Empire* uses diegetic music. Diegetic music means that the music the audience hears, is also the music that the characters hear. This means that the scene becomes a representation of the reality that is portrayed on screen. Nondiegetic therefore means that the music used in the scene is not part of the reality that is portrayed on screen, and the audience is the only party that is able to experience it. The characters portrayed on screen, in the on screen reality, do not hear the music, or hear different music. (Heldt, 2013).

In *Boardwalk Empire* we see the start of prohibition, we see the band playing the music both the audience and the characters in their reality hear, and we see how the music impacts the characters on screen. This results in the audience seeing the narrative world and the reality in that world. In this scene, the music has a small role in the story. By the use of the *'Taps'* Bugle call, the music indicates that something tragic has happened. The music therefore for a short period tells the story in the scene, as it indicates the start of Prohibition. The focus in the entire scene is on the visual aspects combined with the music, and the narrative is progressed by the use of this combination.

In the *Peaky Blinders* party scene, the music is nondiegetic. The music the audience hears, is not the music the characters on screen hear. The characters are partying, and presumably hear different age-appropriate music. The audience, however, hears modern music that creates an atmosphere around the perception of the characters. This scene hardly features

any dialogue, so the narrative relies on the music and the visual aspects to progress. The atmosphere the music creates is reinforced by the little bit of dialogue that is in this scene, as the music tries to give an empowering atmosphere to the characters, and after the dialogue this becomes even clearer.

Fight scenes

Finally in the fight scene, *Boardwalk Empire* does not have music at all. This is a choice made by the creators to create a certain intensity and tension. There is no music to indicate what is going to happen, which means that the audience has to rely on what is being shown on screen to find out what will happen. In horror films for instance, the music is often used to create tension, because it indicates something bad is going to happen. The audience is guided by the music and the intensity of the music. In the *Boardwalk Empire* scene, having no music means that the audience cannot rely on the music to find out what will happen. It also reinforces the fact that HBO is trying to give the most accurate portrayal of real life in the 1920s. Having no music during the fight scene creates a realism for the audience. It reinforces the notion of "looking through a window into the 1920s". The storytelling in this scene fully relies on the visual aspects and sounds in the events that happen on screen. There is hardly any dialogue, and no music. If the audience would close its eyes, they would not know what happened on screen, whereas with the previous scenes, the audience could paint some sort of picture based on the dialogue and the music.

In the *Peaky Blinders* scene, the music is nondiegetic. The music is there to reinforce the feelings the main character in this scene feels. The anger and aggression are represented by the music that is playing. There is dialogue that progresses the narrative. The visual aspects progress the narrative, and the music aids the narrative. The story progresses by finding out what happened through dialogue, seeing where it takes place and the visual effects through the visual aspects, and seeing what happens to the main character through dialogue, visual aspects and music.

The answer to the sub question: '**how does music in television series add to narrativity?'** is as follows. Due to the ability to use multiple techniques of narrativity, and combine them into a multimedial work, creators do not have to rely on everything being "told" by the dialogues. Scenes without dialogue are able to add to, and progress the story. *Boardwalk*

Empire and *Peaky Blinders* have shown how music can be used in a diegetic and nondiegetic way, but for narrativity, this does not matter. What matters is whether the creator of a scene chooses to use the music as part of the narrative. If they choose to do so, then the music can be the medium that tells the story. However, music does not always have to be what tells the story, as it can be merely a way of creating an atmosphere or mood in a scene. This leads me to the second part of the conclusion.

6.2 Historical accuracy

In historical dramas, there is a lot of pressure on the creators on historical accuracy. I have mentioned previously that it is one of the primary modes of judging a historical drama. Fact checking, atmospheres, costume design, are all part of a critic's judgment of whether a historical drama has done a proper job of portraying the period it is trying to represent. When history does not allow for a creator to follow exactly what happened, they rely on authenticity. Authenticity means to be able to fill the gaps that history is not able to fill in a way that is as close to the rest of the period the drama is set in. To judge historical accuracy, those aspects are analyzed, which is what I have done for both *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders.* I rely on this analysis to provide an answer to the second sub question in this thesis: **"How can television series create historical accuracy?"**

Boardwalk Empire

HBO is well known for maximizing the historical accuracy in their television series, and the same can be said for *Boardwalk Empire*. After having analyzed the three scenes, it becomes clear that there has been an incredible amount of attention to detail in *Boardwalk Empire*, from names, events and locations, to music, costumes and decorations. Everything is correct and authentic to the 1920s in the United States. The three most important aspects of historical accuracy in television series are set design, costume design and music. When these three aspects are done properly, it will increase the ability to feel part of the period that is being portrayed on screen. I will go over these three aspects. The music in *Boardwalk Empire* is limited to music from and before the 1920s. This means that every music the audience hears in *Boardwalk Empire* was actually music people would be able to hear and listen to in the 1920s. I do have to note that some music is new music, but inspired by and made to the standards of the 1920s. *Boardwalk Empire* features both new music and music

from the 1920s, but the new music is recorded by the "rules", meaning, the music is made in order to give the authentic feel of the 1920s.

Costume design in *Boardwalk Empire* has also received much attention. It all starts with the Enoch Thompson character, who is based on real-life Enoch Johnson. Johnson was known for wearing expensive and vibrant suits with a red corsage. Enoch Thompson is seen in many different suits and always wears that same red corsage. The suits he wears stand out from the suits the people around him wear, which is what Enoch Johnson was known for. Besides the Enoch character, there are recurring things that can be seen in costume design. Tie pins, suspenders, sleeve garters, hats, overcoats, ties, shoes and suits for men, dresses, hats, heels, bathing suits, underwear, jewelry, coats for women.

Finally, when it comes to set design, *Boardwalk Empire* went the extra mile. The creators had a giant promenade built in the New York area, where with the use of digital editing, the entire set was placed on the beach at the Atlantic City oceanfront. The advertisements, architecture, interior design, artworks, lighting, furniture and electric appliances all were according to accurate portrayals of what it looked like in the 1920s. The creators and designers of the sets have spent much attention to making it look as authentic and accurate as possible, which they succeeded in. Taking these three aspects together means that *Boardwalk Empire* has been able to provide the audience with the "window" that many people are looking for when it comes to period dramas.

Peaky Blinders

The creators of *Peaky Blinders* decided to go a different route when it comes to historical accuracy and authenticity. It all revolves around the use of music. Compared to *Boardwalk Empire*, the creators of *Peaky Blinders* made the decision to use modern music, instead of making the music be a part of the historical period in which it is set. With it, the creators made the decision to only use nondiegetic music, and therefore focused on other aspects that create historical accuracy.

The first aspect is costume design, which is done very well. What is done very well is that in the beginning of the television series, the characters have pants that end at the ankles, because they are lower class. This means that they had to walk through mud and would get their pants dirty if it was too long. The further in the series, the longer the pants get, because they are getting wealthier and do not have to walk in the mud anymore. In the

beginning of the series, they would also wear more working class attire, and later in the series, it moves towards a more upper class look. Then there are the haircuts, which are very short at the sides, because amongst the working class in the 1920s, there would be many people with lice, and keeping the sides very short meant not getting lice as quickly. The second aspect is set design, which is also very well done. Just like the costume design, earlier in the season, the set design was simpler. Furniture, houses, architecture, streets, light posts, all of it was simpler and less well made. It was because the gang was in a lower class state at the start. The further in the series, the better the houses get, the infrastructure, the furniture, streets, etcetera. The set design and costume design follow the lifestyle of the gang members.

This means that the answer to the sub-question **"How can television series create historical accuracy?''** is the following. Television series like *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders* make use of different mediums in order to shape the reality they intend to portray on screen. These mediums can consist of music, but as it turns out, is not a necessity. After analyzing the two series, it shows that historical accuracy in television shows relies more on visual aspects like costume design, set design and character appearance. Of course, there is the authenticity element of this sub question, which I will go into more in chapter seven. In short, authenticity is about the experience of the audience when watching a historical period drama, and their immersion with the portrayal of the time period depicted on screen.

6.3 Answering the research question

After providing information and answers to the sub questions, it is down to the general research question in this thesis, which is **"How does the use of music in historical television series create and aid a narrative?"** The answer was split into two parts, the use of music in storytelling, and how television series establish historical accuracy. Music is able to become a part of the narrative, through nondiegetic and diegetic use, by being the factor that progresses the story, or by shaping the atmosphere and emotions in a specific scene. After analyzing scenes from both *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders*, I have seen that music can be used in these different ways, and the technique that is used has a big influence on the perception of the scene, the characters or the events shown on screen.

However, in period dramas like *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders* there are standards set by the audience and, most importantly, by critics, that judge whether or not the series is giving an accurate portrayal of the period it is set in. Initially I expected that music needed to be part of the creative choices to establish historical accuracy in order for the series to give an accurate portrayal of the period it is set in, but after analyzing the two selected series, it shows that creators are not limited to music from the period they are portraying, and that music can also be used as an important layer in the narrative without being part of the historical period that is depicted in the narrative.

Combining the answers to the two sub questions, I can phrase an answer to the main research question:

Music is a medium that can be combined with other media to create a narrative in a television series. Creators of television series have the ability to use music as part of the narrative, or they can use it to frame a scene in a certain way. Music can be used to represent the period to add to the historical accuracy of the series. This is, however, not mandatory, as music can be used to create an atmosphere, which can be done with both diegetic and nondiegetic music. In *Peaky Blinders* we have seen that music can be used for its narrativity: the content of a song can be used as the voice of one of the characters of the series. Using music this way might go beyond the historical accuracy, but might contribute to a feeling of being involved in the emotional condition of the character. Telling the story through nondiegetic music is historically inaccurate, but might anyway lead to an authentic feeling of being engaged in the story and feeling connected to the character. *Boardwalk Empire* uses music more as a "reassurance" that everything is correct and historically accurate, and it creates an atmosphere that can only be linked to that of the 1920s. In *Peaky Blinders*, the music can take away attention from the fact that it is a period drama, which means that the music sometimes can be a bit distracting and take the viewer out of immersion. *Boardwalk Empire* does not feature any other music, but sometimes can be a bit much for the senses, and can very well be perceived as "going too far" with the attention to detail. Overall, both television series are able to portray a time period, and create a narrative world where the music shapes the emotions, feelings, and sometimes, the narrative.

7. The discussion

7.1 Authenticity

One aspect left to discuss is authenticity. Authenticity is about two parts. The first part is about “filling the gaps left by history”. This means that when portraying a certain historical period, history does not tell creators everything that happened from beginning to end. Some events and periods are not covered by what we know happened for sure, most literature and sources only cover “highlights” of history. This means that at times, creators are faced with large gaps in their plots that do need to be covered in the film, series or other work. This is where authenticity comes in. A scene or event being authentic means that the scene or event has successfully filled the blanks in history with information and images that could very well be those that happened in the real events.

To explain this further I will use *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders. Boardwalk Empire* is the easiest to use, because it features many real-life characters that had big roles in real history. A character like *Arnold Rothstein*, who was a real gambler and bootlegger in the 1920s, famous through his involvement in the ‘*Chicago Black Sox scandal*’, where he paid a baseball team to purposely lose a match. The general information about *Rothstein* is known through literature and other sources, but his day-to-day life is not. The creators needed to analyze as many sources as possible to build the character of *Rothstein* to present the most accurate form of what he could have been like.

Then comes the second part of authenticity, which is the viewer's immersion. In the end, it is up to the viewer of a work whether to believe a portrayal is authentic or not. Authenticity here means: do I believe the character that is portrayed in the series, do I, as a viewer, engage with him or her? Based on my findings, I believe both *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders* have done a solid job at providing authenticity in their scenes.

This research is aimed to give more depth to the concept of narrativity, and was focused on the use of music in narrativity. I have tried to provide a clear question of how music can aid narrativity, and provided an analysis that would eventually provide answers to that question. I wanted to explore what music can do for a narrative, and how heavily storytelling can be influenced by music. It turns out that music in and of itself is a dimension

of narrativity, meaning, music can be the narrative. This can mostly be seen in *Peaky Blinders*, where some scenes rely on the music in order for the story to be told. But that does not mean that *Boardwalk Empire* does not feature music that aids the narrative. *Boardwalk Empire* shows that music can also be used to create a sense of historical accuracy and provide a "window into a different period". What we see on screen, is what the period could have looked like, music included. The two series have two different approaches to the use of music in the narrative.

7.2 Limitations

What needs to be mentioned however, is that this research might look different if I had analyzed more or different scenes. Having seen both series in its entirety, I will note that generally the scenes remain along the lines of the scenes picked for the analysis.

7.3 Personal preference

This does lead to the second thing that needs to be mentioned, which is my personal preference. I prefer *Boardwalk Empire's* choice to include music with historical accuracy. I feel that the music in *Peaky Blinders* works as a distraction of the plot, and it takes away some authenticity for me. Both plots are about gangsters in the 1920s. To me, the 1920s have a very distinct feel and look to it. *Peaky Blinders* feels like complete fiction and something that could never have happened. *Boardwalk Empire*, even though it is also fiction, sometimes feels like a documentary framed as a television series. When I watch a historical drama, I want to feel like I am watching and hearing how that period could have very well looked like.

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9. The appendix

9.1 Reviews

These reviews have been gathered from *www.rottentomatoes.com*, where I searched for *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders*. What is written are quotes from the reviews I found, where the critic who published the review mentioned something that was relevant to the thesis. This meant a mention of the music, aesthetics, set design, architecture, etcetera. The first five reviews are reviews of *Boardwalk Empire.* The last five are reviews of Peaky *Blinders.* These reviews are used in the thesis, and have been summarized to make it more coherent. In this chapter, the full reviews are included to provide transparency with the reader. They have all been gathered when preparing for the analysis, in December of 2021.

"One of the other show's strengths is oddly, also one of its weaknesses. Sometimes the 1920 setting feels too authentic and too saturated, and all the costumes and billboards and mannerisms can draw attention away from the complex story arcs - But even through its weak moments, when it relies too heavily on its atmosphere or its weak romantic plot lines."
Randy Dankievich in *Processed Media:* https://processedmedia.wordpress.com/2011/09/20/boardwalk-empire-review/.

"Contemporary popular songs are prevalent on the soundtrack, whilst movies and books of the era are often referenced. We see the way people dressed, danced and even the type of stand-up comedy they enjoyed. Barely an episode passes without a popular entertainer coming to town (like Eddie Cantor, uncannily impersonated by Stephen DeRosa), with Atlantic City presented as very much the Vegas of the early 20th century."
Robert Beames in *What Culture:* https://whatculture.com/tv/blu-ray-review-boardwalk-empire-season-1.

"We see charming billboards. Piedmont Cigarettes. Chesterfields. "Nut" Tootsie Rolls. The Atlantic City sky is a pastel blue with puffy clouds that look as endearingly artificial as something painted on a vaudeville scrim. Parading musicians, in blackface, carry a coffin containing a bottle of whiskey."

Jim Windolf in *Vanity Fair:* https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2010/09/boardwalk-empire-recap-nucky-meets-girl.

"…vast ads for Nut Tootsie Rolls, Chesterfield and Piedmont Cigarettes ("Not blended"). The multiple musical interludes are marvelous: the giddy Prohibition-first-night bash, Eddie Cantor popping eyes and cracking wise, a boardwalk barker hawking a too-naughty-for-tots girlie show."
Tim Appelo in *Indiewire:* https://www.indiewire.com/2010/09/boardwalk-empire-best-tv-pilot-of-2010-and-third-best-scorsese-movie-of-this-century-238395/.

"The show seems to scream louder than the actual roar of the twenties with even the most minute details accentuated. The sets and scenery oozed period authenticity, and the empire feels colossal. From the Victor Victrola-like sound of the music punctuating every scene to the iconic billboards lining the boardwalk, it looked and felt like the dawn of a new era."
Dereyck Moore in *Marquee Blogs:* https://marquee.blogs.cnn.com/2010/09/20/boardwalk-empire-hbos-newest-gem/.

"I just didn't care as much for the characters as I needed to. They felt too much like cartoons. I longed to take Helen McCrory more seriously as Aunt Polly, the gang's matriarch, but I couldn't help thinking of Peggy Mitchell. And it's hard to take any threat made by Cillian Murphy as Thomas Shelby too personally when he is made up to look as if he's stepped straight out of a 1919 boy band. Still, there's nothing wrong with the occasional romp and Peaky Blinders is certainly worth persevering with. In any case, we all need a break from tortured angst and depressing realism from time to time."
John Grace in *The Guardian*: https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2013/sep/13/peaky-blinders-tv-review.

"Tommy riding cockily through town atop his horse gives the series a slightly ethereal feeling that makes it feel less like historical fiction and more like a particularly involving dream. It's hypnotic. You'll know if you're in or out by... the credits sequence for the first episode, which dives wholeheartedly into the show's world by having Tommy give us a rough tour of it to the tune of Nick Cave's Red Right Hand. (Anachronistic music choices are another thing the

show does well.) You'll either find it impossibly stylish or a little pretentious. Follow that instinct, whichever direction it lies in."
Emily St. James in *Vox:* https://www.vox.com/2014/11/30/7309819/peaky-blinders-review.

"Everything from the colors, sets, costumes, editing and cinematography is swoon-worthy right. Peaky Blinders takes the liberty to be mystical, lyrical and a visual treat. The show also packs in a powerful rock soundtrack featuring artists such as Nick Cave and Jack White. Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds' Red Right Hand is the opening track set to the first scenes of every episode, instead of the standard opening credits."
Ankita Chawla in *Scroll:* https://scroll.in/reel/800850/guns-gangsters-and-grit-meet-the-peaky-blinders-of-birmingham.

"More flash than depth, I guess, and some of the contemporary music-swagger scenes are a bit jarringly anachronistic."
Adam H. on *www.rottentomatoes.com*

"Hard rock & roll music? Is it a joke? It's horrible and irking me to seemingly no end. It's ruining any immersion I was hoping to enjoy but I'm going to try to stick with it. Electric guitars weren't even invented yet. I could almost deal with it except the music is plain terrible. I hope the critics are right about this one."
Frank W. on *www.rottentomatoes.com*

9.2 *Reddit discussions*

Besides reviews found on *www.rottentomatoes.com*, I also wanted to include some less formal discussions. That made me think of *Reddit,* as it is a platform where you can very easily look for discussions, also known as "threads", regarding the use of music in both *Boardwalk Empire* and *Peaky Blinders.* These discussions have also been summarized and used in the analysis chapter. These have also been used in December 2021, together with the reviews, in order to prepare for the analysis.
"The only thing is that I don't think the music fits at all. Don't get me wrong I have no problem with Nick Cave or any other artist featured but most of the time I feel like the series

music choice sounds like an edgy kid with action dolls trying to be cool. Especially when characters are walking down the street in slow motion and rock music starts playing like ''FUCK YEAH DUDE''." Retrieved from r/PeakyBlinders.

"I much more like the music used in Boardwalk Empire because it feels more appropriate to the time and you just get a feel for the 1920s." Retrieved from r/PeakyBlinders.

"I used to equally like Peaky Blinders and the Boardwalk Empire soundtrack, a different approach for a different show but after 5 seasons the slow-mo walk + rock combo is seriously wearing me out." Retrieved from r/PeakyBlinders.

"I like the music in PB but the slow-mo walking has always been cringeworthy and it seems like they add more of it each series :/" Retrieved from r/Peaky Blinders.

"Yes. I have tried to watch this show several times--each attempt following a friend urging me to 'give it another chance.'
Every time I try to watch it I'm distracted by the terrible music choices. The soundtrack absolutely fails to bring the show to life. Boardwalk Empire did such a good job in using music from around the era of the period they were trying to portray." Retrieved from r/PeakyBlinders.

"I've recently gotten into Peaky Blinders, and I have to say, I like the show but music keeps breaking my immersion. In shows like Boardwalk Empire, they made a huge point of having music and sound effects sound like they were from the post WWI era.
It's immersion breaking as hell for me to be watching this, getting into the setting, starting to buy the lore they set out, feeling myself slip into the post-war despair of the seedy criminal world of England and then to suddenly have it ripped away by a wailing guitar solo that goes on for what seems like minutes." Retrieved from r/PeakyBlinders.