

Regulating Sex, Surveilling Sex

Pornographic Nostalgia in The Deuce

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Introduction

During the season two finale of *The Deuce*, a David-Simon produced HBO show about the sex-work industry in 1970s–1980s Times Square, Eileen “Candy” (Maggie Gyllenhaal) and her colleague, Harvey (David Krumholtz), are celebrating at the premier of their pornographic film *Red Hot*, a tale based on *Little Red Riding Hood*, when Eileen holds up a newspaper article. She begins reading with flattered enthusiasm: “The script is at points blunt and knowing. There’s much to be admired here. So much, in fact, that were it not for the gratuitous punctuation of hardcore pornographic imagery, *Red Hot* could be called an instant arthouse tour-de-force.”¹ It is a moment of metacommentary, a review that could be applied to *The Deuce* itself. *The Deuce*, as it seeks to depict the making of pornography, enmeshes images that provide pornographic pleasures to the show’s audience within a supposedly highbrow visual experience.

The Deuce follows female sex workers as they search for protection and safety in their industry, before whatever method they find shows its cracks: first they find purported protection in pimps; then in brothels; then on the pornography set; then in peep-show booths; then, for a white sex worker, in dubious Hollywood agents. The workplace conditions that haunt this show, especially the sexual abuse allegations leveled at *Deuce* executive producer, star, and director James Franco,² indicate the fraught nature of the show’s production and reception, a dynamic only complicated by the fact that *The Deuce* is largely about the struggles of women as they search for safe workplaces in male-dominated industries. This is a plot trajectory that allows the audience to view pornography under the guise of surveillance while framing their position as a sanctimonious one. That *The Deuce* takes place

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in the past helps to alleviate the assumed ambivalence of the show's audience about the amount of images they are exposed to that take the position of a pornography viewer. For the purposes of this essay, I will be defining pornography using Linda Williams's words: as a "visual (and sometimes aural) representation of living, moving bodies engaged in explicit, usually unfaked, sexual acts with a primary intent of arousing viewers."³ What this essay will suggest is that *The Deuce* is anxious about the relationship between voyeuristic and intellectual endeavors and insistently amplifies the historical nature of 1970s–1980s filming and screening instruments—clicking film reels and vintage projectors, for example—in order to assuage this ambivalence. At the same time, in mobilizing Williams's concept of maximum visibility within documentary conventions, the show allows the viewer pornographic pleasures under the guise of surveillance. The show postures surveilled spaces as safe ones for the sex workers who inhabit them: compared to streetwalking, for example, the pornography set and the brothel are characterized as safe places of work because of the brothel's thin walls and the pornography set's exposed nature. In amplifying the historical nature of 1970s–1980s filming and screening instruments to distance the viewer from the subject matter while, at the same time, allowing for the visual and sonic pleasures of watching pornography, the show encourages surveillance without implicating the viewer in the sex-work system.

HBO's attempt to market itself as superior to television sheds light on the imagined audience of the network. The network's name (Home Box Office) coupled with slogans such as "It's Not TV. It's HBO" attempt to situate HBO shows as something more than TV, suggesting that their imagined viewers consider themselves to be more sophisticated than the average television watcher, and more anxious about consuming "lower" genres such as pornography. *The Deuce* and its marketing strategies attempt to situate its exhibition of pornography for the audience as journalistic and historically minded rather than pornographic.

The reputation of David Simon, who also created *The Wire*, as a journalist first and a showrunner second is often marshaled by marketing and publicity materials, along with academics and critics, to indicate the intellectual nature of his shows. Interviews and profiles tend to foreground Simon's earlier career as a reporter for *The Baltimore Sun*,⁴ for which he worked from 1982 to 1995.⁵ This journalistic orientation echoes the pervasive conception of *The Wire*'s sociological potential. Indeed, in a *New Yorker* profile about Simon, Margaret Talbot writes that *The Wire* focused, "with sociological precision," on exploring the city of Baltimore.⁶ Similarly, Professor William Julius Wilson, at a Harvard University seminar on the show,

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argued that “*The Wire*’s exploration of sociological themes is truly exceptional. Indeed I do not hesitate to say that it has done more to enhance our understandings of the challenges of urban life and urban inequality than any other media event or scholarly publication, including studies by social scientists.”⁷ Simon’s reputation has followed him to *The Deuce*. The majority of questions in a recent *Rolling Stone* interview with him, for example, mentioned journalism.⁸ Simon himself supports this kind of rhetorical framing. In one interview, when asked about the best advice he has ever received, Simon turned to journalism in his answer: “I was a young reporter and a very smart journalist said to me, ‘Don’t be afraid to be a fool in the room.’ As I got further into reporting, I understood what he meant more and more, which was there are no stupid questions.”⁹ The marketing of Simon’s persona, one that distances him from TV as a medium, is a strategy that frames *The Deuce* as an intellectual exploration rather than a pornographic one. Though Simon’s reputation has followed him from *The Wire* to *The Deuce*, *The Deuce* is fundamentally a very different show, one whose journalistic underpinnings are hazy at best. The temporality of *The Wire*, which premiered in 2002 and takes place a little after the turn of the millennium, occupies a temporality distinct from *The Deuce*, a show that premiered in 2017 and chronicles happenings of the 1970s and 1980s. Crucially, *The Deuce* differs from *The Wire* in that it is as much about pornographic knowledge as sociological knowledge.

In this essay, I will examine *The Deuce*’s depiction of sex work, paying particular attention to the show’s interaction with pornographic conventions and pleasures. Then I will zoom in on the show’s portrayal of the production and consumption of pornography to examine its reliance on framing porn within a system of historicized instruments to assuage the assumed HBO viewer’s ambivalence about watching so much porn within a supposedly highbrow television show. Through its ostensible fixation on exposing the sex industry, *The Deuce* provides a welcome occasion to examine a viewing position that troubles the genre distinction between highbrow television and pornography, and, in the process, offers a case study for television’s interaction with anxieties of sex and surveillance in an age in which the World Wide Web has complicated the regulation of pornography.

Sex Work and Regulation

Since the advent of visual pornography, knowledge has played an essential role in the pleasure it seeks to elicit. In *Hard Core*, Linda Williams

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argues that pornography's emphasis on visibility is deeply rooted in the quest for knowledge that Foucault outlines in *The History of Sexuality*. For her, "all film pornography is a 'drive for knowledge' that takes place through a voyeurism structured as a cognitive urge."¹⁰ Thus, pornography retains features of scientific knowledge production, echoing conventions of the nonfiction documentary. This cognitive endeavor is the reason Williams gives for the genre's focus on what she calls "maximum visibility": "to privilege close-ups of body parts over other shots; to overlight easily obscured genitals; to select sexual positions that show the most of bodies and organs."¹¹ Ultimately, as she observes, "In contrast to both mainstream fictional narrative and soft-core indirection, hard core tries not to play peekaboo with either its male or its female bodies. It obsessively seeks knowledge, through a voyeuristic record of confessional, involuntary paroxysm, of the 'thing' itself."¹² Hard core pornography, for Williams, fulfills its goal of obtaining and organizing knowledge through mapping truth onto visual discourse, a concept illuminated by the convention of "the money shot," defined as a shot of penile ejaculation. In seeking to illustrate the porn industry's attempt to capture these conventions, the show itself engages them. *The Deuce*, as it aims to capture the underbelly of Times Square at the height of the sexual revolution, locates the truth in what is concealed. The show uses imagery depicting behind-closed-doors activity as a hermeneutic device to hook the viewer, promising them special access to knowledge of the industry's secrets. The show is also obsessed with *framing* this knowledge as a secret in order to keep them watching.

Williams draws upon Foucault for her argument: for him, surveillance acts through confession, a process by which sexuality may be regulated. In the eighteenth century, when "discourse on sex ... became essential," he notes that "one had to speak of it as of a thing to be not simply condemned or tolerated but managed, inserted into systems of utility, regulated for the greater good of all, made to function according to an optimum."¹³ And in a pressure to speak, sex could be managed: "Sex was not something one simply judged; it was a thing one administered. It was in the nature of a public potential; it called for management procedures; it had to be taken charge of by analytical discourses."¹⁴

I will be drawing upon Williams and Foucault in my engagement with Jacob's Smith conception of pornoperformativity, which, for him, "attempts to enact a breakthrough *out* of a performance, thereby offering a tantalizing suggestion of the authentic and spontaneous 'real' expression, via traces of the body in spasm."¹⁵ In other words, pornoperformativity is a mode of performance that contrasts the contrived with the real: in a similar way

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bloopers may be constructed, for example. *The Deuce*, as it depicts pornography in the making, has a tendency to highlight the theatricality of porn actors' performances on set before breaking to show challenges and mistakes. In one moment, for instance, an actor loses his erection during a sex scene with Eileen and reaches for gay porn in order to allow filming to continue. This contrast between performance and "authenticity" allows the viewer to believe they are gaining access to "real" expressions of bodies as they perform, or fail to perform, sex work.

The Deuce's depictions of sex work suggest that regulation of the industry is necessary to protect its laborers; simultaneously, these depictions make possible the analytical discourses outlined by Foucault. Over and over again, the show places its female sex workers in dangerous situations in order to argue for the regulation of the industry. Toward the end of the season one finale, "My Name Is Ruby," a woman stands in the mirror, wiping ejaculate off of her stomach. Dressed in a suede miniskirt and crocheted belly-bearing halter-top, her face is not shown until the camera pans upward, indicating it is Ruby (Pernell Walker), who is often referred to as "Thunder Thighs" by her pimp and johns. She primps herself back up as the reflection in the mirror's corner reveals the john rooting through her purse (see figure). As the audience gains knowledge into what is happening, Ruby remains unaware of the theft. This kind of temporal orientation places the show's audience a step or two ahead of the sex workers they watch onscreen.



Ruby (Pernell Walker) looks at herself in the mirror as her john steals money from her purse ("My Name Is Ruby," MacLaren, *The Deuce*, 2017).

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The viewer learns in earlier scenes that this is Ruby's room. The wallpaper is a feminine brown-and-beige floral design. The lighting is low, and it is filled with her stuff: a colorful striped dress hanging in the closet, hair combs scattered on the mantel, a miniature white vase of fuchsias, a wooden baby Buddha figurine. One of these possessions is a metal traffic light, which looks to be taken from right off one of the New York streets outside her room, an apt marker of Ruby's recent demotion from massage parlor to street.¹⁶ According to George Pelacanos, a co-producer of *The Deuce*, the woman upon whom this character is based also had a traffic light in her room. In an interview, Pelacanos said that the purpose of the light was to indicate her availability to potential clients, much as a taxicab does: "Green meant she was open for business, yellow meant she was occupied, and red was, 'I'm closed.'"¹⁷ Ruby spots the john looting. "Hey!" she exclaims. The camera rotates around to reveal, in a reverse shot, the client from Ruby's perspective. "Whatch'u think you're doing?" Ruby scolds. "Didn't like it, don't have to pay," the client responds. Ruby points her finger at him: "Put that goddamn money back in my purse." "I don't have to," he insists. When Ruby threatens to go to her pimp, the john, who is white, says, "Fuck yo' man, the fuckin' coon and his processed hair." Ruby, appearing startled, tells him to "Go on, get the fuck out of my room," to which he responds, "I'll see you around, Thunder Thighs." He turns around and begins to exit the room when Ruby comes toward him, yelling: "My name is Ruby!" He whips around, grabs her shoulders, and drives her through her window. The glass shatters as she screams; down below, a car skids to a stop and emits a prolonged honk. The last shot is of the traffic light directed out of the now-empty window frame, glaring an alarming red.¹⁸

It is one of many scenes that depicts a sex worker as she is beaten by her john or pimp in *The Deuce*. During the debut season, Darlene (Dominique Fishback) and Eileen are beaten in similar situations, but not to the point of death. What ties these instances together is their behind-closed-doors nature, a danger remedied, by the end of the season, in some of these sex workers becoming involved in the pornography business—a workplace characterized by its visibility, especially in comparison to the streetwalking industry. Ruby, though, doesn't escape: as she explains to a cop, "I wasn't getting chosen that much on the inside. Out here, men with special taste, they find me." Just before Ruby is killed, Eileen calls out to Ruby from her taxicab as it rolls through Times Square. Eileen is on her way to the fancy premiere of *Deep Throat*, a film marking the entrance of pornography into mainstream culture in 1970s New York. She wears a glamorous white coat draped over her shoulders that signifies the role her whiteness has played

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into her newfound position. As if presaging the disaster, Ruby, trying to summon the john who ultimately murders her, doesn't hear Eileen.¹⁹

The audience sees the aftermath of the money shot in the scene of Ruby's murder, the ejaculate on her stomach, yet they don't see the money shot itself, a dynamic that echoes the show's emphasis on zooming out to illustrate the culture that both produces and is shaped by Williams's notion of maximum visibility. Ruby's scream conveys the breadth of her danger and terror, letting the viewer know that they are watching with the purpose of surveilling, and the scene argues for more exposed places of work, showing the threat of the streetwalking industry. At the same time, there are aural pleasures at work here that interact with pornographic knowledge accumulation under the guise of paternalistic surveillance. Quoting Richard Cante and Angelo Restivo, Smith notes that pornographic sound works to "authenticate the pleasure of female performers: female voices serve as 'aural fetishes of the female pleasure we cannot see'... The apparent spontaneity of the female performer's moans and sighs is particularly important in the pornographic quest to represent the female desires that come from 'deep inside.'"²⁰ I argue that Ruby's scream functions in a similar way, as it works to express the truth through sounds that come from "deep inside" her body. In addition, the image of a scantily clad black woman screaming as she is murdered by a white man whom she has just had sex with and who attempts to steal from her engages tropes that are both gendered and raced. Saidiya Hartman²¹ and Fred Moten²² have examined the dangers of reproducing a black female scream that erupts from being beaten by a white slave owner, whereas Carol Clover²³ has written about the horror genre's tendency to punish sexually active women with murder. *The Deuce's* depiction of Ruby's murder provides the viewer with pleasures attendant to these tropes as well as pornographic pleasures coming from knowledge accumulation via the female scream.

The massage parlor, in contrast, is framed as a safer workplace because of its sonic exposure, allowing for acoustic surveillance. The parlor's lack of soundproofing becomes its most notable feature: the show doesn't let us forget it. When one sex worker exclaims, "Three-quarter walls like a fuckin' stable? What am I, a horse?" A manager replies, "It's for your own protection—for when you get in trouble," a comment that seems to justify the assumed audience's surveillance of sex acts, as though the knowledge gained through watching the exploitation and murder of these women somehow protects them.²⁴ Characters tend to comment on the noise and screams frequently ring through the walls when disaster strikes. The show makes clear when a woman is faking an orgasm, rendering these instances

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humorous and allowing the viewer access to her secret. Moreover, moments when she does not fake it inscribe into the scene a truth that echoes Williams's notion of pornographic pleasure obtained through the accumulation of knowledge about how the human body works.

Like the aesthetic focus on Ruby's room and the mechanisms by which she operates her business from within, the show frames knowledge about the system that makes sex work possible as a secret in order to drive the viewer's interest. The first time the viewer sees the parlor in business comes from the perspective of Darlene, which commences in a startlingly long shot as she sits in the room, observing her surroundings. The viewer hears low voices on all sides of her. The partition walls are cheap and white, with long reams of wood dividing them. As she surveys the room in a full shot of her body, the audience sees its contents: a dinky cot with a striped bedspread, a window with a blind, a nightstand with a lamp, a bowl of water, a glass ashtray, and towels. Darlene sighs and wearily sits down on the bed, which is so low her body sinks into it, her knees pointing upward, her arms behind her holding her up, her hands flat behind her on the bed. The audience hears sex around her begin to heat up: squeals and grunts, moans and cries. And then, as the wall begins to rock, the show zooms in to a close-up of Darlene's face before switching to convey her perspective. From the bed, the camera creeps up the opposite wall to a shelf, dimly lit by the lamp below it. The shelf begins to rattle and shake, soon becoming so violent that the contents—a gold box of Kleenex, A Touch of Sweden lotion, Vaseline—threaten to fall off, a visual rendition of the noise. The show then switches back to a close-up of Darlene, who turns, moving her chin upward to gaze at the top right-hand corner of the frame.²⁵

This scene locates knowledge as the instruments that make sex work possible: the lotion, the bowl of water, and the flimsy walls. It also seeks to take the subjectivity of Darlene and share it with the viewer. They see her fatigue. The lack of soundproofing in the parlor mirrors the visibility of the porn set, an examination I will turn to soon. Though the parlor is not as safe as the set—violence still happens—the thin walls act as a kind of security camera; nothing escapes. While in the parlor, two sex workers are beaten when they try to steal money from a john, one sex worker has a panic attack, another overdoses. In contrast to Ruby, all of them are rescued by male surveillers and regulators. These scenes argue for the oversight and regulation of the sex industry. In laying bare the “truth” of the system, and illuminating the effects of a similar exposure on the industry itself, the show suggests that surveillance keeps these women safe. Its emphasis on arguing for a visible system of sex work simultaneously allows the viewer the pleasure of knowledge while keeping them at a safe distance from the system itself.

Porn Production and Consumption

As it represents sex work, *The Deuce* takes care to establish the difference between its audience's view and the watchers of porn through exposing the porn set. Another scene opens with a shot panning around the porn set. The film reel clicks, and the audience's view of the actors is always partially obscured: by the crew, by a director's chair, by a floor-to-ceiling panel. It is a vantage that takes the camera of the porn shoot as a fixture of the scene, as essential as the subjects of the shoot. Although *The Deuce's* audience loses view of the camera for a few seconds in a pan around the set, it always comes back into view; the moving camera capturing the audience's view is rendered in contrast to the scene's stationary one, a difference cast into sharp relief by the dialogue occurring in the scene. During shooting, Eileen exclaims, "No, shit, this is backward! I can see this is backward." When her comment is met with confusion, she explains, "Well, we're telling a story, right? We need Dwayne—we need Dwayne's dick as he takes us into Shana. And we need to be with him, and follow him, as he takes us into her." As she continues to explain, Harvey steps in, and, in a statement that imbues the scene with highbrow aesthetics, says, "Hitchcock Truffaut? You just gave a pretty good explanation of how action dictates camera movement." The audience watches the cameraman move the camera back to behind Shana (Larisa Polonsky) but the porn shoot from the camera's perspective is not visible. The show's viewer receives visual knowledge that it will be shooting the genitals of Shana and Dwayne, but they do not receive access to that view.²⁶

In depictions of porn production and consumption, *The Deuce* harnesses nostalgia, humor, and pornoperformativity to both titillate the viewer and distance them from the implications of watching. The show foregrounds and historicizes the instruments that make sex work possible in order to distance the viewer from the pornographic subject matter. When the audience takes the vantage of a camera lens capturing pornographic material, for example, shots are marked by gridlines to assuage presumed ambivalence about sharing this position (see figure). The show moreover renders mistakes on the porn set humorous in order to ease guilt on the part of the viewer and frame what is occurring as "truthful," in contrast to finished porn films. Here, I will be thinking along the lines of Emily Shelton. In her analysis of the schlubby pornography star Ron Jeremy, Shelton notes that "an utter personification of appetite-run-riot, the funny fat guy uses the spectacle of his body-run-amok to discharge through laughter anxieties about the violence of consumption."²⁷ As she concludes, "pornography has a far more complex relationship to displeasure than is commonly

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The show's viewer watches Lori (Emily Meade) as she acts in a porn film through the camera lens shooting her ("Au Reservoir," Franco, *The Deuce*, 2017).

acknowledged and ... its investment in laughter, as a neutered redirection of anxiety, delivers rich spectatorial rewards."²⁸ Through amplifying historicized instruments, separating the audience's view from the porn viewer's, and mobilizing humor in moments of tension, the show distances the spectator from fraught subject matter, allowing them to watch pornography being made while easing any assumed anxiety.

A scene that shows the shooting of *Little Red* demonstrates the confluence of these conventions. It has clearly been a long day on set, and a head-on medium close-up shows Cindy (Sydney Farley) leaned back, legs spread, dressed in a lacy black bra and matching underwear. She speaks to an entity that appears to be just above her: "I know who you are. They told me to watch out for you. You always come for girls like me." It is clear she is masturbating because her hand moves up and down, but the frame cuts off right where Cindy's crotch would be. Gridlines again mark the shot, a tactic the show frequently employs to indicate that the audience's view is coming from the perspective of the camera shooting the porn film. And yet, the gridlines also separate the audience's viewing position from the viewer of the pornographic film, an attempt to assure the show's viewer that their endeavor is intellectual rather than voyeuristic. In a sonic translation of the gridlines, the film reel clicks, another tactic that renders porn consumption nostalgic and distant from the audience's viewing position. The show's viewer does not see Cindy's genitals, but as they near pornographic material, clicks and gridlines historicize the shot.²⁹

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Both the clicks and the gridlines disappear in the next shot, one that does not titillate like the former. A reverse-shot brings the audience to a medium close-up of Lance (Bill Coyne), dressed as a wolf, peering at Cindy through a window, a gesture toward the scene's voyeuristic fantasy.³⁰ To her, he says, "Does that scare you," before emitting a growl. Next, a switch to a full shot of Cindy from her side shows the camera operators as Eileen directs Lance to enter the room. Next, a close-up of Cindy's face in ecstasy allows the show's audience a moment of titillation without the historicized instruments. As the audience lingers on her, she shrieks in terror, a sonic move characteristic of the show's focus on associating sexual truths with the female scream. In contrast to Ruby's scream, however, this one is clearly rendered as a theatrical performance. Once she screams, a full shot from behind her shows a historicized instrument, in a boom that hangs above her body. Like many instances in the show, the scene's opening is pornographic, with historicized gridlines and sonic clicks to assuage any discomfort. After giving the audience a moment of voyeuristic curiosity, the vantage shifts back to amplify the instruments.³¹

The show cuts to a view of Lance, who looks down on Cindy and says, "Oh little girl, so young, so pretty." Commencing a comedic moment of pornoperformativity, his fake fangs fall out, he grabs them in annoyance, Cindy sighs, and Eileen slams her hand down, calling cut. "And that's scene twelve," her assistant complains. Lance, a divaesque porn star who refers to himself in the third person and whom Eileen ostensibly paid a lot of money to bring on, begins an exchange so ridiculous that it is campy:

LANCE: First of all, fuck the teeth. Let's just do it without dumb props, besides, these caps cost me four grand.

EILEEN: Ever since you came to fuckin' town, all you have done is complain. Cindy has been sittin' here with a fuckin' light meter up her snatch all morning and I haven't heard a peep out of her!

LANCE: Second, this isn't sexy. Third, Lance Minx doesn't need to rape a chick.

EILEEN: No, it's not rape. It's her fantasy, it's gonna be hot! She's gonna be in control!

LARRY: You're the wolf, motherfucker—you've gotta think like a wolf. Should be lookin' at her like you ain't eat in a week and her pussy tastes like porterhouse steak.³²

The exchange is an apt indicator of the show's reliance on humor and pornoperformativity to allow the viewer to indulge in pornographic pleasures and let them off the hook at the same time. Mistakes frequently occur on the porn set, and they are often funny. In one instance, for example, an actress starts complaining during a scene in which Viking ejaculate is sprayed on her face, protesting that it tastes bad. The director says she is

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supposed to look like she enjoys the taste of Viking cum. In response, she proclaims that Viking cum is okay, but not cold Campbell's potato soup squirted out of a baster. The humor and pornoperformativity in these scenes have two functions. First, these mistakes serve as Smith's "break-through out of a performance," which allow the viewer access to a framed "truth," therefore providing pleasures frequently associated with pornography. Second, the humor serves to ease the tension of intense pornographic scenes.

Conclusion

The final shot of *The Deuce's* first season is a prolonged establishing shot of the massage parlor's hallway as Ray Charles' "Careless Love" withers in the background, a song that conveys the longing, nostalgia, and mystery driving the show forward.³³ One of the managers ambles out into the lobby, and as the camera trails backward, doors multiply on both sides of the frame, marking each interval of the hallway. In between each door is a sconce, glowing a golden light. A few seconds later, a woman in a white nightgown slowly enters the frame from behind the camera, slides open one of the doors, and mumbles softly into the room: "You have rubbers?" She turns around, and the audience learns that it is Bernice (Andrea-Rachel Parker), the sex worker who had a panic attack while trying to perform services. She fingers the condoms; her gait is so tired she looks dissociative as she opens her door. "Okay, baby," she says. Her next words are mere murmurs, and the camera continues tracking backward, the light illuminating the system, the number of doors marking how many participate behind them. *The Deuce* promises that the viewer who keeps watching will get to open these doors.

Acknowledgments

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NOTES

1. Minkie Spiro, "Inside the Pretend," *The Deuce* (HBO, November 4, 2018).
2. For more information on the contradictions these allegations bring up when

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considered alongside the show's thematic material, please see Saraiya Sonia, "In Its Second Season, the Deuce Struggles with Its James Franco Problem," *Vanity Fair*, September 7, 2018, <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2018/09/deuce-second-season-james-franco>.

3. Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 30.

4. See, for example, Margaret Talbot, "Stealing Life," *The New Yorker*, October 15, 2007, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/10/22/stealing-life>; Eric Deggans, "Nobody Gets Extra Points for Getting Out of Their Car," *Columbia Journalism Review*, https://www.cjr.org/special_report/david-simon-interview.php/; and Sean Woods, "The Last Word: David Simon on Twitter Trolls, Trump and Making 'The Deuce' in the #MeToo Era," *Rolling Stone* (blog), September 8, 2018, <https://www.rollingstone.com/tv/tv-features/david-simon-interview-deuce-hbo-719397/>.

5. Jeremy Barr, "David Simon Accuses Author of Libel Over Huffington Post Story," POLITICO Media, July 3, 2014, <http://politi.co/1Ugv4dL>.

6. Talbot, "Stealing Life."

7. Ruth Penfold-Mounce, David Beer, and Roger Burrows, "The Wire as Social Science-Fiction?," *Sociology* 45, no. 1 (February 2011): 152, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038510387199>.

8. Sean Woods, "The Last Word."

9. *Ibid.*

10. Williams, *Hard Core*, 48.

11. *Ibid.*, 49.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1: An Introduction*, Reissue edition (New York: Vintage, 1990), 24.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, 33.

16. Michelle MacLaren, "My Name Is Ruby," *The Deuce* (HBO, October 29, 2017).

17. Alan Sepinwall, "'The Deuce' Creators Explain That Stunning Season Finale," *UPROXX* (blog), October 30, 2017, <https://uproxx.com/sepinwall/the-deuce-recap-my-name-is-ruby-review-spoilers-season-finale-david-simon-george-pelecanos-interview/>.

18. MacLaren, "My Name Is Ruby."

19. *Ibid.*

20. Jacob Smith, "Filling the Embarrassment of Silence: Erotic Performance on 'Blue Discs,'" *Film Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (2004): 32, <https://doi.org/10.1525/fq.2004.58.2.26>.

21. Saidiya V Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

22. Fred Moten, "Resistance of the Object: Aunt Hester's Scream," in *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 1–24.

23. Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

24. Roxann Dawson, "Why Me?," *The Deuce* (HBO, October 15, 2017).

25. Dawson, "Why Me?"

26. MacLaren, "My Name Is Ruby."

27. Emily Shelton, "A Star Is Porn: Corpulence, Comedy, and the Homosocial Cult of Adult Film Star Ron Jeremy," *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 17, no. 3 (2002): 119, https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-17-3_51-115.

28. *Ibid.*, 122.

29. Susanna White, "We're All Beasts," *The Deuce* (HBO, October 14, 2018).

30. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (October 1, 1975): 6–18. <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/16.3.6>.

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31. White, "We're All Beasts."
32. *Ibid.*
33. MacLaren, "My Name Is Ruby."

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