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A Matrix of the Sex Trade:

**An analysis of labour relations in prostitution and pornography
in HBO's *The Deuce***

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Abstract

The feminist and sociological debate of prostitution and pornography is an often polarized one. That seeps into the way media represent these practices and the ways these representations are studied. This thesis moves beyond that divisive debate by looking into labour relations and structures of exploitation through a case study of the first season of HBO's *The Deuce*, which is a show about the 1970's sex trade. This thesis also adds to the growing body of literature of television style, using a combination of Butler's style analysis and Mittell's concept of narrative complexity for a dual method approach into the television text. This thesis argues for the importance of style when it comes to analysing television as well as overcoming the dualities of the feminist debate that make complexities of the sex industry invisible, with the aim not only to contribute to the literature of style but assist in the understandings of the sex trade.

The analysis presented here shows the details of the different labour relations that are represented in *The Deuce* and how those relate to issues of abuse, freedom, safety, and drug use in the programme. It also makes clear the exploitation of labour and distribution of surplus in systems that interlock patriarchy, racism and capitalism, with the involvement of the Mafia and the Police for a growth in profits. The representation of pornography in the show also illuminates the differences in commodification and the transition period in the beginning of the Golden Age of pornography. The show also represents pornography as a safe work environment, where the only form of abuse comes from the labour relation between pimps and prostitutes. The use of style complements the narrative by providing a realistic storyworld for the viewer who peeps into the lives of these characters and show an interconnectedness between people and systems which extrapolate the micro understanding and theorization of prostitution as simply female choice and agency.

Keywords: Complex Narrative; Style; Prostitution; Pornography; *The Deuce*

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Introduction

“Welcome to 42nd street,” says the opening credits to *The Deuce*¹(2017). XXX film theatres, signs advertising “Girls”, bright lights and billboards, women approaching cars, police; at the same time an upbeat soul song from 1970 is playing. It prepares the viewer for a journey through time while being able to briefly condense the tone and theme for the show: 1970’s Times Square’s sex industry. *The Deuce* is a drama series that premiered on HBO on August 25th, 2017. It was created by George Pelecanos and David Simon, who were also partners on *The Wire*. The show stars Maggie Gyllenhaal and James Franco, and it “explores the rough-and-tumble world at the pioneering moments of what would become the billion-dollar American sex industry.” (HBO, 2017)

The story begins in 1971 and it is set in New York in the time of a paradigm shift for the sex industry during the rise of legal pornography, or the Golden Age of pornography. The show follows the barkeeps, prostitutes, pimps, cops, and the mafia, that work and operate in Times Square, focusing on the changes and evolutions of the sex-trade through the shift from street to indoor prostitution and the revolutions that stem from the changing laws surrounding pornography.

Producer and actress Maggie Gyllenhaal explains the desire of the show not to deal with morality and instead portray grey areas, which include violence and exploitation (Sandberg, 2017). Creator David Simon states he was interested in showing the creation of an industry (D’Alessandro, 2017). To him, the show does not discuss the morality of prostitution or pornography but rather take it as a fact in society:

Now, if they’re going to exist, where does the money go? What happens to labour? Who profits? [...] On the other hand, if you follow the money and power and you see who’s attrited and who’s exalted, then you have a much more interesting story. (Smith, 2017)

With that in mind, this thesis seeks to examine and explore representations of prostitution and pornography by mainstream media, since mediatic representations of this industry are an important part of how we learn about it (Dunn, 2012; Coy, Wakeling and Garner, 2011; Hallgrimsdottir, Phillips and Benoit, 2006). Critically analysing the representations of prostitution and pornography in *The Deuce*, in a time where the sex industry was radically changing on its way to becoming the multi-billion-dollar phenomenon it is today, can assist in

¹ The Deuce was the nickname for 42nd street until the 1980’s

understanding the evolution of the practice to make sense of its current role in society (Bhattacharya, 2016:83).

As it is noted by Hallgrimsdottir, Phillips and Benoit (2006), the academic interest in both prostitution and pornography has “been focused on understanding how the commodification of women’s bodies, sexualities and sexual labour shapes and is shaped by larger orders of sexual and gender inequality” (Hallgrimsdottir, Phillips and Benoit, 2006: 266), with an increased polarization between those who find it oppressive and those who find it sexually empowering. This focus on the dichotomy of the debate makes invisible the complexities that encompass the institutions of prostitution and pornography. This thesis will, then, contribute to the literature by shifting the focus from agency and empowerment to a discussion on labour and the network of exploitation of the industry.

Multiple studies on the representation of the sex industry exist, but few are focused on television drama or aimed at analysing fictionalised pornography. As such, this research wants to bridge this gap, investigating the representation of both prostitution and pornography in television fiction.

Not only that, this thesis also explores an often relegated aspect of television: style. Research on television frequently puts style as an inferior aspect of the medium, with only a recent effort to delve deeper into an aesthetic examination. This thesis, then, will analyse style alongside the narrative to avoid the disregard of “the text’s integral compositional elements.” (Jacobs and Peacock, 2013: 2)

Aims, Objectives and Structure

In sum, this thesis aims to analyse the representation of the sex trade in HBO’s *The Deuce*, with a focus on the labour relations established by analysing the narrative and style of the show. This research, then, will answer the following research questions:

- How are labour relationships in sex work represented in *The Deuce*?
- In what ways do style and narrative interplay in representing 1970’s sex work in *The Deuce*?

In the first chapter, I begin by explaining how researchers are calling for an exploration of style and briefly explore HBO’s particularities. I also discuss the polarization of the

prostitution and pornography debate, as well as the concepts surrounding sexual labour. In chapter two, I explain the two methods I use for this analysis, as well as how the research process came to be. In chapter three I analyse my data in two sections, which are divided by method. Firstly, within narrative analysis, I cover four subsections: the Labour of Prostitution, Legal Troubles, The Intricacies of the Trade and Pornography. Secondly, for style analysis, I discuss how sound, mirrors and glass doors, characters being used as drivers for the narrative as well as the exceptions engender *The Deuce's* specific style. Lastly, in the final chapter of this thesis, I conclude by summarizing my findings.

Literature Review

This chapter navigates through two main areas of literature. First, it explores how television research can illuminate meanings from its programmes as well as HBO's particularities in producing television. It also reinforces a call for studying formal aspects and the importance of looking into style. Second, it unpacks the debate of prostitution and pornography, while also examining the concept of labour for those practices, and presenting examples of the body of research on representations of the sex trade. Finally, a small summary is presented, positioning this research in relation to the literature.

A Call for Style

Mittell (2015) states that storytelling in television has changed over the years, establishing what he calls "complex TV" (Mittell, 2015: 2-3). He defines it as a creation of "a sustained narrative world, populated by a consistent set of characters who experience a chain of events over time." (Ibid: 10) At the same time, narrative complexity is about aspects of storytelling that are unique to the television format and that move away from traditional episodic and serial forms, which will be further explained in the methods chapter (Ibid: 18).

The emergence of complex television is only possible through

broader concerns of media industries and technologies, creative techniques, and practices of everyday life, all of which resonate deeply with contemporary cultural transformations tied to the emergence of digital media and more interactive forms of communication and entertainment. (Ibid: 53)

These connections that allow for a new form of television also translate to a need to study multiple sides of the circuit of television, such as the technological, commercial, textual,

cultural and everyday practices, for instance (Rocha, 2014: 1084). However, research that embraces the multifaceted television medium requires a web of interdisciplinary scholars, as well as a long time frame and investment (Ibid: 1085). According to Rocha, performing a form analysis is a crucial tool, which helps researchers unravel the ways in which an advertisement can persuade or how a drama can represent the world (Ibid: 1087-1088).

Anderson affirms that television programs can be seen as “cultural symptoms, expressions of profound [...] social meaning.” (Anderson, 2008: 23) In addition, Damico and Quay (2016) argue for how television dramas can “push against the status quo, [...] advocate for social change, [...] or highlight flaws in institutions that govern viewers’ lives.” (Damico and Quay, 2016: x)

Multiple television dramas are widely celebrated, particularly with HBO turning its attention to television as a medium (Ibid: 1). Many researchers agree that HBO is associated with original quality content (McCabe, 2013; Mittell, 2015; Mendes et al, 2010; Leverette, Ott and Buckley, 2008; Santo; 2008; McCabe and Akass, 2008). Authorship is a very important part of the process, with recurrent producers and writers creating and leading shows on HBO (Anderson, 2008: 37). This thesis investigates an example of that, with George Pelecanos and David Simon returning as a team following *The Wire*. HBO provides creative freedom and financial support (McCabe and Akass, 2008: 86-87), as well as a nurturing relationship between executives and creative staff (Edgerton, 2008: 17), for these authors and in turn, they are able to create original content with quality so that HBO can sell more subscriptions (Santo, 2008).

McCabe (2013) suggests that, because HBO sells its series as quality originals, “the auteur as discourse carries important creative meaning and cultural capital that help establish a reputation for a new series.” (McCabe, 2013: 190) Although HBO brings in people who already have established reputations, each HBO show attempts to create its own unique style due to authorship (McCabe and Akass, 2008: 88). Authorship not only serves to sell a program but also to distinguish it from other shows, establishing aesthetic frameworks and expectations (Mittell, 2015: 98). As a result, watching an HBO show can often mean having an “aesthetic disposition”, which is a term Anderson borrows from Bourdieu to state that television can also be viewed as an art form (Anderson, 2008: 24). This thesis builds on this aesthetic disposition to reinforce the importance of bringing style analysis into a research since it is one aspect of television that is under-researched (Rocha, 2014: 1086).

In recent years, the style of television has often been called cinematic, as a means to express its quality (Jacobs and Peacock, 2013; Jaramillo, 2013; Mittell, 2015). However, Jaramillo (2013) critically argues against the use of the word cinematic to describe television. She states that the usage of this expression maintains the idea of a hierarchy between audiovisual products that should not exist. Further, she points out that this comparison prevents researchers from understanding the direction in which the style of television is heading (Jaramillo, 2013: 67). Jacobs and Peacock (2013) make a defence of television style by claiming that “[t]elevision is as capable as film of creating expressive richness in moments that are at once fleeting, demonstrative and dramatically declamatory, climactic, or seemingly inconsequential.” (Jacobs and Peacock, 2013: 6)

Some researchers claim that when studying television the focus has always been on the text or on the programming, and they call for a deeper investigation into television aesthetics (Jacobs and Peacock, 2013; Cardwell, 2013; Jaramillo, 2013). Cardwell (2013) says that, “To situate one’s work within ‘television aesthetics’ is to distinguish that work from those previous approaches. The term takes on a declarative function.” (Cardwell, 2013: 23)

It is important to note that evaluation does take an important part in the study of style and narrative (Cardwell, 2013; Mittell, 2013). Cardwell (2013) claims that the selection of programmes as case studies already have an evaluative aspect to it. At the same time, this evaluative action does not function as a closed interpretation (Cardwell, 2013: 37). Mittell (2013) calls the evaluative critique “a discursive act of persuasion rather than demonstration.” (Mittell, 2013: 46) While Cardwell (2013) affirms that “interpretations and criticisms of any text are up for evaluation, modification and rejection.” (Cardwell, 2013: 38)

This thesis will then add on to the call for style and also look into the narrative complexity, which constitutes the contemporary phenomenon of complex TV, while also keeping in mind the particularities of HBO as a producer, especially when it comes to authorship. Similarly to Mittell (2013) and Cardwell (2013), this thesis does not intend to be the ultimate interpretation of *The Deuce* but present an analysis that builds on previous television research to push the debate forward. In the next section, I will explore the discussion on prostitution and pornography.

Prostitution and Pornography

Prostitution and pornography are often theorised by sociologists and feminists, and most of the time they are focused on one perspective, either negative or positive, about these practices. As McNair (1996) puts it “[m]uch of the existing literature is written from one value-laden perspective or another, adopting a correspondingly dismissive approach to the alternatives.” (McNair, 1996: 7) These opposing perspectives stem from liberal and radical feminism, which disagree on the fundamental notion of what prostitution and pornography are and how these practices correlate to the subjugation of women in society. In this section, I will provide an overview of the differing perspectives, discussing the issue of agency and victimization, as well as issues of labour and neo-liberal exploitation of sex work.

Some scholars believe that women can, and do, have agency within the sex industry, which allows them to view sex work as a regular job, with financial compensation and sexual freedom (McNair, 1996; Concepcion, 1999; Dunn, 2010; Dunn, 2012; and Dunn, 2016). While other researchers view women as victims of the sex industry, which leads to harm for the women involved (Jensen, 1998; Jeffreys, 2009; Coy, Wakeling and Garner, 2011; and Tyler, 2015). It is important to note that Dunn (2010, 2012, 2016) states that, although within her research she encountered women who were empowered and executed their agency through sex work, she understands that this is not the reality for the majority of prostituted women.

Researchers who believe that prostitution and pornography are ways to further oppress women, find the concept of agency problematic, linking it to the notion of “superficial empowerment” (Mendes et al, 2010: 99; Coy, Wakeling and Garner, 2011: 442). Within this concept, individual women become empowered through sex work, or see it as a leisure activity, while doing nothing to change the structure of the demand for sex by men and the power relations that stem from that. This is considered to be a liberal viewpoint, highly connected with neoliberalism and the profitable nature of the sex industry (Jeffreys, 2009).

Carter and Giobbe (2006) affirm that “[l]awyers want to talk about legal theory, sociologists want to talk occupational ideologies and postmodern feminists want to talk about sexual autonomy, free speech and choice. Nobody, it appears, really wants to talk about prostitution.” (Carter and Giobbe, 2006: 18) They believe that prostitution works to grant males sexual access to female bodies, as long as they are able to pay for this right (Ibid: 24). They also see a clear link between working as a prostitute and racism and classism, inasmuch society

economically marginalizes women, specifically poor women and women of colour, through undereducation and job discrimination, ensuring that there is a great number of women who are vulnerable to recruitment in prostitution (Ibid: 24-25). In addition, the authors also discuss work conditions of prostituted women and point out that not only do they have to engage in unwanted sex, sex workers also are subjected to a wide range of sexual abuse as part of the “job description” (Ibid: 27). Jeffreys (2009) also discusses work conditions and states that prostitution does not match the International Labour Organizations ideals of work when it comes to human dignity, security and equity (Jeffreys, 2009: 199).

On the other hand, feminist liberals contest that sexual services are not radically unlike other forms of labour and prostitution could, in fact, provide minority women with advantages, such as more bodily autonomy as well as more control over their working conditions, when compared to other types of employment (Spector, 2006: 7).

When it comes to pornography, some researchers believe that the anti-porn movement exists because feminists take offence over the material that is distributed (McNair, 1996; Nathan, 2007). Nathan, for instance, states that although women may be humiliated in pornography, it is only pretend and that some fantasies in porn may seem disturbing, comparing that to dreaming disturbing things (Nathan, 2007: 35-37). However, she does not take into account that even if pornography is an enactment of fantasy, real women are performing those acts and that is not pretend. Or as Jeffreys (2009) puts it: “Despite the determination of the defenders of pornography to claim that it is speech and fantasy, live girls and women do have their orifices penetrated to produce pornography.” (Jeffreys, 2009: 76) Jensen (1998), then, counter-argues the statement of offense by claiming that feminist critique of pornography does not stem from moralism but from an “analysis of power and harm that focuses on oppression, not offensiveness.” (Jensen, 1998: 5)

Brian McNair takes a positive approach to the sex industry, as well as to the sexualization of culture in general, in his books *Mediated Sex* (1996) and *Striptease Culture* (2002). He affirms that pornography has the possibility of being sexually liberating and progressive for women’s and LGBT rights, but also states that it is contingent on the actual production and content of the pornographic material, meaning that because one particular material is misogynistic and abusive, not all of them lose value. In the same way, Concepcion (1999) believes that having an anti-porn perspective delegitimizes female conceptions of sexuality, as well as holds a belief that all female notions of sexuality would not be co-opted by

the patriarchy (Concepcion, 1999: 98). Atwood (2006), however, states that McNair oversimplifies the sexualization of culture and it “also oversimplifies the ways in which developments in sexual taste, representation and practice may be related to positions of power, particularly in terms of class and gender relations.” (Atwood, 2006: 82-83)

Although McNair (1996) takes a positive stance towards the sex industry and what it can do for the sexuality, desires and fantasies of oppressed user groups, he also makes the connection between sex and power, as well as money and capitalism (McNair, 1996: 173). In *Striptease Culture* (2002), he states that the control of sexuality, i.e., “who has it; what they can do with it; and to whom” has been the foundation of our society, reinforcing systems of oppression where heterosexual men are at the top and women and homosexuals at the bottom (McNair, 2002: 5). He also states that sex is much about money, especially in a capitalist society. This has “nurtured sex industries to rank in size and profitability, if not yet respectability, with the more established and institutionalized sectors of the culture economy such as Hollywood cinema and pop music.” (Ibid: 6)

This link of sexuality, power, control and money is also made by Spector (2006), in which she discusses these issues related to how pornography and prostitution are theorised as two separate things. She notes that the differences in treatment between the two trades make visible how “a person’s identity and freedom of choice are differently affected and implicated by different forms of commodification.” (Spector, 2006: 12)

Tyler (2015), then, argues for a theorisation of pornography as a form of prostitution, inasmuch both are sexual services performed for money. However, some research debates this position, stating that pornography is simply the filming of sexual acts that would already take place (Tyler, 2015). It is important to note that if theorised as prostitution, pornography does still have harms associated with it that are specific to the practice, namely the fact that the product is lasting and can cause perpetual harm. This differentiation between pornography and prostitution can cause legitimization of “forms of prostitution by criticizing some and not others.” (Jeffreys, 2009: 9) To Jeffreys (2009) this distinction stems also from the choice of language used by academic and feminist literature. She affirms that “uses of the language of ‘sex work’ is based upon the premise that it is possible, or even desirable, to make distinctions between various forms of the sex industry [...]” (Ibid: 9).

In this sense, Jeffreys (2009) uses the term “prostituted women” instead of “sex workers”, and calls male buyers “prostitutors” instead of “clients” (Ibid: 9). This active and reflexive choice by Jeffreys puts women into a passive position, where harm is being done to them, and men in an active position, where they are the ones harming the women. In this use of language, some scholars would argue, Jeffreys situates the women in a victim position entirely, removing agency from them. However, she believes that what she calls the sex work position “veer towards a decontextualized individualism of personal choice, which is quite far from the politics of gender, race and class that is at the root of both socialist and radical feminism.” (Ibid: 18)

Labour

Kotiswaran (2011) discusses what she calls middle-ground feminism. For her, this is a group of feminists who want to escape the dichotomy of the sex work debate, “throwing light on more complex normative possibilities in the process.” (Kotiswaran, 2011: 33) The middle ground feminists will:

[support] the rights of sex workers but not the right to sex work; [...] supporting empowering practices of individual sex workers within the sex industry while being against the institution of prostitution itself; [...] and acknowledging the agency of sex workers but interrogating why sex work should be viewed as work. (Ibid: 33)

I do not wish to proclaim myself a middle-ground feminist, but rather take an important idea from Kotiswaran’s discussion, which is the notion that talking about sex worker choice is insufficient; what is important is the labour conditions that are in place, as well as the workings of prostitution as an institution (Ibid: 33). In this sense, the comprehension of labour relations within prostitution is central to this thesis. To achieve this, I will mostly turn to Marxist feminists’ analysis of prostitution, since not only do they analyse the gender side of sex work but also how it fits in the social order of capitalism. In other words, “sex work is critical to an analysis of the lived intersectionality of capitalism and patriarchy in individual and collective lives.” (Beloso, 2012: 50)

Beloso (2012) states that understanding prostitution as harmful to all women ignores the harm we do as participants in the political economy of capitalism. This statement seems to oversimplify the nature of prostitution by conflating the possible harms of the sex trade with the harms of capitalist production since sex work has a gendered nature (Jeffreys, 2009; Kotiswaran, 2011).

Some research discusses the comparisons that are made between prostitution and care work, or domestic work, as well as what that means for an argument of prostitution's usefulness to society (Bhattacharya, 2016; Walkowitz, 2016; Durisin, 2009). Durisin (2009), for instance, makes parallels between sex work and domestic work, especially in regard to migrant workers and women of colour. Bhattacharya (2016) however, points out that even though domestic and care work are very useful in society, they still belong "to the lowest stratum of the service sector so far as working conditions go, even when it is paid for." (Bhattacharya, 2016: 88) This means that even if we theorize prostitution as labour due to its supposed proximity to care and domestic work, we would not be saying much regarding fair and safe working conditions. As Bhattacharya (2016) states, prostitution is not a contract between "free" and "equal" people, which is one of the main conditions of work within capitalist labour relations (Ibid: 86).

Theorizing prostitution from the perspective of the workers in the top ranks, who "may enjoy relative freedom and economic benefits" also negates the reality that those workers are far outnumbered by those who belong to the lower strata, or the "ruined proletariat" (Ibid: 89). Bhattacharya (2016), then, understands prostitution as systemic to capitalism, which adapts itself to social change. As such, it is only possible to understand prostitution's current character and role in society by finding "links with the evolution of social exploitation in general and patriarchy in particular." (Ibid: 83)

Durisin (2009) calls for a theorization of prostitution as sex work because she believes that it would assist women workers in understanding the systemic violence against women that happens in the workplace, and unite them to combat this violence. Her argument is to focus on capitalist relations since she believes that "patriarchy is a part of interlocking system of power that works with capitalism, racism, and colonial histories." (Durisin, 2009: 128) Following that logic, she claims that recognizing sex work as a form of labour leads to an understanding of the conditions of the exchange of labour power, which creates the possibilities for violence and exploitation (Ibid: 130). Durisin believes that solely focusing on the gender side of prostitution removes sex work from the social relations of capitalism. This thesis wishes to avoid this omission. The research conducted here then agrees with Durisin's idea that attempting to fit prostitution in defined boxes of violence or freedom makes the complexities of the sex trade invisible since there is a range of different working conditions possible (Ibid: 129-130).

Van der Veen (2000, 2001) also brings forth the duality and confrontation of the two main discourses that surround prostitution. In her understanding, these "totalizing and

monolithic” views on the sex trade hinder the problematization of different class relations (van der Veen, 2000: 122). The author defines class as “a process of the production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labor” (van der Veen, 2001: 43) and states that “the class aspect of prostitution will also influence how prostitution impacts everything else within the society where it occurs.” (Ibid: 42) Van der Veen also claims that producing a new discourse on the class differences in prostitution could “foster a politics of economic innovation and empowerment.” (Ibid: 123) I do not wish to contend the latter statement however, this thesis will use van der Veen’s understanding of class relations in regard to prostitution in order to analyse how the labour relations in *The Deuce* are represented.

In this type of analysis, context is the underlying cornerstone (van der Veen, 2000: 135). By promoting an antiessentialist analysis, van der Veen reaffirms how prostitution as a commodity is overdetermined by both class and nonclass processes and that any attempt of defining what prostitution “is” is void, since it can vary depending on the different contexts (van der Veen, 2001: 45;48). By focusing on this context-dependency, van der Veen claims that it is possible to recognize “the contributions made on both sides of the debate” (Ibid: 48). This thesis does not desire to be “stuck in the middle” of the debate per se, but in fact bring into light an analysis of class relations to foment a more rounded understanding of prostitution, since “[r]epresentations of prostitution have a profound effect on laws, policies, and social practices, and hence also on the nature of class relations within the sex industry.” (van der Veen, 2000: 137)

It is paramount, then, to provide a definition of the different arrangements of class relations in prostitution, taken from van der Veen’s research (2000, 2001). The first possibility, which is the one radical feminists focus on is that of sexual slavery. “The slave owner may have the prostitute work in a slave class process in which the slave owner sets the terms of the work, appropriates and distributes all of the surplus labor, and spends an amount just large enough to cover the slave's subsistence.” (van der Veen, 2000: 126) The second arrangement is that of capitalist class relation, and it is defined as

a third party (an employer) buys the labor power of the sex worker (employee) and consumes it in the process of producing and selling a commodity to others (clients). The employer pays the employee a wage equal to only a portion of the total value the worker contributes to the enterprise and appropriates and distributes the surplus. Workers may be free to sell their labor power in exchange for a wage and free of feudal or slave obligations to work for any one particular person. But workers may also be subject to supervision and managerial control, may have little control over decision making (e.g.,

regarding prices and earnings), may be vulnerable to speedups (attending to more clients in a shorter period of time) and an intensification of duties (Ibid: 127).

Another alternative is that of feudal class relation, in which a

sex worker may be indebted and under some sort of obligation, oath, or fealty to an agent (or pimp) for a period of time, a situation which may characterize a feudal arrangement. The bonds of obligation may be formed by familial or love commitments, debt obligations, or a status of illegality. The feudal agent sets the terms of the contract, allowing the sex worker to keep a portion of her earnings while the remaining portion is appropriated by the agent. The agent may then distribute some of the surplus for various services to secure the performance of work, such as rent, payoffs to police, and protection for women (Ibid: 131).

The independent form of class relation is one that van der Veen states is often ignored by radical feminists. It consists of self-employment and it is “a class process in which the individual worker both produces and appropriates his or her own surplus labor.” (Ibid: 132) In this type of class relation, the employment can both provide freedom for the worker but also safety problems, since they do not have someone responsible for their well-being (Ibid: 134). I would argue that this type of prostitution is not ignored by radical feminists but that it is interpreted alongside any other type of prostitution. To illustrate, Jeffreys (2009) states that making distinctions between forms of prostitution serves only the purpose of legitimizing it (Jeffreys, 2009: 9). Finally, the communal class relation means the workers “organize and work communally (in a communal class process of producing, appropriating, and distributing surplus labor) or collectively (through unions or other collective associations).” (Ibid: 134)

Representation of Prostitution and Pornography

Similarly to the contrasting theories on the sex trade, there is also an array of analysis of mediated representations of prostitution and pornography. In their article, Coy, Wakeling and Garner (2011) bring examples of representation of prostitution in different popular culture products, such as the film *Moulin Rouge*, two television programs, one comedy, and one drama, as well as the usage of the word “pimp” in reality programs and music. The authors define the ways in which mediated narratives construct prostitution as symbolic violence. (Coy, Wakeling and Garner 2011: 442) The concept of symbolic violence derives from Bourdieu, which the authors understand as “a means of reproducing gendered hierarchies, of reinforcing gender orders that privilege men and masculinity, and casting women as less than human, without coercion or physical force.” (Ibid: 442) They also understand that the glamorization of the sex

industry and equating it with empowerment is a form of symbolic violence towards women that believe they were harmed through prostitution, due to a perpetuation of the stigma of prostitution while it is marketed as glamorous and a marker of choice (Ibid: 446).

Basu and Dutta (in Mendes et al, 2010) provide a postcolonial critique of the representation of children of sex workers on the documentary *Born into Brothels: Calcutta's Red Light Kids*. In their research, they argue that the documentary presents a narrative of hopelessness and sex work as an unwanted reality (Mendes et al, 2010: 100-101). The authors also state that the figure of the filmmaker is presented as that of the white saviour (Ibid: 103). The combination of the above features makes the documentary “[fail] to document the structures of colonialism, class, and patriarchy [in] Third World” countries (Ibid: 104).

Hallgrimsdottir, Phillips and Benoit (2006) analyse the media narratives of the sex industry in Victoria, in Canada, through a 25-year period by comparing media accounts to sex worker’s own self-reports of their lived realities (Hallgrimsdottir, Phillips and Benoit: 266). Their goal was to illuminate the distance between the two and show how the media contribute to constructing and perpetuating the stigma of prostitution (Ibid: 266). The authors conclude that the mediated narratives “place the worker at the margins of society, as the stigmatized other, and direct the moral obligations of the audience in particular ways: abandoning fallen women and rescuing lost girls.” (Ibid: 279)

Dunn (2010, 2012, 2016), on her articles on the reality TV programme *Cathouse*, analyses both the text of the show and the context, being able to perform ethnographic observations and interviews at the brothel Moonlite Bunny Ranch, the location for the reality TV series. She states that “[t]he show constructs a counternarrative of legal prostitution where the women at the Moonlite Bunny Ranch are “sex workers” who feel safe, do not feel the need to be reformed, are amply compensated for their work and even see what they do as a service to the community.” (Dunn, 2012: 345)

However, she observed the perpetuation of power structures, even though the brothel was operating legally, while an individual sex worker could make \$250,000 a year, the brothel, owned by a man, was making the same amount from each sex worker. She brings forward the point that power structures will remain in the Nevada brothel system until women, especially feminists, own the brothels (Ibid: 361). She does not, however, argue for this statement and it seems to be unfounded given the earlier argument of the amount of money the brothel makes

in comparison to the prostitute. Having a woman as an owner would not change the fact that the brothel makes a large profit on the prostitute's labour. What would need to change, in this perspective, is the type of labour relation in place. Another interesting point was how it might benefit this particular brothel to be put under scrutiny from the television attention it gathered, making its owner follow all rules more thoroughly (Dunn, 2010, 2012, 2016). This means that the safety and ample compensation might not occur in other brothels.

Boyle (in Mendes et al, 2010) reinstates the "relentless scrutiny of women's choices and agency" when it comes to the feminist debate (Mendes et al, 2010: 113). She analyses the TV drama *Secret Diary of a Call Girl* from ITV2 and concludes that the show's emphasis on agency and choice puts the focus on a postfeminist individualism (Ibid: 114). The scholar also points out the problem in conflating choice, desire and desirability (Ibid: 114). Ultimately, she affirms that analysing the main character, a study on representation serves the purpose of moving "beyond the figure of the 'call-girl'", while striving to denaturalise the focus on the figure of the prostitute in media accounts of commercial sex (Ibid: 116).

Van der Veen (2000) uses films to exemplify the types of class relations that could happen in prostitution. The film *Eréndira*, by Gabriel Garcia-Marquez, for instance, showcases a feudal class relation. The main character Eréndira burns down her grandmother's house and has to go into prostitution to pay back the debt made, while her grandmother takes care of the business side, advertising and soliciting clients (van der Veen, 2000: 131). To exemplify independent class relations, the researcher discusses the film *Girl 6*, by Spike Lee. Judy, who used to work in a phone sex company, starts the same type of work from home, however, she must provide her own security and deal with administrative issues, such as getting a new unlisted phone. She ends up having to leave town after a client discovers her address and threatens her life (van der Veen, 2000: 134).

Positioning this Research

Following Cardwell (2013), this thesis positions itself within television aesthetics, not because I want to delve deeper into *The Deuce* and analyse it as a work of art or discuss its beauty but because it is important to include style into an analysis of a televisual text, since it is something which is frequently left aside but is integral to the overall understanding of a show (Cardwell, 2013: 23). In this sense, it is also important to reinstate that much like Mittell (2015) and Cardwell (2013), this thesis does not expect to produce a closed interpretation of *The*

Deuce, but rather build on the previous work both by television and feminist scholars to analyse and contribute to the field of research of television and prostitution and pornography.

When it comes to the feminist literature, this thesis wants to avoid the closed and biased interpretations that render complexities invisible and instead, wants to bring these theories together to understand the nuanced representations of a multifaceted institution. Similarly to Kotiswaran's middle ground feminism (Kotiswaran, 2011: 33), this thesis will analyse and interpret the data from different angles, using theories from different ideological stances. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methods and process of this research, followed by the analysis chapter.

Methods

This chapter will explore the methods and process that were put in place when conducting this research. It is divided into three sections. The first two cover narrative analysis and style analysis as methods, while the third goes over each step done throughout this thesis, in an effort of transparency and reflexivity.

Narrative Complexity

This thesis takes its starting point with Jason Mittell's concept of narrative complexity, which can be understood as a narrational mode, that is a set of norms for narrative and comprehension (Mittell, 2015: 17). Television's conventional mode of narration was an episodic format, with plot closure in every episode. With what Mittell calls complex TV, however, narrative techniques assume that a series "builds over time" (Ibid: 18).

For the purposes of this research, a narrative analysis looks for certain narrative aspects that help investigate how the storytelling of a given show takes place. For Mittell, serial narratives are composed of four main elements: storyworld, characters, events and temporality (Ibid: 22). Within the element of events, there are major events, known as kernels, and minor events, known as satellites. Kernels are essential to the continuation of a plot, while satellites are not always necessary to the plot, but add "texture, tone, and character richness" (Ibid:22). Mittell notes that events may sometimes be presented as satellites, but in hindsight prove to be a kernel. Another classification of an event is narrative statement and narrative enigma. The former describes an event that has no ambiguity and raises no other questions than "what next?".

While the latter raises questions about what precisely happened, how the event came to pass and if the event is even real (Ibid: 24-25).

The element of time could also be divided into three subdivisions: story time, discourse time and narration time, or screen time, for a term better suited for film and television (Ibid: 26). Story time is defined as “the timeframe of the diegesis”, that is, the norms of chronology in that storyworld. Discourse time is “the duration of the story [...] within a given narrative”. According to Mittell, discourse time is rarely the same as story time, due to ellipses in between events. Complex narratives often use strategies, such as flashbacks and repeating the same story from a different point of view, to put events in a different order. Finally, screen time is the actual time it takes for a viewer to consume the story. Thinking about traditional forms of viewing television, the screen time is the same for everyone, including the breaks between segments, as well as breaks from one episode to the next. With more modern and technological viewing practices, the breaks are not controlled anymore however, it still takes the same time for all of those who are watching a show (Ibid 26). Screen time is also used as a marker for beginning and end of episodes, with strategies such as recaps, opening sequence, credits and previews of the following episode. These strategies function as “paratexts” that define boundaries and rhythm of each episode, constraining the storytelling to the limits of screen time (Ibid: 27).

One of the main aspects that drives a narrative forward is hypothesizing, of which there are two: curiosity hypothesis and anticipation hypothesis. The former is a backwards-looking hypothesis, that is, a desire to understand and learn more about gaps in the story, or the narrative’s past. The latter, on the other hand, is a forward-looking hypothesis, that usually stems from narrative statements, propelling the viewer to wonder what might happen next. When thinking of watching serial programs, another facet to consider is links that may span across episodes or seasons, as well as intra-episode, which, according to Mittell, “offer dedicated viewers an acknowledgment of, and reward for, their dedication and attention.” (Ibid: 79-80)

Mittell also makes a case for sampling when methodologically necessary. The author analyses the *Veronica Mars* pilot to explain how first episodes are used to teach a viewer how to watch a show. He states that it would be possible to analyse each shot, sound, line for deeper analysis of the storyworld and how the pilot moves it forward, however, he would need an entire book for this type of analysis. Instead, he proposes an analysis that zooms out and observes the

trends and strategies used by the pilot (Ibid: 74). The same strategy will be used in this thesis. An analysis of each shot is out of scope for this type of research and, therefore, sampling will be carried out to exemplify the narrative strategies, as well as style, and their significance for the representation of the sex labour relations present in *The Deuce*.

In summary, when analysing the narrative of a show, one can look for juxtaposition of elements, such as voice-over narration, on-screen text, split screen, sounds; mysteries and enigmas; the presentation of characters and the establishing of relationships; flashbacks or jumps in time, and if these have any stylistic differences to demarcate it; if the show has multiple plotlines, and their division between episodic and serial; and if and how the opening credits are presented. By looking for these aspects in the storytelling, one can see what plot points are recurring and how they connect, as well as how the story arcs present a vision of the overarching themes in the narrative, which is the way the sampling will be done.

According to Mittell, another characteristic of complex television is an invitation to “audiences to engage actively at the level of *form* as well” (Ibid: 52). This call for engagement with form leads to the use of the second method, which is style analysis. In the next section, this method will be further explained.

Style

To analyse *The Deuce*'s style, this thesis relies on Jeremy Butler's method as described in his book *Television Style* (2010). As stated earlier in this dissertation, studies of style in television have often been overlooked (Rocha, 2014; Jacobs and Peacock, 2013; Butler, 2010).

Butler (2010) divides media stylistics into four strains: descriptive, analytic, evaluative and historical. The first strain helps build the others, since “[t]o discuss style, one must first be able to describe it.” (Butler, 2010: 4) The analytic and evaluative stylistics stem from the descriptive since the researcher describes what is relevant, resulting in some form of interpretation or evaluation. Historical stylistic is about describing the evolutions of style and discussing what has caused the change (Ibid: 3). Evaluative and historical stylistics are not relevant for this research, since I do not wish to make an aesthetic evaluation of *The Deuce* nor do I seek to understand how its style shows an evolution of HBO's or television style but rather look for meaning within style that will make the analysis deeper, assisting in the understanding of the sex labour relations in the show.

There are a few options for describing style. Butler discusses the semiotic descriptions done by John Fiske and John Hartley, where they use a verbal shot list, describing framing, camera movement, editing, etc. This description would evolve into an interpretation of aesthetic codes, that also takes into account the broader context. Another possibility of description is that of stylometry, measuring shot-length and shot-scale, angles, point-of-view, etc. For this thesis, I will use the descriptive stylistics proposed by Butler, describing the text with a series of silent, still images, along with a text explaining what is happening in those images, taking into account sound, when relevant, as well. The scholar makes a point that a description's purpose is not to replicate the program, but rather "serve to further the analysis." (Ibid: 11) Hence, at certain points, I will not do a shot by shot description but simply describe the relevant shots, camera angles, sounds and effects that analytically aid the research.

Following a description of style, comes an analysis. Style serves one or more functions in a text. Building from Bordwell's functions of film style, Butler enumerates eight functions for television: four come from Bordwell's work while the other four are specific to television. The first function is to denote, which serve the purpose of describing settings and characters, as well as acting as the introduction of dialogue and action. The second function is to express, which has to do with the feelings the style wishes to elicit. The third function is to symbolize, that is, to create more abstract meaning. The fourth function is to decorate, which is "style for style's sake." (Ibid: 12-13)

According to Butler, these four functions are enough for most studies on television however, it does not take into account certain specificities of television, such as advertisements. The fifth function, then, is to persuade, given the persuasive nature of commercials. Linked to this is the sixth function, to interpellate, which is the style used to catch the viewer's attention. After the viewer has given attention to a given show or clip, style can then be used to differentiate, the seventh function, which is used to make a show stand out from others, make it recognizable. Finally, the eighth function is that of liveness, which can be noticed from a declaration that a show is live to an occasional misframing of a shot.

With the tools presented above, I conducted a style analysis of *The Deuce*, observing the pattern and strategies used by the show to serve as specific functions for the storyworld. In the analysis chapter, I present a sample of scenes, to exemplify these strategies. In the next section, I explain how the analytic process occurred in detail.

Process

The process was divided into four phases: reconnaissance, data gathering, data mapping and analysis. In this section, I will explain how each phase was conducted throughout the research. The very first step for this thesis to move forward was having access to the episodes, which was acquired through the subscription of HBO Nordic's services, making the episodes readily available in their full format at any time.

First, an initial viewing of the whole program was done, for an initial understanding of the show, or the reconnaissance, which allowed me to become familiarized with the characters and plots. This phase was of extreme importance for the design of this research, making me aware of what differentiates *The Deuce* from other types of representations and pinpointing sex labour relations as the objective of this study.

Following the final design and the methods reading, a second viewing was done while simultaneously taking notes on the scenes that were relevant towards answering the research questions proposed. It is important to note that this was done very carefully and slowly, with many pauses and going backwards, to ensure proper understanding of the plot and dialogue, as well as diminish the possibility of missing pertinent visual cues while taking notes. This process resulted in 66 pages of handwritten notes, with descriptions of the plot development, important dialogue, notable camera work, sound, and lighting.

At this point, I created a diagram² of *The Deuce*, including the major characters³, their relationships, changes of labour situation during the show⁴, and the important places for the plot. This diagram made clear the connections and changes that took place throughout the narrative. With that in mind, I read the notes from each episode, trying to find the most important and pertinent plot points. After this, I watched the episodes again, this time with no pauses, finding links and patterns between them, for instance, plots that go through multiple episodes, intra-episode and references, as well as stylistic strategies used repeatedly. When this process was finished, it resulted in four overarching themes that link back to the research objective, that is, to understand how labour relations are represented in sex work in *The Deuce*. The first theme is The Labour of Prostitution, the second is Legal Troubles, the third is Intricacies of the Trade and the final theme is Pornography, which is a separate section for

² Please find a picture of the diagram in Appendix A

³ Please find a list of all major characters in Appendix B

⁴ Please find a brief summary of each episode in Appendix C

analysis not because it is being theorised as a different thing but because it will show the specificities of the practice as well as how the focus of the show begins to change through pornography.

I note, here, that the choice of terms for the themes is not a matter of positioning myself. As stated earlier in this thesis, language is indeed important when it comes to discussing prostitution and pornography (Jeffreys: 2009, 18). However, the decision to use the terms “labour” and “trade” stems from this research’s objectives, rather than an ideological stance. In order to analyse the labour relationships, it is paramount to keep in mind what role each character might play and the encompassing structures, even if the conclusion might be that they are not represented as labour, but oppression. The next chapter will present the analysis.

Analysis

We are introduced to *The Deuce*’s storyworld by an on-screen text, a black background with a typewriter white font telling us the show is set in New York in 1971. This text is juxtaposed with the sound of a train going through the tracks, which continues on after the black background and the on-screen text disappear to give way to a shot of a street. This juxtaposition hints the narrative and sound strategy that will be used throughout the show and will be further discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

In the first episode, Lori meets Ruby and Candy for the first time and talks to them to “get up to speed” since she was just recruited by C.C. She mentions the people she has met at Leon’s diner. This is a natural way for the narrative to reinforce names and characters since Lori is a new person in the pre-existing storyworld that is *The Deuce* and so is the viewer. From the pilot, the audience is introduced to a heavy character list that constitutes the series. The plot is quickly shown not to be about a handful of characters but rather follows what Mittell calls centrifugal complexity (Mittell, 2015: 52). Within centrifugal narratives, the story expands in an outward fashion as the narrative centre is the relationships between characters and institutions, with its narrative richness being “found in the complex web of interconnectivity forged across the social system” (Ibid: 52). This means that what elevates centrifugal narratives is the connection between characters and those characters to larger systems of power and institutions. In this characteristic of *The Deuce*, we can observe the importance of recognizing authorship (McCabe and Akass, 2008: 88), since this is the same type of complex narrative

encountered on *The Wire*, David Simon and George Pelecanos previous collaboration on HBO (Mittell, 2015: 52).

In the storyworld of *The Deuce*, time is shown in a straightforward manner. There are no flashbacks or flashforwards, and there are no repetitions of events to show a differing perspective. The audience is given clues to how much time has passed between episodes through mentions of dates, events and seasons, clothes changing for instance. In the second episode, the viewer knows it is April through an exchange between Ruby and Officer Flanagan. In episode six, it is the holiday season, since people are cold and the police mention Christmas and New Year's. In episode eight, it is June of the following year, which is possible to know through a reference to *Deep Throat*, which will be explained in detail in another section. Although time is presented as straightforward, the narrative complexity lies in the web that is formed through the plots, as well as how there are close to none episodic plots, meaning that almost all presented plots stretch in at least two episodes. In the next section, I will discuss the relations between prostitutes, pimps, police, Mafia and other players through a narrative analysis.⁵

Narrative Analysis

The Labour of Prostitution

Another day, another bunch of dicks – Darlene

Through what the narrative displays, the prostitutes who are pimped are in a feudal class relation (van der Veen, 2000:131). This means that the women are obliged to work for a pimp with bonds of love or debt. The pimps would set the terms for how much money they had to hand in each night and they would, in turn, distribute the surplus accordingly to each prostitute and also use it to pay-off the police. Bernice's arc disturbs this interpretation due to the fact that she is sold to Rodney by Larry. Darlene brings Bernice to New York under the pretence that she would be a model. When getting there, Larry is irritated with the fact that Bernice is not "street ready" and tells Darlene to put her on a bus back. Bernice decides to stay in New York and, although this is her own choice, she has no control over who she is working with since she did not participate in the negotiations done by Larry and Rodney. When Larry

⁵ Before moving on to the rest of the analysis, it is recommended the reading of Appendices A, B and C.

tells her she was with Rodney now, he compared her to a ballplayer, saying they get traded all the time. This comparison cannot hold because the players have some sort of control in accepting the trade as well as get a margin of the deal most of the time. In that sense, Bernice was trafficked and then sold as a slave, however, due to the other characteristics of her labour, it is still, in fact, a feudal class relation that she is in, as explained above.

The advent of the “massage parlour”⁶ disturbs not only the class relations but also how labour is performed. In episode six, the pimps are told they cannot stay at the parlour and in episode seven they all discuss their changed role since the prostitutes move indoors. For the prostitutes, they are still in a feudal class relation but the pimps are no longer the top of the ladder, relinquishing their control and profits to Bobby and the Mafia.

As for the labour, in the first five episodes, the narrative shows the prostitutes approaching johns⁷ constantly, be it the focus of the scene or in the background, it is an ongoing situation. In the parlour, on the other hand, the john comes in and chooses someone as they stand in line. The method for getting clients differs completely, which has implications for the prostitutes and their labour. When they were working on the streets, they could approach any man passing by, trying to convince them to buy sex from them. At the parlour, on the other hand, they were put in a passive position, waiting for a john who already knows he wants to buy sex. This also has limitations for the type of woman that works at the parlour. Ruby, who was overweight and black, for instance, preferred going back to the street even though it could cost her arrests, and ultimately led to her death, because the men who would buy sex from her would not go to the parlour.

Candy, on the other hand, is a prostitute who does not have a pimp. In “Pilot”, we are introduced to Candy in a scene where Rodney is trying to recruit her, saying that it is dangerous to be alone. She then says that, “Nobody makes money off of my pussy but me. I’m gonna keep what I earn. I don’t need you. I don’t need anybody else to hold my fucking money for me.” This line by Candy illuminates the question surrounding the role of the pimp or another agent that takes a percentage from the prostitute’s earnings, a subject which will be further explored in the section “Intricacies of the Trade”. Later on in the same episode, when Lori asks Candy who is her man and Candy says she does not have one, she explains that she has to “work a little harder” and “be a little more careful.” Candy does not reveal to Rodney that she has to put

⁶ Massage parlour is the term used to describe the brothel established by Pipilo and Vincent

⁷ This is the term used to reference males who buy sex

in more effort because she does not want to show him a weakness he can explore in recruiting her. In that way, the narrative does not reveal that to the viewer either, not until Candy is talking to Lori and Ruby, a situation where she is more comfortable with being vulnerable. While she says she does have to work harder, Candy believes that having a pimp would mean someone else making money off her labour power and in fact taking money that she has earned. In that sense, for Candy, a pimp would be someone exploiting her as a labourer, so she establishes an independent class relation, in which she alone is responsible for the production, appropriation and distribution of her surplus (van der Veen, 2000: 132).

Candy's class relation changes, however. Throughout the season the narrative carefully crafts a slow build-up of problems in Candy's work life, which leads to her desire of wanting to quit prostitution. In episode three, named "The Principle is All", a john calls her and tells her he has the clap and she also might have it. In the same episode, a john harasses her for anal, to which she replies he does not have the money. This links to Carter and Giobbe's understanding that as long as men are able to pay, they are granted access to women's bodies and sexuality (Carter and Giobbe, 2006: 24). In "I See Money", it is raining and she decides to work the XXX movies, offering fellatio to men who are there. She is performing oral sex on a john when a rat walks on her. In the same episode, a john dies while she is fellating him and she is heavily mocked by pimps and Frankie and his crew about this fact. In "What Kind of Bad?", she is assaulted by a john, resulting in a massively bruised face. Later on in this episode, Rodney and Candy fight and he reveals to the viewer she has been assaulted multiple times in the discourse time's past. The gradual accumulation of these scenarios makes pornography a way out for Candy, a safe work environment with the possibility for growth, as she becomes closer to Harvey. In fact, by episode eight, she is directing scenes with Harvey. Pornography, for Candy, represents more autonomy (Spector: 2006: 7).

In episode six, Candy learns that there will not be another shoot for a month and worries what she will do about money. Harvey tells her to go back to what she did. She says no. He feels bad for her and gives her the phone number of an agent, Alex, who provides vetted clients while taking a percentage of the earnings. With this new arrangement, Candy works under a class relation that is a mixture of feudal and capitalist. She is free from feudal obligations but has Alex working as an agent. At the same time, the distribution of surplus is in closer proximity to that of a feudal relation. When it comes to pornography, a capitalist class relation is established, where an enterprise appropriates and distributes the surplus and pays the actress in

the form of a wage or contract payout that is only a portion of the value produced (van der Veen, 2000: 127-131). Contrary to what Dunn (2012) states, the fact that Alex is a woman did not change the class relation that Candy was in, meaning that she still had to give up a portion of her money to Alex, as well as be in the same position of possible dangers as she would have been with a male employer in a capitalist class relation, for instance, abuse from johns.

In episode one, Reggie Love and C.C. are central to an intra-episode reference. In their dialogue at the beginning of the episode, Reggie says to C.C.: “You ever really want to have to cut a bitch? Sometimes you want a bitch to think you might, but, pshh, shit.” C.C. nods and smiles but, at the very end of this episode, C.C. cuts Ashley’s armpit and threatens to cut her face because she said she did not want to work in the rain.

This is just one form of abuse and fear that the prostitutes have to live with. In the first episode, we see Darlene being assaulted. Later on, the narrative reveals her assailant was, in fact, a regular john paying to “play rape”. However, he went further than Darlene would have liked, bruising and hurting her, which again exemplifies the access granted due to payment as well as the abuse as part of the job description (Carter and Giobbe, 2006: 24;27). Darlene also seems to live in constant fear of Larry up to the point where she spends a long time with a john and returns with only the amount of money of a regular date. She then tells him “to do what needs doing”, meaning that if Larry needs to beat her, she understands that. In episode five, Candy is assaulted by a john. In episode seven, Melissa is beaten by Reggie Love and in episode eight, Ruby is killed by a john. These instances of abuse illustrate how prostitution is dangerous and oppressive to women (Jeffreys, 2009: 09; Carter and Giobbe, 2006: 27) as well as how it does not present women with dignity, security and equity as a job (Jeffreys, 2009: 199).

Apart from the abuse, the narrative also repeatedly shows the prostitutes doing drugs. When the show first introduces Reggie Love, Melissa and Shay, he gives the women a vial of cocaine to wake “their asses up”, which they both snort. In episode two, Lori snorts cocaine with C.C. Candy is a heavy drinker. Shay is addicted to heroin and has an overdose in episode seven. In that same episode, Bernice has a dissociative episode while with a john and does not understand where she is and what she is doing. The next day, Darlene gives her a bottle of pills that will make her “see nothing” and “feel nothing”. Darlene also advises Bernice to leave because she feels Bernice will die otherwise. The use of drugs links to a need by the prostitutes to have something that helps them deal with their work, or “dissociate from the abuse” (Jeffreys, 2009: 30).

While for feminists discussing the issue of prostitution sex seems to be at the centre, since it is either seen as an oppressive tool or a means for liberation, *The Deuce* treats it differently. The narrative usually skips over the sex between prostitutes and johns unless it serves the purpose of showing things other than the act itself. For instance, when the john Candy is with dies while she is fellating him; or when Melissa and Barbara steal money from their johns. On the other hand, when the plot is presenting the arc on pornography, sex is shown. It is part of the process of making the films, it is shown as something manufactured and heavily directed, which goes against the argument that pornography is filming sex acts that would already take place (Tyler, 2015: 116). For the show, the sex is less important than the structures at hand and how each person plays a part in the overarching institution of prostitution.

In episode two, Loretta is arrested along with many other prostitutes. She and Officer Alston talk over dinner and he asks her why she has not left prostitution. She replies, very ironically, “Oh, shit. You know what? I completely forgot to get an education.” Loretta does not see a way out of prostitution because she believes she is unable to support herself otherwise, due to a lack of proper education, which makes her economically marginalized and vulnerable to staying in prostitution (Carter and Giobbe, 2006: 24-25). Through this scene and episode, the narrative connects the police to prostitution, which will be analysed further in the next section.

Legal Troubles

No-go means go – Officer Flanagan

In episode two, named “Show and Prove”, we see a shot of Officer Flanagan driving a police van and Officer Alston on the passenger seat. We can see some girls in the back of the van. They park it on the street, sounding the siren, as someone yells “Ho patrol”. Loretta tries to run but Officer Flanagan stops her. Officer Alston starts rounding up the women saying, “Ladies, ladies, everyone against the van.” Melissa starts walking and Ruby enters the frame saying “Shit.” The camera shows Rodney and Larry walking up to the van. Officer Alston tells them they want to be shown papers proving that the prostitutes have been arrested in the last 48 hours. Officer Flanagan says, “Show and prove, ladies.” Rodney then says, “You ain't got to show them shit.” To which Flanagan answers “Actually they do, genius”, while moving to the front of the line and pushing Melissa closer to the van, we then hear Rodney: “Ain't you read the Constitution?”

The scene continues with the camera going from showing the pimps, to the officers, to the line of ladies, while we hear all of them speaking throughout. Flanagan tells Ruby she needs to go in, she says she has the paper, he says it is invalid because it is the 31st and the stamp says 28th. Ruby mocks him saying there is no April 31st. She walks away laughing. Flanagan escorts Loretta towards the van and when she is climbing in, he puts his hand on her buttocks.

From the moment the police van appeared on the scene, the prostitutes and the pimps knew what was happening, the viewer, however, did not. Officer Alston's explanation for the showing of the papers acted much more as an instruction for the audience than for the prostitutes. At the same time, the focus of the scene on the prostitutes, even though the pimps were standing beside them and even talking back to the Officers, demonstrates to the viewer that the criminalization of prostitution is one-sided. Finally, the scene could have ended with Ruby walking away after confronting Officer Flanagan, however, it continues with him escorting Loretta and abusing his power position to touch her buttocks, showing another possible instance of abuse in the work life of the prostitute (Carter and Giobbe, 2006: 27).

In episode three, however, no-go zones are established for arrests. This means that no law enforcement official was allowed to make arrests at a determined area around the Deuce. Officer Alston is very intrigued by this fact. In episode six, we are shown Rizzi telling the officers at the 14th precinct that the orders from downtown are to arrest all the prostitutes on every corner and, this time, the pimps are to be included, be it with a charge or by towing their cars. Rizzi says "We're gonna spend the next two weeks making the 14th uninhabitable to the pussy trade." In the same episode, Officer Alston is talking to Sandra about the frequency and scope of the arrests. He says, "other than the Deuce, where do they think all the dirt is gonna go?" Later on, he sees Lieutenant Sweeney talking to pimps from far ahead. He does not hear them but Sweeney is telling the pimps that any offer to put their girls indoors is a good offer. Officer Alston and Officer Flanagan follow Sweeney to the entrance of the parlour. They talk about how there are three parlours in the no-go zone and connect the dots of the police operation that started in episode three and took four whole episodes to finish. As Officer Flanagan says, "No-go means go", in other words, the police play a very important part in shifting the status quo of the sex trade.

The Intricacies of the Trade

*Somebody gonna sell the pussy. Somebody gonna buy the pussy.
We're just landing the cut – Black Frankie*

In one of the first scenes from episode one, “Pilot”, C.C. and Reggie Love are talking at the bus station. They are discussing the war in Vietnam when the camera moves to a steady medium shot behind the two, then a lady moves into frame, walks past them and as she is almost exiting the frame, we hear Reggie Love ask C.C.: “What do you suppose her problem is?” The camera cuts back to show the two pimps. C.C. then answers: “I ain't even know, and I ain't interested.” Reggie Love continues the dialogue:

- You could turn her ass out. I ain't met one yet couldn't be broke.
- No, I'm looking for product, not a challenge.
- You just lazy.
- No, bro, practical.

Here, C.C. and Reggie Love discuss what could be called business tactics in recruiting women. Reggie Love seems to see a possible prostitute in any woman since he believes he could “break” any of them. At the same time, C.C. refers to the prostitutes as products, which negates their position as workers, which means, for C.C., the prostitutes are selling themselves rather than their labour power, which goes against Durisin’s understanding of what the commodification of sex work is (Durisin, 2009: 130). The use of the word “break” by Reggie Love is particularly interesting; he could have chosen “convince” or “recruit” but, instead, chose the word “break”, to mean that if a woman breaks, he has the control in the labour relationship, which goes back to the impossibility of a contract between “free and equal people” in sex work (Bhattacharya, 2016: 86).

Interestingly, viewers who are attentive to details can catch C.C. using the word “break” to refer to a prostitute in episode eight, while talking to Larry. Barbara has been arrested and Larry talks to C.C. about bail and if she would turn on him to get out of jail. Larry says that she would not do that because she is loyal, C.C. then says Larry “broke her good”. Although earlier in the show C.C. seems not to agree with what Reggie Love is saying about breaking a woman, in his talk with Larry, the audience is able to see that, to C.C., women who are broke are a very positive thing, something to be proud of as a pimp.

C.C.'s notion of women as products links to a scene from episode three "The Principle is All", where two other pimps are talking: Larry and Gentle Richie. Larry and Darlene get to the bar and sit at the counter, by where Gentle Richie was sitting. Larry kindly asks Darlene to move further down the counter so he can talk to Richie. Larry then asks if Richie is a communist. Richie then replies:

- I don't know nothing about that, but I don't dig hierarchical oppression, man. I just don't.
- Talking that shit got Rochelle fucked up.
- No, Rochelle's my everything, man.
- She your ho, Richie.
- Yeah, but she controls the means of production, dig?
- Means of... you talking about pussy?
- More or less.

In opposition to C.C., Richie believes the women control the means of production, which goes hand in hand with his thought about hierarchical oppression. That is, to him, he should not exert any type of hierarchical control over the women that work with him. However, he is still the one who is profiting from such labour power. Not only that but he is a white male, while Rochelle is a black female, establishing three different types of hierarchical oppressions in the labour relation between Richie and Rochelle (Beloso, 2012: 62). Larry is put in this scene in direct contrast to Richie since he is someone who holds a tight control over his prostitutes.

As exposed in the previous section, it took some time for Officer Alston to make sense of the big picture, because he did not have access to some important information that the audience had. For the audience, the process began in episode two, when Rudy and Vincent are walking on the Deuce and talking. Rudy tells Vincent that somebody needs to clean that place up, Vincent asks if Rudy has an interest in that area, to which he answers that he is working on something. In episode three, Rudy discusses locations with a lawyer, as well as who to put in the front of the operation with his Mafia boss. Pipilo is told to put someone that is not a part of a Mafia group and no family. This exposition in the narrative points towards Vincent but at the same time makes the audience wonder why it is that it needs to be someone they can pull away from if something goes wrong, hinting that it is possible that a problem will indeed occur in the future. In episode four, Rudy shows a location to Vincent and says it is his future. Up until this

point, the audience still does not know exactly what business Rudy is talking about. An exception to this might be an attentive viewer who likes to connect plot points since the locations discussed with the lawyer matches the no-go zones established in the same episode. The audience is made aware that this new business is a massage parlour, through a discussion between Vincent, Bobby and Frankie in the very first scene of episode five.

In the very beginning of the narrative, the viewer is unsure of how Rudy fits into the sex trade industry since his interactions are only with Vincent regarding Frankie's debt and the Hi-Hat, which creates anticipation hypothesis. His small remark to Vincent in episode two, stating that somebody needs to clean the "human filth" on the Deuce appears to simply be a satellite event, something that shows prejudice on his behalf towards prostitution. However, as the plot moves forward, the audience understands that by "clean the Deuce up" he meant to have a place indoors, where he will take profit from the prostitution that was once on the street, meaning, his remark was a kernel since it pushes the parlour plot forward.

When it comes to profit and payment, the narrative also presents a contrast of events. When the prostitutes first talk about pornography in episode two, Candy makes a remark about the one-time payment to the actors for the films in the loop, or peep, machines: "Every time some guy puts a coin in one of those machines, someone's making money off what you did and you're not making another dime." In episode three, Candy talks to Harvey about the films. Harvey puts her interest down, saying there is no money in films. In episode six, Candy asks Harvey about how he gets paid for the film, if it is by number of sales or percentage of profits, and why is it that the actors do not get any of that. Harvey evades the answer by increasing her pay in 50 dollars. This scene shows Harvey's disinterest in sharing the profits with the actresses.

While this is happening, Frankie and Big Mike are investigating a possible skim operation with the machines. The peep machines belong to Hodas and Rudy allows him to place the machines in some of his stores. For this deal, Pipilo takes a cut from the earnings. Rudy is suspicious that Hodas is not being forthcoming about the profits and wants to settle the situation at that moment because there will be real money in it soon. Later on, we learn that on a good week, the machines pull in 40 thousand dollars. Big Mike and Frankie's investigation leads to Big Mike designing and proposing the "Masturbatorium". This idea substitutes open peep machines for a row of booths with machines inside, making the loop watching more private and more industrialized (Jeffreys, 2009: 3), and hence, more profitable, which links to McNair's (2002) notion that sex is also about money (McNair, 2002: 6). In episode eight, Hodas talks

about income from specific machines to tell what is popular and make films based on that, which would also increase profit margins. In both situations, it is possible to observe an economic innovation, although it serves to only foster the profit margins of the people at the top and it does not trickle down to the prostitutes. This means that although there is creativity, it is not served to empower the women, contrary to van der Veen's expectations (van der Veen, 2000: 123).

Another important aspect in terms of profit is the difference between pimps as individuals and the parlours as an organization. In the first episode, C.C. tells Reggie to get himself a couple of "white bitches and a fine black bitch" since no one pimp can handle more than two or three women. The viewer gets a similar statement from Larry in episode eight, when he says that he did not go for Melissa after Reggie Love's death because "three women is more than enough trouble." This shows that the pimps have a limitation on growth as a business and profit margins because they have to micromanage the prostitutes, since most of them carry intimate relationships with their prostitutes, as well as have to provide protection, payoffs to the police and manage the earnings due to the feudal aspects of the class relation. This is in direct opposition to the parlours, where it is possible to expand with little investment, getting more rooms. This ties in with the capitalist expanse and the industrialization of prostitution, becoming concentrated and increasing in scale (Jeffreys, 2009: 3), as well as the systemic link to capitalism and its adaptation to social change (Bhattacharya, 2016: 83).

Money, more specifically cash, plays an integral part in the storytelling. Throughout the season, the narrative shows the viewer cash. Candy is the only prostitute who is seen counting cash for herself by doing bookkeeping. All other forms of cash counting are delegated to the pimps or Bobby, Frankie and Vincent. This reinforces her independent class relation, as opposed to the other prostitutes who work in a feudal class relation. In the last half of the season, however, we see much less of the money with pimps and much more with Bobby, Frankie and the Mafia, which signifies a power shift in who has control of the money. This shift also has one big component, that of race. All pimps shown on the course of the show are black except for Gentle Richie, who is himself an exception in the way he handles and views prostitution, as already analysed earlier. As a stark contrast, with the advent of the parlours and porn, it is white men who are reaping the most profits from the sex industry, making the pimps into what could be called lower management. This contrast can be understood when analysing prostitution as a

part of patriarchy and, hence, as a system of power that highly connects to capitalism, racism and colonialism (Durisin, 2009: 128).

Pornography

You may now roll the motherfucking camera – C.C.

The differences between the commodification in prostitution and pornography become clear through a scene at the porn set (Spector, 2006: 12). Candy invites Lori for a film when another actress fails to show. Lori goes but does not talk to C.C. first. C.C. then shows up on set. Lori gives him one hundred dollars and C.C. complains that she could have made that same amount in one hour with regular dates and demands another hundred from Harvey, as well as 40 dollars from the actor stating that “you fuck my girl, you pay.” Here, C.C. understands the film as prostitution and the actor as the john. In a way, he has the same interpretation as radical feminists on this subject but the parallel stops there. His view is solely based on the amount of money he is going to earn himself from Lori’s performance, while for radical feminists this understanding comes from the notion that sex is used by males for the subjugation of women in society (Jeffreys, 2009).

Another instance where pornography and prostitution are put to contrast is when Larry tells Darlene she has been invited to do films. She is reluctant to do so because she says that videos are permanent and that in 50 years time they are still going to exist, relating that to the possibility of her having children and grandchildren that might come to view her work. To her, this is part of the ongoing nature of the harm pornography can cause (Tyler, 2015). Despite this, Darlene goes on to do films because she does not enjoy the change to the parlour.

While for Candy pornography was seen as a way out of prostitution, as examined in the first section, and for Darlene an alternative to the disagreeable work at the parlour, Lori seems to take pleasure from it. A loop she filmed is put in a machine at Fat Mooney’s and she goes to watch, becoming extremely happy at seeing herself. She even tells the man next to her to come watch her machine because that film is better than the one he is watching. When he recognizes her, she leaves in triumph. Lori also mentions multiple times that she is experienced in prostitution because she has been doing it since she was 16 and that it is her choice to be pimped. In Lori’s character, it is possible to see agency and enjoyment through sexuality

(McNair, 2002; Concepcion, 1999). However, at the same time, Lori is subjected to abuse, not only from johns when she was working the streets but also from C.C., who has a short temper. In this way, the concept of superficial empowerment is a useful one to describe Lori's situation, where she believes she has agency and seems to take enjoyment from the work she does, while at the same time being subjected to the power relations set by her pimp and johns (Coy, Wakeling and Garner, 2011:442).

A significant reference in the narrative is *Deep Throat*, which helps to close the season off. In "Au Reservoir", Paul's friend tells him about a big hardcore feature that is about to be released. He cannot remember the name but knows it is about a girl who has her clitoris in her throat. This snippet of information would already be enough to reference *Deep Throat*, linking the time of the narrative to the time of the release of the film, which was June 12th, 1972. But in the season finale, Harvey shows Candy an invite to the film premiere, which they attend. At the film premiere, it is possible to spot Hodas and Matty the Horse, as well as Fat Mooney. C.C. and Lori try to enter but they are barred because they do not have an invitation. Although Lori is already working as an actress in pornographic films, she and C.C. are excluded from this milestone event for the industry, which can symbolize the differentiation between the past and future of the sex trade. The inclusion of the premiere in the diegesis of the season finale of the show hints that what is to come will be much more focused on pornography and how the Golden Age will affect the character's lives and trades.

Style

This section explores the style of *The Deuce*. The mise-en-scène of the show presents very low-key lighting and colour schemes, which can be observed from the images in the following sections. The show also strives for authenticity, which can be exemplified by the constant presence of trash in the streets, which is a known fact for 1970's New York (Figure 1). The following analysis brings examples of strategies used throughout season one and that make up *The Deuce*'s unique style.



Figure 1 Example of trash in the streets

Sound

There are multiple stylistic strategies that are recurring throughout *The Deuce*. The most important one is the use of juxtaposed sound. In every episode, the opening and ending credits songs are juxtaposed on whatever scene precedes them. The scene that follows the opening sequence always starts with the sound in a black background following the beginning of the scene. This device is used as a continuity strategy, linking the non-diegetical paratexts that serve to delimit the screen time with the storytelling.

Throughout the season, there are sounds that do not belong to the main narrative, such as screams, horns, prostitutes approaching johns, moaning, fighting, music, and sirens. The only scene not set in New York is when Darlene goes home to North Carolina. While there, she goes outside and talks to Bernice and we hear birds singing and a rooster crowing. The presence of these sounds on this scene serves the purpose to symbolize the stark difference between North Carolina and New York, contrasting it to the ever-present cacophony of the deuce.

It is, in fact, notable how sound is a specificity of *The Deuce* stylistic strategy and signature. Contrary to multiple shows, while the main plot point is developing, the rest of the storyworld is not quiet. There is a recurring presence of car radios, prostitutes approaching johns, people having sex, pimps fighting with prostitutes; while at Leon's we hear other tables talking, orders being shouted to the cook; while at the film set, we can hear Harvey directing or another actress complaining about where the actor is touching her. This use of sound differentiates *The Deuce* from other shows, that is, the rest of the storyworld does not wait for the main narrative to unfold. In fact, these other sounds are often louder than the main narrative.

Things are happening and they will continue to happen around the main characters. It also denotes and expresses the frenzied and hectic environment that is the deuce and the Times Square area. And finally, it symbolizes continuity and interconnectedness, through allowing the viewer to hear other characters voices even though they are not on scene.

Driver for the Narrative

Another strategy often used is that of one character serving as the driver for the narrative. One example of that is a scene from episode four, “I See Money”. Earlier on in the episode, Candy was with a john who died while she was fellating him, she walked out of the room and tells a pimp and a prostitute about it. Now the pimp is at Leon’s, the diner, telling Rodney about it. The camera is on Rodney and it starts to slowly pan to the left, showing that Candy is sitting just one or two stools away from them at the counter. The focus is on Rodney. Rodney looks over at her and checks her out, shifting the focus to Candy. The camera moves to show Candy and she looks over her shoulder to a table where Frankie is sitting, out of focus. The focus changes to Frankie (Figures 2-5).



Figure 2 Candy in the background out of focus



Figure 3 Rodney and Candy, focus changed to Candy



Figure 4 Candy looks at Frankie, who is out of focus



Figure 5 Focus changes to Frankie

The camera then starts to pan right and show that Black Frankie, Big Mike and another man from the bar at the table, are also discussing the john’s death. The camera cuts to the table and shifts back and forth between Frankie and Black Frankie while they talk. The camera goes back to Candy who moves her head away from watching Frankie’s table (Figures 6-7).



Figure 6 Shot of Frankie's table



Figure 7 Shot back to Candy. Frankie out of focus

Then, the camera cuts to show Rodney and the other pimp, calling her. Camera shifts between them making fun of her and her not reacting. Candy starts getting up, we can see Darlene shaking her head behind Candy and in front of her, what appears to be Larry. Candy gets up to show Larry out of focus, he is laughing. He, then, starts slowly clapping, to which Rodney and the other pimp follow. The camera cuts to Frankie's table, where they all start clapping also. Camera shifts to Candy, who is clearly upset. Then, the camera shows everyone getting up and clapping, then back to the same shot of Candy leaning on the counter. She turns to her left side and says, "Fuck you", toward where Rodney is. The camera then, shifts to Rodney and the other pimp, then back to Candy, who chuckles. She starts walking, the camera follows her, and says, "Fuck all of you." The camera continues on her, while she walks past everyone. When she gets to Larry he says, "You impressed everybody, that's all, Candy." Candy leaves and the camera stays in the same place, right outside the door (Figures 8-13).



Figure 8 Candy gets up, revealing Larry



Figure 9 Rodney and Larry clapping



Figure 10 Candy, looking at people clapping at her



Figure 11 Candy leaves, camera pans with her



Figure 12 Shot of Candy as she leaves



Figure 13 Shot of the diner through the glass door

We still hear the pimps talking. Larry says, “She should be proud.” Rodney agrees. We can see Darlene has her head down. Then, the credit song starts playing and the scene cuts to black to start credits.

This scene shows us how Leon’s is a hangout spot for the people who work around 42nd street and the way it was done shows us the connections. It could have been a scene where it simply showed the different groups reacting to the fact that a john died while Candy was fellating him but it chose to use Candy as a hub for the different groups to react, where she looked or how she moved, made way for the narrative, showing the viewer the different groups. This also happens when the camera follows Candy until she is outside Leon’s, where the camera stays and shows that the subject continues, even though Candy has left the scene. To complete this continuity and interconnectedness, the end credit song starts before the credits begin, helping the transition. This scene also symbolizes Candy’s loneliness working without a pimp. The viewer is taken to these different groups, people are sitting together, talking while Candy is alone, which relates to her independent class relation. Connected to the use of Candy as a hub and the loneliness is also an expression of compassion and sorrow towards Candy as a character who is suffering mockery from a tough situation.

Another example is how characters move to show another narrative event that was hidden behind them. In the scene above, this happens when Candy gets up to reveal Larry in the back. In episode four, Abby is in the bathroom and when she moves to get tissues to wipe her hands, it reveals Shay injecting heroin (Figures 14-16).



Figure 14 Abby washing her hands



Figure 15 Abby moving to get tissue...



Figure 16 ...revealing Shay injecting heroin

This stylistic device serves two functions. The first one is to denote, since Abby's placement on the scene, as well as the camera, serve to conceal and reveal a plot point. The second is to symbolize. Apart from revealing a narratively significant situation, it also serves to reinforce the idea that everything and everyone in the Deuce is connected. They frequent the same places, they all know each other and see each other.

The two scenes described above are also an example for the use of mirrors and glass doors, which will be further examined in the next section.

Mirrors and Glass

Multiple scenes use mirrors and glass doors as a stylistic strategy. In the first episode, Vincent is having sex with a waitress when they hear a woman screaming. After the waitress insists, Vincent goes outside to see what it is. The figures 17-28 below describe the scene.



Figure 17 Vincent hears screams

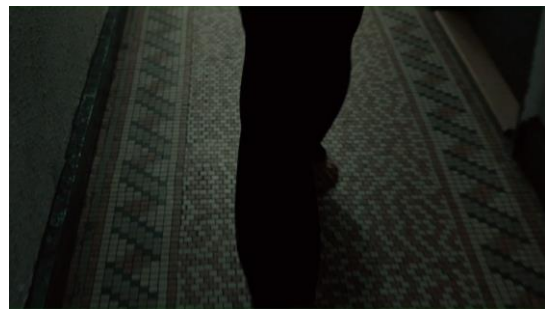


Figure 18 Vincent starts walking towards it

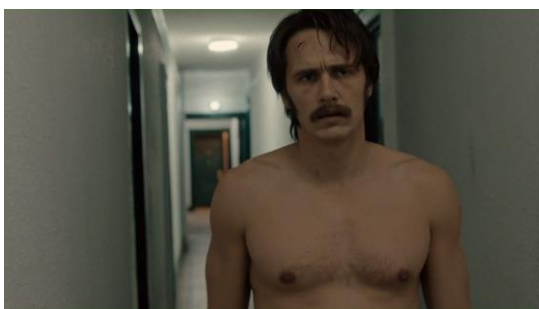


Figure 19 Camera pans up to his upper body

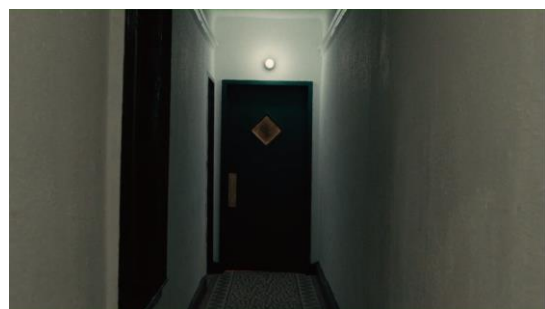


Figure 20 Shot changes to the door

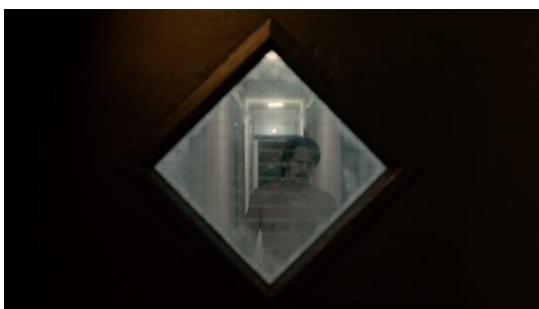


Figure 21 Shot showing Vincent from inside the door



Figure 22 Vincent sees the other side



Figure 23 Camera shows what he is seeing



Figure 24 Back to Vincent's face



Figure 25 He starts walking back



Figure 26 He looks over his shoulder



Figure 27 He gets to his room and looks back again



Figure 28 Shot changes to show C.C. and Ashley

The scene described above denotes the event of C.C. assaulting Ashley, by using Vincent as a way to show the viewer this situation. The glass in the door serves the purpose of allowing Vincent to lead the audience into C.C. cutting Ashley. It symbolizes the viewer peering into this assault, expressing a feeling of discomfort and helplessness that we, as viewers, cannot interfere and assist Ashley in escaping C.C. This scene also acts as a satellite event, building to construct C.C. and Ashley's relationship, ultimately causing her to leave.

Not all scenes that use glass and mirrors serve this purpose, though. Figure 29 shows another example of the use of mirrors. In this scene, Candy is talking to Harvey about payments and profits from the films, while Josie is setting up an actress behind them. While the use of the mirror allows the denotation of the continuity of the scene, where other people are still doing their jobs while Candy and Harvey talk, the fact that the actress is topless also serves a decorative function since her being nude in that situation serves no further narrative purpose.



Figure 29 Candy, Harvey, Josie and actress in the mirror

Exceptions

The pilot, as Mittell notes, sometimes has a few narrative and stylistic differences to the rest of the programme, to serve its educational and inspirational purposes (Mittell, 2015: 56). The pilot of *The Deuce* is no different, especially in terms of style. It is the only episode in which we can view wide shots. These serve the function to denote, demarcating space and time very clearly to the viewer, reinforcing the temporality and locality of the narrative. In figure 30, the wide shot shows the Deuce and its many theatres with pre-Golden Age films. This wide shot not only shows the viewer where the show is set but also emphasises once again the focus on the sex trade. In figure 31, the stress is in the demarcation of space and time. The Twin Towers are shown under construction on the horizon, as a way of showing that the show is set in the early 70's since they were inaugurated in 1973. Both of these shots aide in the comprehension of the show, since it is important for the viewers to “create cognitive maps of the storyworld, [which suggests] the importance of spatial orientation and visual construction in the viewing process.” (Mittell, 2015: 166)



Figure 30 Wide shot of the Deuce



Figure 31 Wide shot of the NYC skyline, showing the Twin Towers in construction

Another exception is the use of slow motion in episode six. This is the only use of this mechanism throughout the entire first season (Figures 32 – 41). Bobby puts on a song on the radio as the parlour opens. He tells Richie to leave. As he begins to leave, the image moves more slowly. The scene cuts to show a big line of prostitutes being taken to the police van, while the song carries on, now non-diegetically. Sandra watches as the prostitutes are being taken away. We then see police, pimps lined up and a tow truck. Shot changes to show C.C. in the line-up and then we see detectives taking the pimp's belongings and throwing them on the ground. After that, the prostitutes arrive and enter the police station, signing up for processing. Finally, the slow motion ends when the shot shows Alston and Larry, returning to its normal speed while they interact.



Figure 32 Shot of Bobby tuning the radio



Figure 33 Gentle Richie leaves and slow motion begins



Figure 34 Line of prostitutes taken to the van



Figure 35 Sandra watching prostitutes



Figure 36 Shot of a tow truck, police and pimps lined up



Figure 37 C.C. in a line-up

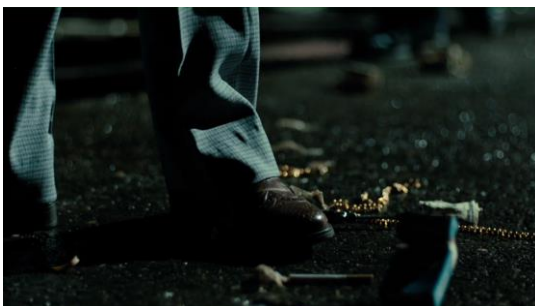


Figure 38 Pimps things thrown on the ground



39 Prostitutes entering the police station



Figure 40 Prostitutes signing in for processing



Figure 41 Alston and Larry as Larry's car is towed

This scene, of course, performs the function to denote the result of the house-cleaning that was instituted earlier on in the episode. The viewers are taken through the new implementations and for the first time seeing pimps also being harassed and having their nights disturbed by the police, which symbolizes how they are not immune and are no longer the top of the ladder of the sex trade. Apart from that, the single use of slow motion in the entire season also serves the purpose of symbolizing something else. This scene signifies changes. The slow-motion is guiding the viewer to an understanding that the status quo does not exist anymore and that we are going to see the structures changing.

In the chapter above, I unpacked the ways in which the narrative expose prostitution and pornography in *The Deuce*'s storyworld and the different perspectives that constitute the whole of the sex trade. I also provided examples of the show's style and how they act together to make up the unique style of the show but also act as symbolic meanings, such as interconnectedness and continuity, for instance. In the following chapter, I will provide my concluding remarks.

Concluding remarks

The purpose of this thesis was to analyse the representation of the labour relations in place in HBO's series *The Deuce*. This was important because much like Kotiswaran (2011) states, discussing choice or agency is insufficient when it comes to the debate on prostitution and pornography (Kotiswaran, 2011: 33). This research contributed to this theoretical discussion, as well as included style analysis, which is an often disregarded method in the literature. Using a combination of narrative and style analysis allowed this thesis to shed light not only on the content of the show but also understand the part that the more formal aspects of television play in telling the story. This was done to answer this thesis's two research questions:

- How are labour relationships in sex work represented in *The Deuce*?
- In what ways do style and narrative interplay in representing 1970's sex work in *The Deuce*?

The Matrix of the Sex Trade

Through the analysis, it is possible to observe that *The Deuce* presents a myriad of different labour relations in prostitution and pornography. Prostitutes that are pimped have a feudal relation with their pimps, having little to no control over their work life (van der Veen, 2000: 131). They are obliged to meet quotas of result and are tightly managed by their pimps, suffering the risks of angering them and being assaulted. The pimps, however, lose some of their control to the parlours. The parlours made the pimps' role unstable by taking over the closer management role while also collecting larger profits.

The move from the streets to indoors also meant a big change for getting dates with johns. The prostitutes had a much more active role in approaching and soliciting prospective clients while men were walking the streets. Whereas at the parlour, they were limited to waiting for johns to enter the establishment. This means that while the parlours mean bigger profit for those who control it, they could mean a more limiting experience for the prostitutes.

Candy is the one character who has three different labour relations throughout the show. She starts with an independent labour relation, moves to a mix of feudal with capitalist relation while working with an agent, Alex, and then gets into a capitalist labour relation while working with pornography (van der Veen, 2000: 127;131-132). For her character, an independent class relation meant freedom from an exploitative relation with pimps. However, after multiple bad situations including a physical assault, she moved on to working with Alex, giving her more safety while relinquishing a portion of her earnings and her status as a free agent. Pornography, on the other hand, was seen as a possible way out for Candy, giving her more control and room to grow as a worker, progressing from being an actress to assisting the directing and the art production.

While pornography was liberating for Candy, it was empowering for Lori, a way for her to express herself sexually (McNair, 1996; Concepcion, 1999; McNair, 2002). Although it is possible to observe agency from both Candy and Lori within the narrative, this is constrained by the other aspects of their labour situation, such as the possibility of abuse by a john or by a pimp, as well as limitations when it comes to profit and distribution of surplus value. The latter occurs since the real money was made by the Mafia, while the actresses made only a small percentage in the form of a flat payment, which does not take into account possible earnings from the peep machines.

Drugs and alcohol are a part of the routine of the prostitutes. They act as a coping mechanism to get on with their labour, which points to a strenuous working routine, with a necessity to escape reality (Jeffreys, 2009: 30). This can be made very clear by Bernice's breakdown and Darlene providing her with pills that will prevent that from happening. "Blackness and nothingness where the john's face should be", says Darlene.

Another important discovery was the fact that undereducation perpetuates abusive labour relations since the prostitutes do not see another possibility than that to work for a pimp through feudal labour relations. This also links to an inequality between prostitutes and pimps when it comes to a labour contract. If a person sees prostitution as their only choice, they are in fact not free to establish proper labour conditions (Bhattacharya, 2016: 86).

On multiple occasions, another feature of the routine of these labour relations is abuse. Not only from johns but also pimps and the police. Interestingly, no abuse was shown during the shootings of pornographic films. However, prostitutes who are still working under a pimp while acting for loops are subjected to abuse as a part of the labour relation established. This means that the show did not represent the pornographic environment as an abusive one, which has implications for the labour of the actresses. Prostitutes who are transitioning from having dates to working in pornography can find a safer and more equal environment in the represented porn industry of *The Deuce*. Nevertheless, there is still an exploitation of labour power by the Mafia when it comes to the surplus distribution.

The police are a part of the everyday working life in the Deuce. Legality is represented as ultimately less important than taking profit from prostitution and, as such, the Mafia is able to establish the parlours. The collusion of the police as an institution and the Mafia was integral to the removal of the prostitutes from the streets. Officer Alston summarizes their involvement, "we pushed them into the parlours." The Mafia, then, works to increase their profits by industrializing and expanding their business. As Bhattacharya (2016) states, prostitution and pornography are adaptable to social change. The innovation of the "Masturbatorium", the investigation of which themes men prefer to watch on the peep machines, as well as the easily expandable model of the parlours ensures that the Mafia controls the sex trade as well as reaps major profits from it. White males are at the top, black males serve as a controlling force in the role of the pimps and females are at the bottom. This structure relates fully to the intersectionality of patriarchy, racism and capitalism (Durisin, 2009: 128; Beloso, 2012: 50).

This research also discusses how the show explores the differences in commodification between prostitution and pornography. While the pornographic industry is still developing, there is a grey area as to which role the prostitutes play. This is evident by C.C.'s desire to be paid for Lori's work not only by the hours but also by the actor because he is having sex with Lori. This transition period, as well as the existence of the pimp, create confusion in what type of labour the prostitute is performing in the film since the bigger picture is still the same: having sex and pretending to like it. The show also considers the possibility of perpetual harm, by Darlene's hesitation of going into pornography. Taking into account the working conditions of the pornographic industry that are represented in *The Deuce*, it makes sense for her as a character to choose a working environment that is safer.

When exploring style, this thesis uncovered the juxtaposition of sound that helps to set the mood and present the Deuce as a living thing, almost like a character. The continuous cacophony and frenzy insert the viewer into a hectic environment, acting as an immersion tool. *The Deuce's* style aims for realism by showing the loud, dirty, messy Deuce and their use of low-key lighting and colour schemes. The other stylistic strategies analysed, such as the use of mirrors and glass as well as characters acting as drivers for the narrative serve the purpose of not only connecting the different plots but also symbolize continuity. These devices provide a sense of looking into the characters, peeping into their lives, much like the peep machines, which also help in expressing feelings to the audience.

Altogether, this thesis exemplified a case study of narrative complexity. It demonstrated how using a narrative analysis can help uncover meanings and illuminate the innerworkings of storytelling to make sense of the story being told and how it represents a social issue. This research also corroborated the importance of analysing style, which is still an aspect of television that is put aside. Furthermore, the combination of the two methods indicated that there is much material to be uncovered from associating methods and moving beyond the belief that television does not have style. Moreover, this thesis also contributed to the discussion on representation of the sex trade, which needs and can move beyond a discussion of choice. From the analysis presented here, a possibility of future research could be analysing another aspect of television as a medium, by looking at the audience and their interpretations and meaning making of prostitution and pornography in *The Deuce*, which could illuminate issues of policy making and regulations for the sex trade. With the release of the second season of the programme, which is currently under production (Littleton, 2018), further research on

representation could prove interesting, to analyse the expansion and modifications of the pornography industry and how the labour relations and systems of exploitation will evolve.

As shown, this research brought to light multiple angles of analysis, seeking to understand how the labour relations are represented and discussed in *The Deuce*. It demonstrated the changing of labour relations, the ever-existing possibility of abuse and assault, the change from active to passive soliciting, the use of drugs as escapism, the racial and sexed hierarchical structure of the industry, and the use of stylistic devices to reinforce those themes as well as assist in inserting the viewer into the expanding storyworld. All of these facets act as a puzzle piece.

In *The Deuce*, everything is connected. The workplaces, the places where people rest, the places where they eat, are all the same. The narrative shows us that and the camera work, positioning of characters and sound follow. The type of labour relation established is not the only important thing when analysing the intricacies of prostitution and pornography of the show. The narrative does not allow the viewer to make fixed conclusions about the labour presented, providing the audience with more and more connections and characters, and showing an evolution of the trade over time. Ultimately, what *The Deuce* presents us with is a complex network, a systemic structure of exploitation, a matrix of the sex trade.

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Appendices
Appendix A – Diagram

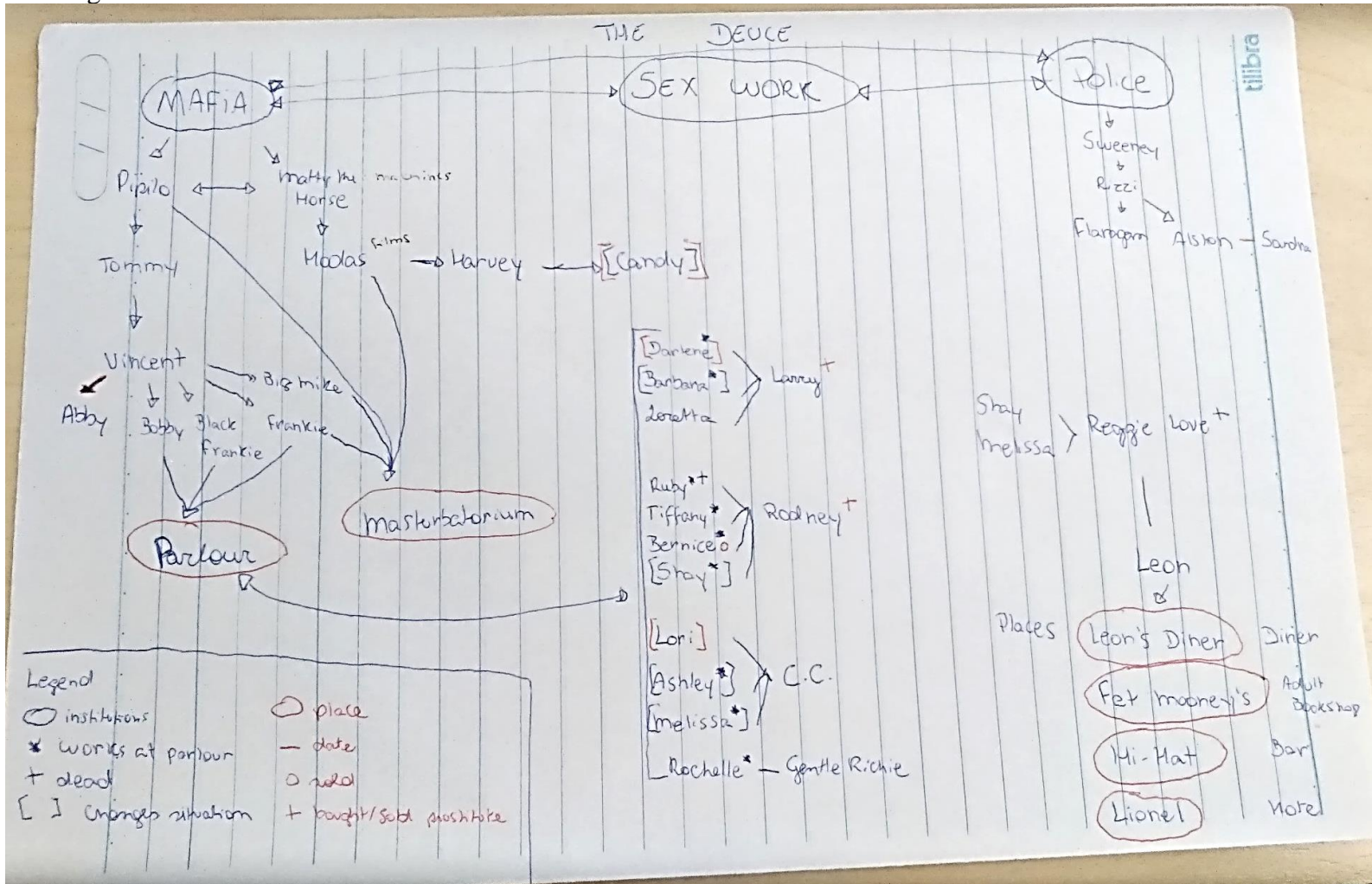


Figure 42 Diagram of characters and places in *The Deuce*

Appendix B – Character List in alphabetical order

Abigail “Abby” Parker – Waitress at the Hi-Hat, ends up dating Vincent, wants to free the prostitutes from the pimps

Ashley – Prostitute pimped by C.C. She goes back home with money Abby gives her

Barbara – Prostitute pimped by Larry Brown, has an affair with Melissa and steals money with her. Larry gets her arrested for drug dealing as payback for the money she kept from him.

Bernice – Prostitute pimped by Rodney. She was recruited by Darlene for Larry Brown but he sold her to Rodney for two thousand and five hundred dollars.

Big Mike – A security guard for the Hi-Hat. Designs the “Masturbatorium”.

Black Frankie – Gunman for Vincent. Ends up working as security at the massage parlour

Bobby Dwyer – Vincent and Frankie’s brother-in-law. After having a heart attack and needing money, asks Vincent to accept Pipilo’s offer to open a massage parlour

C.C. – Pimp; pimped Lori, Ashley and Melissa, after Reggie Love dies.

Chris Alston – Police officer, ends up dating Sandra Washington

Danny Flanagan – Police officer

Darlene – Prostitute pimped by Larry Brown

Eileen “Candy” Merrel – Prostitute, does not have a pimp, ends up working as an art director for porn films

Fat Mooney – Owns a sex book shop. His shop carried the film machines and eventually the “Masturbatorium”

Fran Dwyer – Vincent and Frankie’s sister, married to Bobby

Frankie Martino – Vincent’s twin brother. Gambler, ends up helping Bobby handle the massage parlour and comes up with the “Masturbatorium” with Big Mike

Gentle Richie – Pimp; pimped Rochelle.

Gerald Sweeney – Lieutenant. Asks for a side cut of the massage parlour.

Harvey Wasserman – Pornography director

Larry Brown – Pimp; pimped Barbara, Loretta and Darlene

Leon – Owns the diner where a lot of the characters eat at

Loretta – Prostitute pimped by Larry Brown

Lori – Prostitute pimped by C.C. Wants to go into pornography

Marty Hodas – Responsible for the loop/peep machines and for making the films, acting below
Matty the Horse

Matty the Horse – Mafia player, with the Genovese mafia, responsible for the majority of the
film industry

Melissa – Prostitute pimped by Reggie Love. After he is killed by Leon, goes over to work for
C.C.

Paul Hendrickson – Gay bartender at the Hi-Hat.

Reggie Love – Pimp; pimped Melissa and Shay. Killed by Leon

Rizzi – Desk Sargent

Rochelle – Prostitute pimped by Gentle Richie

Rodney – Pimp; pimped Ruby, Tiffany, Bernice (Ginger) and Shay, after Reggie Love dies.

Ruby “Thunder Thighs” – Prostitute pimped by Rodney. She is killed by a john in the season
finale

Rudy Pipilo – Mobster, is in business with Vincent

Sandra Washington – Journalist who wants to write a story about the prostitutes and the pimps

Shay – Prostitute pimped by Reggie Love. Addicted to heroin

Tiffany – Prostitute pimped by Rodney

Tommy Longo – Works for Rudy Pipilo as an associate

Vincent Martino – Gets in business with Rudy Pipilo to own a bar and accepts the set up of a massage parlour for his brother-in-law Bobby

Appendix C – Brief summary of Episodes

Episode 1 – “Pilot”

Vincent moves out from home into a hotel on the deuce. He is approached by Tommy about his brother Frankie’s debt with Rudy Pipilo. Lori is recruited by C.C.. Ashley gets jealous of Lori and is assaulted by C.C., which Vincent witnesses. Rodney tries to recruit Candy, who does not accept. Darlene has a rough john who likes to role play rape, and one who likes to watch films with her. Larry gets mad at Darlene for taking too long with the second john. Abby gets arrested.

Episode 2 – “Show and Prove”

Police arrest prostitutes who have not been arrested for the past 48 hours. Ashley takes nude pictures with a photographer to try to get porn film roles. Darlene finds out she has a clandestine film shot by a john. Candy fills in for Loretta at a porn film. Rudy and Vincent strike a deal to launder money with Bobby’s help. Rudy offers Vincent a bar. Vincent meets Paul at this bar. Lori gets attacked by a john and C.C. kills him. Abby leaves school.

Episode 3 – “The Principle is All”

After being attacked, Lori is scared to do regular dates, so she works the tunnels. Ruby introduces Candy to Harvey, with whom she tries to get a job behind the camera. He says there’s no film on the camera, but when there is she would get a job. She refuses. Darlene is late again and Larry is angry. Bobby has a heart attack. Sandra starts approaching the prostitutes for a story. Rudy talks to a lawyer about a plan for buildings on the deuce then to another mobster who says not to put any known face on the new business. Abby and Big Mike start working at the Hi-Hat. The police establish a no-go zone.

Episode 4 – “I See Money”

A john dies while Candy is fellating him. Abby talks to Darlene and tries to understand why she is a prostitute. Abby buys Darlene a bus ticket home. Ashley becomes more annoyed with how C.C. gives preferential treatment to Lori. Barbara and Melissa start an affair. Vincent hires

Black Frankie after a fight broke out in the bar. Rudy has another space he wants to give Vincent. Candy meets a man at a music store and goes on a date with him.

Episode 5 – “What Kind of Bad?”

Darlene recruits Bernice by saying she will work as a model in New York. Larry is unsatisfied with Bernice and sells her to Rodney for two thousand and 500 dollars. Pipilo wants Vincent to run a massage parlour. Vincent denies, but later on Bobby tells Vincent he wants to run it. Sandra tries to convince her editor to let her write the story. Candy is assaulted by a john. Rodney and Candy fight when Rodney tries to recruit her after being beaten. Barbara and Melissa rob a john. Alston and Flanagan get an envelope full of cash. Candy goes back to talk to Harvey, who says there's been a change and soon there will be.

Episode 6 – “Why Me?”

Vincent and Bobby try to get the pimps to pay the parlour and put their girls there. They refuse. Candy shoots a film. She tries to talk about the payments the women get. Police start doing “house cleaning”, arresting all prostitutes and, if possible pimps. Pipilo asks Frankie and Big Mike to check the count on the peep machines to make sure Marty Hodas is being straight with him. Tommy helps Vincent get girls to start the parlour. A decision that helps the porn industry is given by a judge. Candy gets Lori on the film but C.C. shows up on set demanding more money. Sweeney tells pimps they should take offers to move their prostitutes indoors. Pimps negotiate with Vincent to put some girls as a trial run. Sweeney asks for a cut of the parlour. Harvey gives Candy another option to work as a prostitute until there is another film to shoot. Darlene is conflicted about doing films. Big Mike designs the Masturbatorium, a line of booths for the peep machines.

Episode 7 – “Au Reservoir”

Ashley runs away from C.C. Abby helps her and gives her money so she can go to her sister's place. Shay has an overdose. Candy has her first upscale date. Paul talks to a friend about a hardcore feature film about a girl who has her clitoris in the throat. Pimps discuss their new role after the parlour. Barbara and Melissa get caught stealing and are expelled from the parlour. Candy helps Lori act better in a film. Bernice has a dissociative episode and Darlene gives her drugs to deal with the job. Melissa arrives bruised at Leon's and Reggie Love is rude to her multiple times in front of Leon. Leon kills Reggie Love.

Episode 8 – “My Name is Ruby”

Masturbatorium is ready. Harvey and Candy talk to Hodas about what type of film is more successful. Melissa goes to work for C.C. and Shay for Rodney. Harvey shows Candy an invitation for a hardcore film premiere. Pipilo shows another location to Bobby, Frankie and Vincent, talking about expanding the parlour. Barbara is arrested for drug trafficking. C.C. meets his old mentor. Darlene is on a film for the first time. Candy directs for the first time, covering for Harvey. Candy and Harvey go to the Deep Throat premiere. C.C. and Lori cannot get in. Ruby gets killed by a john. Abby and Vincent move in together.