



Crime and violence in working class England represented in Peaky Blinders and Ripper Street

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This bachelor thesis focuses on contemporary popular media representations of the working class in England during the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The thesis will pay special attention to the representation of contemporary ideas about organized crimes in this historical context.

The work is divided into two parts. In the theoretical part, the thesis presents the socio-cultural background of the working class and their status in late 19th and early 20th-century society. To that end, it briefly maps out the mentions characteristics of the era, including significant changes for the working class. In the practical part, the thesis focuses on how the TV series Peaky Blinders and Ripper Street illustrate the issues of the working class and the increase of crime and violence. The analysis will be based on theories of television genre and adaptation, with emphasis on a contemporary fascination with the period in question. Lastly, the thesis considers the question of sensationalism in these two TV series.

Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na zobrazení pracujících třídy v Anglii v druhé polovině 19. století a na začátku 20. století skrz moderní populární média. Práce bude věnovat speciální pozornost vyobrazení moderních nápadů o organizovaných zločinech v tomto historickém kontextu. Práce bude rozdělena na dvě části. V teoretické části se bude věnovat socio-kulturnímu pozadí pracujících třídy a jejich postavení ve společnosti na konci 19. a začátku 20. století. Také bude zmíněna stručná charakteristika doby, spolu i s významnými změnami pro pracující třídu. V praktické části se práce zaměřuje na to, jak seriály Peaky Blinders a Ripper Street znázornili problémy pracujících třídy a nárůst zločinů. Analýza bude založena na teoriích televizního žánru a adaptacích s důrazem na moderní fascinaci touto dobou. Nakonec se zaměří na otázku senzacionalismu v těchto dvou seriálech.

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Anotace

Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na zobrazení pracující třídy v Anglii v druhé polovině 19. století a na začátku 20. století skrz moderní populární média. Práce bude věnovat speciální pozornost vyobrazení moderních nápadů o organizovaných zločinech v tomto historickém kontextu.

Práce bude rozdělena na dvě části. V teoretické části se bude věnovat socio-kulturnímu pozadí pracující třídy a jejich postavení ve společnosti na konci 19. a začátku 20. století. Také bude zmíněna stručná charakteristika doby, spolu i s významnými změnami pro pracující třídu. V praktické části se práce zaměřuje na to, jak seriály Peaky Blinders a Ripper Street znázornili problémy pracující třídy a nárůst zločinů. Analýza bude založena na teoriích televizního žánru a adaptacích s důrazem na moderní fascinaci touto dobou. Nakonec se zaměří na otázku senzacionalismu v těchto dvou seriálech.

Klíčová slova

pracující třída, viktoriánská Británie, gangy, televizní seriály, senzacionalismus, Peaky Blinders, Ripper Street

Crime and violence in working-class England represented in Peaky Blinders and Ripper Street

Annotation

This bachelor thesis focuses on contemporary popular media representations of the working class in England during the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The thesis will pay special attention to the representation of contemporary ideas about organized crimes in this historical context.

The work is divided into two parts. In the theoretical part, the thesis presents the socio-cultural background of the working class and their status in late 19th and early 20th-century society. To that end, it briefly maps out the characteristics of the era, including significant changes for the working class. In the practical part, the thesis focuses on how the TV series Peaky Blinders and Ripper Street illustrate the issues of the working class and the increase of crime and violence. The analysis will be based on theories of television genre and adaptation, with emphasis on a contemporary fascination with the period in question. Lastly, the thesis considers the question of sensationalism in these two TV series.

Key words

Working-class, Victorian Britain, gangs, television series, sensationalism, Peaky Blinders, Ripper Street

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Introduction

Some might say that the Victorian period was one of the most beautiful eras in Britain. With its unique infrastructure due to the Industrial Revolution, 19th century Britain flourished with factories and industrial growth. The population had its baby boom, and women started to get more rights. Science, shipbuilding, and the steam engine were developed. With money came the essential projects – such as railways. Railways changed daily life in Britain.

Even though the British industry was on the rise and the population grew, those times were not so lucky for most workers during the 19th century. Those enormous factories needed as many employees as possible to run their plants all over Britain. However, employees were poorly paid, and the ones who came to larger cities, such as London, seeking a better life, struggled to pay the rent and survive. Due to the Industrial Revolution and the need for many workers, the working-class society was created.

This thesis focuses mainly on the lives of these working-class people in the Victorian era. In addition, it also briefly introduces the post-world war period, with its description of working-class society as well. These two times in Britain's history are depicted in two famous television series – Ripper Street and Peaky Blinders. Each of those series is special, with its unique plot and an impressive touch for details of the working-class culture.

In addition, the thesis introduces a specific kind of crime – the organized one. Organized crime is briefly illustrated in Ripper Street through its first stage, commonly known as street gangs. On the other hand, Peaky Blinders are about the organized true crime scene. In that series, it is possible to see how the British gangs improved and

grew and how their goals changed over time. The gangs did not grow only in their population or territory but also in their power, resulting in the leading positions in some British cities, such as Birmingham.

The thesis also briefly introduces the sensationalism behind those detective novels from the Victorian era. With the information from Jessica Cox's book, the author of this thesis shows how the newspapers fascinated people, significantly the crime scene articles, and how these stories were later produced in books and re-produced as television series.

The thesis aims to depict and illustrate the most crucial aspects of the working-class society in Britain through two television series, *Peaky Blinders* and *Ripper Street*, with a special focus on organized crime and gang culture.

1 Theoretical part

In the theoretical part, the author introduces the historical background of the Victorian period with its changes that affected the working-class society. Then, the author focuses on a brief summarization of the working class in Britain, the creation of gangs, the birth of organized crime, and a short subchapter concerning the Peaky Blinders phenomenon. The last chapter demonstrates the sensationalism of Neo-Victorian novels, especially detective ones. The main aim of the theoretical part is to summarize the aspects that affected the working-class society, which is later depicted in the practical part, and ensure that the reader can understand the television series analysis better.

1.1 Historical background

1.1.1 The second half of the 19th century

The second half of the 19th century, commonly known as part of the Victorian era, is believed to be one of the most fruitful periods of Britain, filled with many essential reforms. The empire grew in size and population, despite the cholera pandemic in the 1830s. Even though this work covers only the end of Queen Victoria's reign, the author finds it necessary to describe the period's hygiene and nutrition issues (ultimately resulting in the cholera pandemic), the basics of its political system, and some examples of political activism during this era, and lastly the economic sphere of this period, which was heavily influenced by the Industrial revolution. This brief introduction to the Victorian era is crucial for a better understanding of the overall Ripper Street television series and its cultural struggles, especially in a working-class society in London.

The Victorian period started in 1837 when an eighteen-year-old niece of William IV. overtook the throne (Peberdy, Waller 2021, 654, 674). The industrial revolution and its effects influenced Britain, mainly the big cities (e.g., London). Thanks to the revolution, people believed that there were greater opportunities in towns and better incomes. Instead, they were welcomed with long-hour shifts, poor nutrition, and even worse accommodation. Child labor intensified, and most children did not experience a typical childhood. They did not attend school because they were needed as a working force to support their families. Thankfully, reforms of the 1830s abolished slavery and limited working hours for children. In 1847, the limit of working hours, called the Factories Act or the Ten Hours Act was also applied to adults (Peberdy, Waller 2021, 216, 276).

Due to lousy hygiene standards and nutrition, the cholera pandemic spread extremely fast. The reform of health care was needed, and the help from the government sent in 1831 was not enough. As a reaction to the situation, social reformer Edwin Chadwick wrote *Inquiry into the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population* in 1840 (Harvie 2000, 42-43). Eight years later, the Public Health Act was published. The General Board of Health was created to prevent epidemics. The General Board was set for five years at first, and they sent help to areas with high death rates. After the Public Health Act, healthcare in Britain improved (The Health Foundation). There was a boom of new doctors, big cities hired their medical officers of health, and in 1854, doctor's visits became compulsory (Harvie 2000, 43).

But the British government had passed even more Acts during this era. Britain was a constitutional monarchy at that time and had two houses of Parliament – the House of Lords and the House of Commons. During Queen Victoria's reign, the House of Commons had around six hundred members of Parliament. England had the most

representatives, mainly due to its tradition. Wealthy landlords occupied the House of Lords. Liberal Party and Conservative Party led the national politics (Steinbach 2021). The essential Acts for the elections happened in 1867 and 1884. Both were called the Reform Acts, allowing more men to vote, concluding that nearly two-thirds of British men had voting rights (Peberdy, Waller 2021, 480). The state wanted to improve education, the situation between Britain and Ireland, and workers' health care and working conditions. There was created a movement for women's rights that led to the passing of the Married Women's Property Acts in 1870. This Act gave married women more rights, such as owning their property (Steinbach 2021).

1.1.2 Chartism – a new hope for workers?

When discussing political activism during the Victorian period, it is necessary to mention the Chartist movement. It was a political movement mainly from 1839–to 1848. They wanted election rights for the working class. In 1832 the Reform Act allowed only qualified men to vote, meaning that they had to own property to vote (UK Parliament). Chartists mainly were working-class people in Britain and wrote three petitions to Parliament in 1839, 1842, and 1848. In these petitions, they wanted:

- vote for all men above 21,
- secret ballot,
- no property qualification to become a member of Parliament,
- payment for members of Parliament,
- electoral districts of equal size,
- annual elections for Parliament (Thompson 1984, Preface).

Unfortunately, the Parliament rejected all their petitions (Peberdy, Waller 2021, 107). The most surprising thing about the Chartist movement is their support from the

public, especially during the economic depression and hunger around the 1840s. The petition from 1848 had around six million signs. However, it is crucial to mention that many of those signatures were forged, so the actual number is way lower. But the demonstration planned before the delivery was unsuccessful and taken by many as an end of their movement (Thompson 1984, 323-326).

1.1.3 The post-industrial economics of Britain

The economic sphere of the Victorian era is vast. That being said, the author prefers to summarize the most impactful industries in Britain. The Industrial Revolution could not happen so quickly if the country were not so wealthy and highly interested in science and scientific research. At the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, Britain led the production of industrial goods globally. Coal, iron, wool, and cotton were used as raw materials (Burns 2010, 144-145). Coal and the steam power generated by coal were the most critical aspects of the Industrial revolution. Most of the power was used by iron manufacturers. The textile industry was also on the rise, with four times more exports in 1870 than in 1830. Britain was also the leading country in ship sailing and, in the late Victorian period (after 1881), the biggest shipbuilder as well (The History Press).

A massive step for land transport had been made, mainly thanks to the development of the steam engine. Revolution brought the railway engine, designed from iron, and functioned on coal and steam power. The railway industry changed people's lives, meaning they could use it as transport to work or fasten travels to the countryside. It also connected cities with the countryside, and industrial companies were able to extend even further (Morgan 1988, 507-509). One of the most famous engineers and locomotive designers are father and son Stephenson. Robert Stephenson was later titled the greatest engineer of the nineteenth century for his

impressive steam engine Rocket and railway bridges (Westminster Abbey). As for the design of the carriages, they were divided into classes. The third one did not even have a compulsory roof until 1846, and each class had different pricing. Seats were wooden, and trains did not offer a toilet (The History Press).

Commuting to work through public transport became ordinary during the Victorian period. In 1863, the first underground line was opened in London. It was named the Metropolitan Railway, and it connected Paddington and Farrington. After this construction, more underground trails were built (most of them after 1900), creating a new network that Londoners later called the Tube (Transport For London).

The economic sphere was on growth, and so was the construction subsphere. Britain had built new roads, bridges, and docks and dug sewers and tunnels. During this time, they even solved the sanitation problem in London. Engineer Joseph Bazalgette dug sewers and water pipes to prevent it (Peberdy, Waller 2021, 575). Most investments were sent to building and construction in the late Victorian period. Some industrial places were not so efficient, and they even replaced some small companies with bigger ones based at the ports. There had been a more significant competition, with the U.S. joining the revolution and competing mainly in the iron industry. That battle was not successful for Britain, but overall, the economy of Britain during the Victorian era was on the rise (Ashworth 1966, 17-33).

The Victorian period ended with Queen Victoria's death in January 1901. Her reign lasted over 63 years, which was the longest. The whole era featured many reforms, mainly political and healthcare, and widened the power of Britain. Queen Victoria expanded the power of monarchy to states like New Zealand. During her reign, there were several wars. After the Crimean War, she even honored the soldiers with her Victoria Cross, which became the highest award in Britain and the

Commonwealth (Johnson). Her son Edward VII. took the throne when she passed away, and the Edwardian era began.

1.2 The working class of England during the 19th century

A brief introduction to the working class during the Victorian era is essential for a better understanding of the problematics depicted in the practical part. Even though only one television series were based in the Victorian period, similar aspects of the working-class society can be used even for the second series, *Peaky Blinders*.

As the Industrial Revolution offered new opportunities, wealthy business people took the chance and created profitable companies in the new economic sectors. To keep their companies running and expanding, they needed a core workforce – and the working class was created. But since most of these people lived a poor life, they often struggled with money, resulting in children's work and shared housing. Not only poverty but also nutrition and hygiene standards made their lives miserable. On the other hand, the growing wages and lesser working hours gave the better-paid workers time for leisure activities.

At the time of Queen Victoria's reign, society was divided into three groups. Firstly, the aristocratic upper class was full of wealthy landlords and their families. Most of them offered jobs to the working class. In the middle stood the middle-class, which emerged during urbanization and the growth of cities. And finally, the last one was the working class, where workers were not skilled and worked in bad conditions for low wages. In addition, this list could be expanded with the fourth class, mainly called the "underclass. "It consisted of people unable to work and orphans (Morgan 1988, 537-546). Some of the jobless women were inclined toward prostitution. Prostitutes were a massive issue in Victorian England. The spread of diseases was fast,

and some were not curable (Lang 2006, 296). The government took action in 1864 when the Contagious Diseases Act was passed, followed by extensions in 1866 and 1869. Police then could take women that looked like prostitutes to doctors for further disease tests. It was a highly controversial Act, mainly due to giving police the power to conclude a woman's job without any clue, and it was canceled in 1886 (The Health Foundation).

Workers were hired for manual labor work such as shipbuilding or manufacturing. Manufacture became a trend during the second half of the 19th century, and more workers converted from agriculture to transport or mining (Benson 2016, 9). John Benson (2016) demonstrates this switch by looking at the number of workers in specific spheres. For example, in 1851, there were around 2,1 million workers in agriculture, but in 1891 the number lowered by half a million. The increase is then illustrated in transport, where the number of workers rose from 1,5 million to 3,4 million in forty years (Benson 2016, 10).

Although manufacturers, mining, and transport companies employed most workers, some chose a different path. The costermongers were commonly known in the streets of London during the 19th century. These street sellers tried to sell anything that would come in handy for buyers – food, medication, spices, clothes, and birds. They would make impressive money if they were lucky and had regular customers. In contrast, poor people tried to sell anything on the streets. Ultimately, they would search in the dirt and river to find something to sell. Others tried to beg for money as well (Picard 2009).

The child boom of the Victorian era resulted in child labor which was briefly discussed in the previous chapter. Working-class families needed all members to work to run the household. There were specific jobs that kids did better than adults, for

example, chimney sweepers, where they could fit better thanks to their tiny bodies (Lang 2006, 295).

The high fertility rate did not last that long, though, mainly due to middle-class society preferring only a few children and the working class not being able to finance it. In 1870 education became compulsory, which led to children spending more time at school. Before that, boys were hired for work around the age of ten, while girls helped raise younger siblings and did the house chores. The better-paid workers-controlled fertility to be able to run the family; low-income families mostly tried begging or met worse ends (August 2007, 100-101). This is also the time when the help of others is needed. Families lived very close to each other, some even shared a house, and the bond strengthened. Women who wanted the best for their children-maintained relationships in the working-class districts (August 2007, 95).

When discussing workers' lives during the 19th century, it is essential to mention some of the good aspects that the author will demonstrate in the practical part. The introduction of leisure time activities and its popularity among the working class flourished during the end of the 19th century, especially in the 1870s. Reasons for it were simple: workers got the free time due to shorter working hours (August 2007, 92). In addition, the increase in average wage provided them with additional money they could spend on hobbies. For instance, an average worker's wage in 1880 was around twenty shillings per week, whereas the years before, it was only fourteen (Benson, 2016, 53). The major boom happened in commercialized leisure. Men spent their free time watching professional football or gambling. However, not all of them could afford tickets to the venues. Instead, they sat in a pub and discussed it with others or read about it in the newspapers. Pubs became a vital place for discussions or predicting the results of matches (August 2007, 132-133).

Nevertheless, leisure activities were not affordable for everyone since housing and nutrition prices increased, as did the average wage. Furthermore, people working in domestic services or manufacturing did not enjoy leisure due to their long working hours, and others had to work overtime (August 2007, 128). Even though commercialized leisure was not for everyone, it remains an essential change to workers' daily life.

The lives of working-class society in the late 19th century were still entangled with many day-to-day struggles. The prostitution problem lasted to the end, and the mystery of Jack the Ripper caught the eye of many journalists, trying to sell inspiring stories concerning the murders. Not everyone could afford their housing. Families controlled fertility to survive with their incomes due to compulsory education for children. However, the increase in leisure activities and free time for some workers opened new opportunities to earn money through gambling or betting on horse races.

1.3 Organized crime in Britain

One of the aspects of the working-class society that the author chose to illustrate through television series is organized crime. Therefore, it is crucial to outline the beginnings and the rise of organized crime and gangs in Britain to understand the series' crime scene, depicted in the practical part. This chapter also introduces the Peaky Blinders phenomenon to demonstrate the television series' origin.

1.3.1 Late 19th-century street gangs and hooliganism

Organized crime in Britain did not come out of nowhere. It had been built for many years by gangs in various cities. (Chinn 2019, 23) These gangs were not organized in any form, and their goals were completely different from what was happening during the early 20th century when the organized crime occurred.

Since the regulation of child labor in the 1830s, children could not help their families with money by working as before (Humphries 1981, 28-41). Working-class kids were spending most of their time on the streets, and since they did not have any gardens or playgrounds, the streets were their playground. They tried contributing to their family income by stealing small things, such as cigarettes. However, the most important thing is that they did not have any supervisor looking after them, so they made their own decisions (Humphries 1981, 121-122; 150-156). This youth chose their territory based on where they lived and fought for it. Ultimately, they formed gangs to defend their territory and sometimes attack another. Their goal was not to earn any money or intimidate people living there. It was the feeling of owning something that drove them (Davies 1998, 351-352). Most of these children lived in poverty without clean water and inadequate sanitation. Usually, they lived in tiny houses where they shared bathrooms with other families. These overcrowded poor districts are commonly known as slums (Lilley 2022).

Slums were the "product "of the mass industrialization in Britain (Davies 1998, 349-369). As mentioned before, these working-class people lived in absolute poverty, sometimes without clean water. Some people even call it "the background "of the town. This background during the late 19th century was full of small gangs. Interestingly, these gangs were initially not based on religion or ethnicity (Davies 1998, 351-352). Even though there were many occasions in which the faith occurred, especially when talking about Irish immigrants. Irish migrated to Britain during the Great Famine, searching for a better life.

Nevertheless, many ended up in poor districts, fighting for their lives. They lived on Park Street in Birmingham and were often confronted by protestants (Lilley 2022). The religious problems resulted in the Murphy riots in 1867, showing the relationship

between protestants and Irish Catholics. William Murphy, the reason for this riot, died in 1872, a year after the attack on him in Cumberland (Wohl 2002).

During the last three decades of the 19th century, the biggest cities in Britain had numerous gangs in their slum districts. Birmingham had their symbolic phenomenon of Peaky Blinders, even though it was not just only one gang. Thanks to this city's mugshot collection, society can now see how widely the early Peaky Blinders spread. As for London, the number of gangs was even higher. They are divided mainly into two sections: the North and South of London. In the North, the active gangs were, for example, the Chapel Street gang, City Road Lads, or The Monkey Parade gang in Whitechapel. From the South section of London, one of the most famous were the Hooligans. They took an anti-Irish nickname and presented it as their name, which was very uncommon. Press loved it. Therefore, many street gangs reported in the late 19th century to early 20th century are labeled "hooligans " (Lilley 2022).

1.3.2 From street fights to organized crime

However, as time progressed, so did these gangs. From non-organized groups of youth, where anyone could leave and join another gang, the successful ones shifted to other goals. The late 19th gangs focused mainly on territorial fights and keeping the status, whereas the 1920s looked more organized and were driven by money-making. Before the Roaring Twenties emerged, and even before the war, Britain had an organized gang system. They used modern weapons (guns, knives), and the leader was mainly the brain of the whole organization. Professor Carl Chinn (2022) sees Billy Kimber as the man who helped "build "organized crime in Britain (Lilley 2022).

Billy Kimber saw the switch in society during the early 20th century. Police were more professional, and people enjoyed other things rather than being on the streets.

The emergence of cinema and professional sports contributed to fading the typical street gangs away. If the gangs wanted to survive, they needed to change their goals and focus. Kimber chose racecourses. His Birmingham Boys gang was one of the first organized gangs in Britain. They would attend a racecourse and then pickpocket or intimidate the bookmakers (Chinn 2019, 142-152). The reason why he chose horse racing was the Street Betting Act of 1906, which banned gambling outside the racecourses. He also saw an enormous opportunity in racecourses because there were masses of people with a lot of in-hand cash that could be stolen easily (Lilley 2022).

This was also the time when gangs fought across the cities. With his Birmingham Boys, Billy Kimber tried to control the London racecourses, but his plans clashed with other gangs – the Sabini family and the Jews (Lilley 2022). During the summer months of 1921, these two sides fought against each other in various places. Eventually, the "war" ended thanks to Edward Emanuel's brilliant mind. Emanuel was the godfather of the Jewish gang. He devised a plan to take all the bookmakers from South England and sign them under one organization for protection. He would then employ Sabini's family to protect these bookmakers during racecourses with strength. Authorities, such as the Jockey club or the Southern police, immediately supported his plan. The legalization of the Sabini's attacks to protect bookmakers meant an end to this war (Chinn 2019, 162-169).

Real organized crime showed up mainly after the First World War. Before that, the majority of gangs were trying to defend their territories. Territories were based on their location, and the youth of working-class society in Britain used these street fights to grant themselves some status and respect. They had the feeling of owning something, so they fought hard for their spot. The gangs changed, and so did their goals as the years passed. From fighting for their area and pride, they converted to a

money-making "business. "The reason for that might be simple – they got old. The youth that had fought hard in the streets matured and got older. Their expectations of life changed, and with society changing even quicker than before, these gangs had to switch as well.

1.3.3 The Peaky Blinders phenomenon

Even though a more detailed description of the Peaky Blinders can be found in the practical part of this thesis, the author finds it necessary to briefly introduce this phenomenon that has gained massive popularization during the 21st century.

The first time that the term "Peaky Blinder" was used was in 1890 when three men attacked a man named George Eastwood. This new label replaced the commonly used "sloggers" or "slogging gangs" (Chinn 2019, 48). Slogger means *heavily hit someone*, and its origin dates to the 1820s (Chinn 2019, 20). The rise of slogging gangs was not exclusively in Birmingham but also in other British cities. Birmingham was one of the most industrialized cities in Britain, and many workers lived in dirty places full of smoke. The dangerous working conditions and no pleasure from their lives motivated some factory workers to join these gangs. It is not true that every slogger, later called Peaky Blinder, was unemployed – most of them worked in local factories (Lilley 2022).

After the attack in 1890, the local press started to call most gangs "Peaky Blinders." As the newspapers got cheaper and more people could read, the popularity of these notorious gangsters arose. People loved to read about all the fighting and brutality. Peaky Blinders could be taken as celebrities of that age. Nevertheless, with all that popularity goes an image they kept according to their rules.

Men's cut was called a "Peaky hairdo." They kept a long fringe, but everything else was shortened or even cut. The fringe would then shine underneath their hats. Firstly, they wore the billycock hats. Men would put the hat lower to one eye, which might be why the name "Peaky Blinder." After some time, the gang would replace these hats with new, flat caps that are known thanks to the series. The famous razor blade in a cap is a myth because they did not have these razors at that time. Men would also wear a daft, which is a scarf with bright color. They would tie it around their neck. The scarf's color would also match the buttons' color on their jacket.

When talking about Peaky Blinders, it is essential to mention the role of women. In these gangs, there were several women as well, primarily girlfriends or wives of the Peaky Blinders men. These women did also steal or attack aside with the men (Lilley 2022).

However, with society changing and the new century ahead, Peaky Blinders started falling apart. Birmingham was becoming a more secure city, and many rules limited them. After the First World War, these small gangs that would be called Peaky Blinders were slowly vanishing. But it was not the end for all gangs in Birmingham. For example, Billy Kimber's Birmingham Boys gang flourished after 1918, which the author explained above (Chinn 2019, 51).

Even though society these days might think there was one particular gang of Peaky Blinders, they are wrong. The press used it mainly to refer to any gang member in the late 19th and early 20th century Birmingham. Therefore, some exciting parts of their lifestyle (clothing, language) still symbolized them as a whole. Thanks to that, it is now clear how significant this community of Peaky Blinders gangs was and how they changed everyday life in Birmingham.

1.4 The sensationalism behind the Neo-Victorian sensation novels and their 21st-century adaptations

During the 19th century, society loved to read about crimes that were reported in the daily press. With the creation of the Detective Branch in 1842 also an interest in learning more and reading about detectives and their work. Some famous authors followed this trend during the 19th century (Cox 2019, 76). Furthermore, this fascination with Victorian-era continued, and several sensational novels were rewritten and ultimately adapted into television series.

The sensation novel uses aspects from various styles and types of novels, such as the Gothic or the Newgate one. It is possible to find the perks of detective fiction as well. But as for the Gothic novel, one of its key elements that define it is taken out from the Neo-Victorian sensation novels – the supernatural. Victorian sensation novels focus more on mortality and rationality rather than the impossible, which can be seen, for example, in R. L. Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Cox 2019, 11-12).

Jessica Cox's book (2019) introduced several definitions of a neo-Victorian sensation novel. Altogether, they all point out the importance of "*the text's active engagement and dialogue with history, and hence the necessity of an informed and critical understanding of the period*" (Cox 2019, 16).

This thesis focuses mainly on detective and crime depicting stories, and J. Cox (2019) dedicated a separate chapter in her book regarding detective sensation novels. As already said, with the rise of the press and the creation of the Detective Branch came an interest in detective work or crime scenes in general. Cox (2019) highlighted that the sensation was intensified by the anxiety that these written crimes could happen

even in the higher-class society. Some people could be motivated by that and enjoy the publication even more (Cox 2019, 76).

Even though the Peaky Blinders series were not based in the Victorian era, the second series, Ripper Street, was. It is essential to mention the sensationalism behind these detective stories, resulting in a wave of interest in the crime scenes. In addition, thanks to people's interest, it is now possible to read or watch those series, consulting the Victorian crime stories and some of the phenomena, such as Jack the Ripper.

Jessica Cox (2019) also cited Hadley's notes, where she discovered that "*sensation and detective fiction adopt a similar plot structure: both genres hinge on the discovery of a secret from the past that threatens the social order in the present*" (Cox 2019, 77). Even though these two types of novels might seem similar, there are some essential elements that differentiate them. For example, the need for a professional detective is omitted. Instead, the sensation novel usually consists of an amateur detective, sometimes a woman. Moreover, the details of the crime scene, its settings, and the whole description play an essential role in the sensation novel. The crime scene is also linked closely to domesticity and society or the group of people living there. The crime itself is then defined as something that can be punished by Victorian Britain's laws (Cox 2019, 78).

These elements found in Victorian sensation novels were the leading points for the neo-Victorian sensation novels. Thanks to that, it is possible to divide these novels from typical historical detective ones concerning the 19th century, often depicting Doyle's Sherlock Holmes (Cox 2019, 84).

As the famous Collin's *The Moonstone* from 1868, generally known as "*the sensation genre's most significant engagement with detective fiction*" (Cox 2019, 77),

got its television adaptations, other topics allured 21st-century directors. There has always been an interest in Sherlock Holmes, but also in the unsolved case of Jack the Ripper from 1888. This case received multiple adaptations during the 20th and 21st centuries. BBC launched their neo-Victorian television series, directly linked to the period and crime district called Ripper Street (2012 -2016). However, these new adaptations differentiate from original Victorian sensation novels, mainly through the loss of domestic space's importance and the family itself. They focus more on the crime scene, and the detective might be professional, as it is in Ripper Street (Cox 2019, 84-86).

The Victorian sensation novel was successful during the 19th century due to social interest in crime and detective work. Its legacy, the neo-Victorian sensation novel, also shone, especially when talking about the Sherlock Holmes phenomenon. The author recommends L. Haynsworth's article called *Sensational Adventures: Sherlock Holmes and His Generic Past* for further reading about the Sherlock Holmes phenomenon. In recent years, television and producers saw a massive wave of interest in the Victorian period again. Nowadays, many brilliant adaptations focus on late-Victorian Britain's crime, for example, the case of Jack the Ripper and the BBC's television series – Ripper Street.

2 Practical part

The practical part depicts two television series, Ripper Street and Peaky Blinders. The author used the information from the theoretical part and the first two seasons of each series to find and demonstrate some critical aspects of the working-class society.

2.1 Ripper Street

The first television series that the author chose for depiction is called Ripper Street. The series aired from 2012 to 2016, consisting of five seasons with six to eight episodes. The plot is situated in a London district named Whitechapel, known for its Jack the Ripper phenomenon. The story is set in the Victorian period, starting around 1890. It demonstrates the work of detective Edmund Reid in London's division H, his struggles, and his workmate's life background (IMDb).

Although Ripper Street focuses further on the lives of the main characters, there were several moments where the society of working-class people got its time. While watching the television series, the working class could be seen selling in the streets, getting arrested, or playing hazardous games at the local pub. In addition, some episodes illustrated the "organized" crime during the Victorian period in Whitechapel and the phenomenon of Jack the Ripper.

The author chose to demonstrate some of the critical traits of working-class society in the first two series of Ripper Street.

2.1.1 Street-sellers, costermongers

One of the most visible traits was the street-sellers, commonly known as costermongers. They could be seen in nearly every episode, mainly due to the detective

and sergeants walking through the streets. Most of the shops looked the same – small, wooden stand with a white awning to cover the goods before the rain. These shops covered both sides of the street. Usually, it was some of the highly used streets because many people were trying to sell or buy. It is necessary to mention that not everyone had their own stand. In season two, episode three, a woman was selling her goods with a small wooden “board” with a harness so that she could move with it (‘Ripper Street’ SE02 Ep3). Others tried to do the same, but most were hidden due to the number of people on the streets.

The most visible product in the first two series was flowers. A woman was selling them. Women who sold them had their stand full of flowers so the customer could choose. Sometimes they even placed a basket next to the stand to resupply if they ran out. One moment that caught the author’s eye happened in the sixth episode of season two. A young girl was helping her mom to sell flowers. Sergeant Drake, the main character of the series, came to buy some for his wife, Bella. The kid showed him their products, and with each flower he picked, she told him the specific meaning of the kind (‘Ripper Street’ SE02 Ep6).

Other street shops varied from clothing to groceries, such as fresh vegetables or freshly baked bread. While describing the shops, it is also essential to comment on their owners. The owners wore the same outfits as a most working-class society during the two series. Their outfits dominated plain colors and basic materials. Most of their clothes had no specific pattern. The difference in clothing throughout the classes could be seen in the second season’s penultimate episode, where the counselor Cobden visited the poorest district in London during the 1890s. Her new dress was full of patterns, whereas the poor children had their muddy old clothes torn in several spots (‘Ripper Street’ SE02, Ep7).

2.1.2 The streets and the street life

During the first two seasons of Ripper Street, there were numerous scenes where the streets played the central role but were overshadowed by the story of Edmund Reid or his fellow police officers. Apart from the costermongers that had been already introduced, the series demonstrated the “life of the street.”

On the darker side of the street life were homeless people and prostitutes. Ripper Street did not cover too many scenes of homeless people. Nonetheless, they could be seen in the busy streets, usually sitting on the ground next to some stand. The interaction between them and the main characters was infrequent. For example, one was illustrated in the first series and its fifth episode. An old friend of sergeant Drake gave two sick, homeless old men money (‘Ripper Street’ SE01 Ep5).

The second part of the darker side was prostitutes. It is crucial to divide prostitution into two sections – the Long Susan’s house and the street. The street prostitutes were infrequent in the series. They wore different dresses (a bit muddy and dirty), and most importantly, they worked in the streets. The author also thinks that the main difference was the money for their services, with the street ones being cheaper. The street prostitutes also seemed older than the ones from Long Susan.

While depicting the darker side of street life, focusing on the other part is also necessary. For example, in the third episode of the first season, a street priest read a part from Bible. At that scene, his reading was only the background of the whole plot (‘Ripper Street’ SE01 Ep3). But overall, it demonstrated how religious the working-class society was.

Another better part of the streets was the stations for horses. It was common during those times due to the usage of horses for transport. Although these tiny parts

of the scene could seem unimpressive, it was fascinating because these stations were almost at every corner of the streets. Even though these poorer districts had an ongoing issue with sanitation, the water for horses looked clear. It was unclear whether these stations for horses were paid by the city or not.

2.1.3 Children of the streets

Most working-class children spent their time playing on the streets. With the regulation of children's work, some tried to earn money there to help their families. During the two seasons, children could be seen playing on the streets, together or alone, or talking to an adult. Moreover, there were also scenes where the series demonstrated various options for kids to earn money.

As mentioned, a girl helped her mother sell flowers in their stand. Other kids tried to beg for money. It is possible that their parents used them for begging because they thought that people would rather give money to a young kid than to an adult. In the first season and its sixth episode, the main character, detective Edmund Reid came across a young girl that roamed the streets. She begged for money by shouting, "Relief fund, give a penny," and carrying a bucket where she collected the earnings ('Ripper Street' SE01 Ep6). Others tried to beg while sitting on the ground and waiting for someone to drop a penny on their hat. In addition, one young boy tried to earn money through his musical talent. In the second season's pilot, he played the flute to entertain others and make a penny for his family ('Ripper Street' SE02 Ep1).

A specific type of kids' job was introduced in the seventh episode of the first season. Two boys worked in shoe shine booths. These booths were designed for the shoe-shining work because they had a specific construction. The particular structure consisted of a wooden booth with comfortable leather seats, a rooftop so the guests are

not bothered by bad weather and a spot for the customer's boots. The boots' area was then divided into a classical wooden stair and a metal one designed to clean the shoe. Boys would firstly wash or clean them with a brush and then polish it ('Ripper Street' SE01 Ep7).

2.1.4 Muckrakers and the boom of newspapers

One of Ripper Street's most crucial roles in the first two seasons was a muckraker named Fred Best. His job was to attend nearly every crime scene and ask specific questions. If he did not get any answer from his target, he would try to threaten him with the information he already had about the person. Mostly the information was personal. The muckraker was introduced at the beginning of the first season and continued to show up during the second season. His first appearance was linked to a murder scene, where he tried to investigate whether the murder was linked to Jack the Ripper. He knew people would read about that and buy the newspapers more frequently.

With Best's job as a muckraker came the second part – the newspapers' boom. In the 1890s, society enjoyed reading about murders and crimes that happened in their city. The newspapers covered a drawn illustration of the dead person with each death. However, they did not only focus on murders and crimes. Muckrakers tried to get information about various affairs and then write about them as well. They altered stories so they could sell. In the first episode of season one, Edmund Reid said they "ruin people's lives through stories" ('Ripper Street' SE01 Ep1). Usually, the headlines of articles were also misleading because they tried to persuade people to buy the newspapers.

The newspapers were sold in small stands on the busy streets. The series also demonstrated society's fascination with crimes and murders. When something happened, some working-class people came to the scene and tried to see as much as possible. Often police officers had to control them. After that, they could expect a story about it in the daily newspapers.

2.1.5 Women's choices

The first two seasons of Ripper Street illustrated the role of a female in a different light than is usual for this particular period. It did not focus on typical families with the mother working as a street seller or in some factory. The women that took place in the series were usually independent. Ultimately, in one episode, the series demonstrated the power of feminism through a gang of women.

Each member of the family had to work in the working-class society. Some women chose to prostitute; others had nowhere else to go and ended up on the streets. If the woman were young and pretty, Long Susan would invite her to her house. She would offer her protection, a stable home with a private room, and forty percent of her earnings.

If the woman did not want to fall into prostitution and got no place to stay, she could come to Mrs. Reid's shelter for women. This facility was introduced in the final episode of the first season. The shelter accommodated women who got no home. Women were taught how to do the basic house works there. Moreover, women had their free choice there. If they chose to leave, they could immediately. And if their new life journey failed, they could come back ('Ripper Street' SE01 Ep8).

The third episode of the second season demonstrated how feminism and hatred towards men could be dangerous during the 1890s. The so-called "abused women

gang” offered a place for women who evil men tortured. Most of these women were prostitutes before. The former gang had a leader that taught members the means of self-control, self-respect, and basic knowledge. However, with hatred and power came also harmful and dangerous decisions. These women were ordered to abduct specific men, torture them in the basement, and then try to trade them for money from the police. Each member of this gang seemed nearly possessed by its leader. Thankfully, with the help of Long Susan, the former women’s gang got arrested (‘Ripper Street’ SE02 Ep3).

2.1.6 “Organized” crime

Even though the first two seasons of Ripper Street did not offer too many episodes with organized crime, the author chose one specific part where the series introduced a former gang of young boys with their adult leader.

The first season’s second episode focused on a gang of young boys. The plot began with one of the boys being convicted of murder and ultimately sentenced to death. This was also the time when the specific mark of their gang could be seen. The boy had cards tattooed on his hand.

As the story continued, the gang leader arose from the shadows. He claimed that his gang was the boys’ home and that they listened and obeyed every task he assigned them to. When he faced detective Edmund Reid, he even said, “if I tell them to destroy this place, they will do it and even thank me.”

During the episode, the tattooed cards were explained as well. The convicted boy explained the meaning to sergeant Drake. Each card had a different meaning and was usually connected with a crime. For example, the queen was rape, boys were house break, and kings were muggings. They received the tattoo when they came back with

a completed task. As a prove, they had to cut the tongue out from their victim and bring it to their leader.

The gang fell apart when their leader got killed. The boys ran away, and it was unclear whether they continued to misbehave or not ('Ripper Street' SE02 Ep2).

2.2 Peaky Blinders

The second series that is further discussed in this thesis are Peaky Blinders. The series aired from 2013 to 2022 and is known to be one of the best UK television series. The plot circles around a Birmingham family named Shelby and their gang, Peaky Blinders. They live in a district called Small Heath (IMDb). The series focuses not only on the lifestyle of the Shelby family and the Peaky Blinders but also on the organized crime of this notorious gang. In addition, it illustrates what a highly industrialized city looked like after the first world war.

The author chose to demonstrate the critical aspects of the working-class society and mainly organized crime through the first two seasons of Peaky Blinders. The series showed the industrial city of Birmingham and its strikes and riots, the leading position of Peaky Blinders in Small Heath, the process of illegal and legal gambling, and the wars and betrayals between other gangs, such as Sabini's or Camden Boys.

2.2.1 Birmingham and Small Heath

The city where the Peaky Blinders television series took place was Birmingham, one of the highly industrialized towns in England. However, throughout the episodes, the series demonstrated mainly only one district of the city – Small Heath. It was illustrated as a poor part, full of working-class people employed in heavy industry.

The heavy industry could be seen in many episodes of the first two seasons. At the beginning of the first season's pilot, Thomas Shelby traveled back home through the streets of Small Heath. The streets were dirty, dark, and full of pollution from factories. They also had to work in sweltering conditions since most workers were illustrated without shirts.

Working-class people in Small Heath were not satisfied with their wages. Therefore, some of them were inclined toward communism. The communist strikes were organized by a character named Freddie Thorne, an old friend of the Shelby family. His leading role in those strikes was illustrated in the first season's pilot episode, where he motivated workers to go on a strike because of low wages ('Peaky Blinders' SE01 Ep1). Two episodes later, he gathered his followers once more. However, their gathering did not last long since the chief inspector banned groups of more than three people due to the rise of strikes in those days. Thorne gave a speech, and at the end, he claimed, "united, we will never be defeated." But since the chief inspector is against communists, his gatherings vanished quickly, and so did the spirit of communism ('Peaky Blinders' SE01 Ep3).

Even though the communist strikes were the only ones visible, there were numerous scenes where characters of the Peaky Blinders read or talked about other riots or strikes. Most of them were introduced through newspapers. Muckrakers did play an essential role in Peaky Blinders as well. But they did not call them "muckrakers" – in the first season's second episode, Thomas Shelby invited a redactor over to write about their riot. It was a "lightning fire to raise the alarm." They burned pictures of the king to show how the crown treated them. Most of these working-class people had to go to the first world war and fight for the king. Two years later, they were attacked in their homes by the police. Their riots were against this brutality from

the police, and Thomas used the press to raise awareness. If it got further in the country, the burning of the king's pictures would result in an embarrassment for the king ('Peaky Blinders' SE01 Ep2).

Other strikes were usually due to low wages and working in harmful conditions. In their daily newspapers, Evening Despatch, people from Birmingham could read about them. The most repeated strike would be the BSA strike, roughly mentioned in two or three episodes during the first season.

2.2.2 The leading position of Peaky Blinders in Small Heath

During the first two seasons of the series, Peaky Blinders seemed like the most powerful gang in the Small Heath, potentially in the whole of Birmingham. Their leading position was also empowered through bribing the police. The series described this process as something ubiquitous – almost every city gang bribed their local police. Thanks to that, they not only got more protection and new information, but mainly the police pretended to overlook every crime scene.

The overlooking aspect changed when a chief inspector Campbell was sent to Birmingham by Churchill to collect stolen weapons. There was an ongoing minor interference between Thomas and inspector Campbell, heavily influenced by Campbell's feelings for Grace, that worked for him as a special force. Thomas and the chief inspector tried to use their fragile deal to manipulate the other side. Their small "war" was full of betrayals, but mainly from the chief inspector Campbell's side. Even though Thomas got betrayed by him numerous times, in the last episode of the second season, even nearly killed by Campbell's orders, the author thinks that he managed to show Birmingham who is the absolute leader and a valuable person. The leading force was not the police, influenced by whoever was paying them more and sometimes

inclined to illegal decisions, but the Peaky Blinders themselves. Campbell's order to kill Thomas Shelby was not completed due to a demand from Churchill, that wanted to speak with Thomas personally.

In addition, the series briefly illustrated the scare of the Peaky Blinders. Working-class society was afraid of them and did not want to become an enemy to them. In most of the scenes where the Peaky Blinders were walking through a busy street, people created a free passage for them. In the first season's pilot episode, Thomas went to see a Chinese magic girl. When he rode a horse to the place, people tried to hide from him as he rode next to them. Peaky Blinders fascinated them, so they looked from their hideouts. But no one came to Thomas and spoke to him. They all waited until he was gone ('Peaky Blinders' SE01 Ep1). The scare was later demonstrated just briefly throughout the episodes.

2.2.3 The process of illegal and legal gambling

Illegal gambling was one of the primary incomes for the Peaky Blinders. The gambling focused on horse racing. But in the first and second season, they were not as professional as other gangs who specialized in this section, such as Billy Kimber or the Sabini's. They had their small gambling room, where anyone from Small Heath could place a bet. The whole "gambling office" was joined to a family home. It consisted of two or three small offices for the accountant, head manager, and another manager. In the accountant room, the Peaky Blinders also hid two safes with money. Then, the gambling office was not so structured. There was a space for two or three employees who counted the money, a table where people could place a bet, and a raised place with stairs where the board was situated. The panel was the main thing in the whole office. Gamblers and the rest of the people could see each horse's rankings and the upcoming races. Lastly, there was an entrance space for the book of the upcoming

racers. If a person wanted to place a bet, they would have to choose the horse they want to bet on and then go to the employee to have their bet written and set. After that, they would wait, usually to the next day, for results.

In the first season's last episode, after their victory over Billy Kimber, Peaky Blinders went legal with gambling. They received the licenses and became the country's third-largest legal race track operation. However, they wanted to expand even further – to London, where the ongoing war between the Sabini's gang and Alfie Solomons' Camden Boys took place ('Peaky Blinders' SE01 Ep6).

2.2.4 The wars and betrayals between other gangs

The first two seasons introduced five gangs, including Peaky Blinders, mainly through various deals, later followed by betrayals or even wars between two gangs.

Firstly, they illustrated the gypsy gang of the Lee family. Throughout the first season, Peaky Blinders and Lees attacked each other. In the second episode, Tommy and his two brothers travelled to meet the Lee family outside Birmingham. They met in nature and wanted to make a deal with a horse. Their middleman was Johnny Dogs, who happened to be a gypsy as well. He was close to Lees and a good friend of the Peaky Blinders. However, the horse deal did not go so well, and the scene ended with a fight between them ('Peaky Blinders' SE01 Ep2). During the following episodes, the Lee family sent a bullet with Tommy's name. That symbolized the beginning of a war between these two gangs. The war finished in the second season with a marriage. The marriage was crucial for both sides, and the scene was more of a ritual. Esme Lee and John Shelby got their hand-cut, and their blood linked together when they touched each other. That act symbolized the end of the war between these two gangs and an

alliance on the highest level. Blood links were more than just a signature on a deal; they were unique. They were also highly respected among the gypsies.

The next gang that took its place in the television series was Billy Kimber and his boys. Billy Kimber was firstly introduced as a respected leader of a horseracing gambling sphere. Especially Thomas Shelby praised him. But he also saw the opportunity in working with Kimber. Through Kimber, Peaky Blinders could become legal and get a better position in the gambling section. During the first season, there was a war between the Lee family and Kimber because Lee's robbed his bookmakers on racecourses. Peaky Blinders offered Kimber help. But Kimber was not so sure whether to work with them or not.

Nonetheless, their blood link with the Lee family was more vital than the unsure deal with Kimber, so Thomas betrayed him. Their quarrel ended with a street fight in Small Heath. There, Thomas shot Kimber to his head in defense. Tommy's deadly bullet got covered by his follower and member of the Peaky Blinders, Danny. After the death of leader Billy Kimber, his gang vanished.

Thirdly, the Peaky Blinders series introduced an Italian gang led by Sabini. In the second season's pilot, Sabini's club was attacked by Peaky Blinders in London ('Peaky Blinders' SE02 Ep1). Due to that, a war between them began. Sabini was an influential gang leader; his protection covered local London police. His reliance on the police was later shown as not so successful – when the police were busy, they had almost no protection. This Italian gang was one of the two leading gambling offices in London. They also specialized in racecourses, which they attended.

Sabini had an ongoing war with the Camden Boys. They were a Jewish gang led by Alfie Solomons. He ran an illegal distillery – a cover for that was a bakery company.

However, the rum production did cover only ten percent of his income. Around eighty percent of the Solomons' income came from horseracing. They had their bookmakers on racecourses and were London's second-leading gambling office. The series illustrated the war between Camden Boys and the Sabini's as a long-lasting interference.

Into the ongoing war came Peaky Blinders. With the attack on Sabini's club, they clearly sided with the Jews. In the second episode of the second season, Thomas made a deal with Alfie Solomons to form a brigade. The brigade consisted of a hundred men, and their job was to protect Camden Boys from the Sabini's ('Peaky Blinders' SE02 Ep2). The unit was led by Kitchen and introduced in the second season's third episode. They all got their aprons and were legally signed as bakers in Solomons' bakery ('Peaky Blinders' SE02 Ep3). The deal was not only about the protection but mainly considered Thomas and Alfie as business partners. Peaky Blinders could use their dock in Camden Town to ship products. Later in the series, they even shipped Scotch whiskey to the USA. Due to prohibition, the rich people from the United States were willing to pay a high price for the "good stuff."

However, the deal between Peaky Blinders and Camden Boys was destroyed and betrayed. Alfie Solomons agreed to work with Sabini. Sabini persuaded him that Peaky Blinders were trying to overtake everything and that they wanted to control the racecourses by themselves. Together, they wrote a peace agreement, where Sabini added the declaration of war on Peaky Blinders. The brigade was attacked, and Thomas Shelby had to devise a plan to take down Sabini alone.

Thomas' plan was demonstrated in the last episode of the second season, where the Peaky Blinders and Lee family attended Epsom races, one of the most famous racecourses in London. The plan's most important aspect was burning Sabini's

licenses for bookmakers. Each bookmaker had to keep the permit on himself throughout the race for validation. When Thomas occupied the police (with the claim that the king might be in danger), the rest of the gang went to bribe bookmakers and burn their licenses. The plan was to weaken Sabini through these license spots – if the bookmakers try to re-apply, they probably will not get accepted again. The free spots would then come to the Peaky Blinders ('Peaky Blinders' SE02 Ep6).

Overall, the first two seasons ended with a blood link with the Lee family and a business deal with Alfie Solomons. The Sabini's gang got weakened successfully, and Peaky Blinders expanded to London.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this thesis was to demonstrate the critical aspects of the working-class society and the creation of organized crime in it through two popular television series, *Ripper Street* and *Peaky Blinders*. The author briefly introduced the reader to the Victorian period in the theoretical part. Knowing some fundamental changes in political and cultural life was essential to understanding the series.

However, due to *Peaky Blinders* not being true to fact, the information about the Victorian era could be used only for *Ripper Street*. As mentioned, working-class society lived in poverty with lousy nutrition and sanitation. The reason was the Industrial revolution that required many employees for low wages. *Ripper Street* flourished with these scenes. The subchapter called “the streets and the street life” briefly showed how poor people lived in the streets of Whitechapel, London. In addition, the author also described prostitution, which was an issue during the Victorian era.

Ripper Street illustrated many essential aspects of Victorian Britain. Even though the author did not depict them in the practical part, it is crucial to briefly mention them—for example, the rise of railways. During the second season, an episode was dedicated to building an underground train. It was probably an addition to London’s underground system, called the Tube. Another aspect that was briefly shown in the series was the cholera scare. Even though the series took place in the 1890s and the cholera pandemics happened around the 1830s, the working-class society was still afraid of it. However, the episode also illustrated that the illness was not cholera but another sickness from wheat that also spreads fast.

On the other hand, the first half of the practical part mostly depicted the working-class culture in Ripper Street. Some of the characteristics were the same as those introduced in the theoretical part of the chapter about the working-class people. Apart from the workers in factories, the series perfectly illustrated the street-sellers, commonly known as costermongers. Although they could be seen only as a background most of the time, it was a crucial part of the whole first two seasons. Their unique stands and the differentiation in their merchandise were impressive. Overall, they all sold what they could offer the best – bakers provided fresh bread, and women offered colorful flowers from their garden.

While depicting only the Ripper Street series, the author also briefly mentioned the sensationalism of the Victorian era. The popularity of the detective series was mainly thanks to the Sherlock Holmes phenomenon, but Jack the Ripper was not so far behind. With the newspapers' boom and the creation of the detective branch in 1842 came an interest in the crime scenes. Society wanted to read about it, and this fascination has not changed to this day. That is also why the BBC and other producers chose to demonstrate Victorian Britain through crime scenes. However, Ripper Street is different from the first detective sensational novels; it lacks domestic space and family bonding. In addition, it does not feature an amateur detective, and the main character is a male. Edmund Reid is a character based on a real detective from the 1890s Victorian Whitechapel, and he was a professional detective.

The other parts depicted in Ripper Street were similar to those in Peaky Blinders. The division of the conclusion is essential for adequately understanding each chapter. Even though the series were both based in the working-class society and covered some “organized crime,” they demonstrated these parts differently. Also, with the time-skip

of Peaky Blinders, it is impossible to match Victorian Britain with its aspects because they took place after the first world war.

These small correlations could be found in the organized crime and the newspapers' boom subchapters. Although they might seem similar, the series described two different organized crimes, mainly due to being thirty years apart. Ripper Street demonstrated the creation of street gangs and the gang culture, whereas Peaky Blinders showed the rise of gangs. In Peaky Blinders, the gangs were linked to the police, which they usually bribed for protection, and they did not fight for their territory since they already got that. Their main goal was to make as much money as possible – mainly through illegal gambling on horseracing. While comparing these two series, it is impressive to see how the small street gangs changed into some sort of a company throughout the years.

The newspapers were treated the same in both series, but the people who wrote for them had other labels. Muckrakers seemed to not exist after the first world war. Instead, Thomas Shelby called for a redactor to write about their riot. He did not ask intimidating questions to get as much information as possible – he listened to the leader of Peaky Blinders and wrote precisely what Thomas recited to him. Even though the muckrakers became regular redactors, articles in the news stayed the same. They wrote about strikes that were happening in nearby factories.

With the depiction of Ripper Street and Peaky Blinders, it is visible that these two series got some aspects in common, but the rest is different. The main thing that they both got in common was society. They were both based in the working-class sphere, where people had to work long hours in poor conditions to survive. Often the kids had to work to help their families with income. The series illustrated various kinds of work in the working-class society, such as costermongers or kids' shoe-shining jobs.

But most of the workers were employed in factories. With the rise of heavy industry, factories needed more men to work for them.

Another similarity was the gangs. As mentioned, the series depicted them differently – Ripper Street showed the street gangs, whereas Peaky Blinders demonstrated the true crime in London during the 1920s. The last significant correlation was the news. The importance of the newspapers was more highlighted in Ripper Street, but in Peaky Blinders, it also got its time. The author thinks that the reason is that Ripper Street was based two years after the famous Jack the Ripper case. While combined with the sensation of crime scenes, working-class society was fascinated with newspapers since they always had exciting articles, often edited by the muckraker so they would sell even more.

Overall, these two series illustrated not only the crime scenes and the gangs but, most importantly, the culture of the working class during two different periods – the 1890s and the 1920s. They were some crucial aspects that demonstrated the era, such as the war medals in Peaky Blinders that could not be seen in Victorian Ripper Street. These aspects need to be considered because the working-class society was also heavily influenced by them. However, apart from these differences, the series correlate with the workers' strikes and riots, mainly due to low wages. With these all similarities mentioned (the working-class society, gangs, strikes and riots, newspapers' boom), it is visible that there might be some time gap between these two series. But the life of the working-class society did not change, even after the first world war.

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