THE LAST RITES OF D'ANGELO BARKSDALE: THE LIFE AND AFTERLIFE OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN *THE WIRE*

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> *I can never see or see again in a film certain actors whom I know to be dead without a kind of melancholy: the melancholy of Photography itself.*
>
> —*Roland Barthes,* Camera Lucida[1]

> *Somebody snapping pictures, they got the whole damn thing.*
>
> —*D'Angelo Barksdale,* The Wire[2]

I

In a 2005 public forum celebrating *The Wire* hosted by the Museum of Television & Radio, major figures from the production team and cast gathered to discuss the series and its impact. Cocreators David Simon and Ed Burns, among others, fielded questions from critic Ken Tucker before taking inquiries from the audience. One woman, who introduced herself as a criminal attorney, credited the show's many on-screen and offscreen contributors for their "realistic" elaboration of the investigation process. In the world of *The Wire,* a criminal investigation offers the narrative frame for each season. But, as a caveat to her praise, she offered one targeted counterpoint, a moment in the series in which histrionics seemed to trump authenticity. She highlighted a scene occurring toward the end of the first season, a breakthrough in the series' first sustained case involving the Barksdale drug ring. In this episode, police investigators and a state attorney attempt to turn D'Angelo Barksdale, wayward nephew of kingpin Avon Barksdale, toward testifying against his uncle's syndicate. Throughout the season, as the Barksdales became wary of the case against

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them, they guarded the family business with a violent stance toward potential defectors—including former employees and paid-off witnesses—and, as such, the body count in *The Wire*'s Baltimore spiked. D'Angelo was the investigators' desired mark because he showed hints of compunction regarding the uptick in murders.

In the scene in question, Detectives Jimmy McNulty and Bunk Moreland from the Major Crimes Unit help interrogate D'Angelo in a New Jersey State Police station. They confront him with a litany of crime scene photographs (figures 1–3). On the table are five full letter-sized color prints, each portraying one murder victim at the presumed spot where their body was found. One of these photographs depicts the slumped body of D'Angelo's teenage protégé, Wallace, whose murder in the previous episode was not fully confirmed for D'Angelo until he viewed this image. Here, the investigators look to corroborate their evidence, while D'Angelo's lawyer recoils at the spread of gruesome photographs, and it is the reactions in this scene that the defender in the audience criticizes: all of the characters in the scene are being pushed to a breaking point, so why would the attorney shudder while the others, especially D'Angelo, draw their attention closer to the crime scene photographs? This line of inquiry marks more than an informed fan's critique. It suggests further consideration of one of *The Wire*'s central staging devices: the encounter with printed photographs.

In Simon's response to the audience member's question, he explained the importance of imbuing the scene with some sense of shock:

> There was a lot of movement of those photographs in the scene, it was all very *choreographed,* that the detectives keep pushing [Wallace's photograph] and pushing the other victims into [D'Angelo's] face. And he's being forced to look at that, at the cost. And we needed and wanted, as part of the psychic journey of that scene, for everybody, for his lawyer to display without saying a word, his sense of being outside the human condition as the murders mounted, as the rate of violence became apparent.[3] (emphasis added)

Here Simon implies *choreography*—typically employed to reference the directed movement of dancers and actors—as a heuristic to engage the dynamic presence of still photographic prints in this scene. Whether performers move in unison or as a staggered ensemble, the emphasis on choreography points toward the organization of movement, and thus its choreographers. In opposition to words, the show's producers use these

Figures 1–3. (Clockwise) Crime scene photographs in the New Jersey interrogation of D'Angelo Barksdale (1.13).

photographs to dramatize the actors' portrayal of the limits of the "human condition." Photo historians and visual culture scholars have persuasively argued that individuals construct systems of meaning and historical significance by presenting images in sequence or as particular constellations.[4] In such studies, the efficacy of such assemblages is in part due to the idea that photographs can reflect a "truthful" vision of whatever they depict. Photographs produced as props for a television show can be choreo-

graphed similarly, but such a use epitomizes the tensions inherent to the performance of authenticity in *The Wire*. The authority of these photographs is underwritten by the directed movement of two sets of actors: those on camera who handle the prints and those who play dead in the images. The photographs of the murdered characters are animated by the actors like a dour deck of cards—removed from a manila folder, placed in the middle of the table, flipped upside down, held in hand, stared at, pushed away. The camera's focus paces the characters' visceral or matter-of-fact responses to the images by softly zooming in on the victims' faces for emphasis. As such, the choreography Simon refers to here is layered, occurring within and outside of the frame of this scene. The question remains: Do the producers of *The Wire* want us to trust the effectiveness of the performances in this scene because of or despite the photographic medium?

The Wire is by design both a dramatic and pedagogic work. The series' successes are underwritten in part by the premise of *insider* visual knowledge: information to be attained by both its characters and viewers through each season's investigation.[5] As such, the producers of *The Wire* employ photographs as one recurring device to advance both the story lines and their critical project. They aspire to change the way television is produced and consumed, with the intended outcome an interconnected and multiperspective critical attentiveness to institutional truth claims, as presented to and experienced by its audience. The truth claims dramatized within the series are drawn from the actual War on Drugs in the United States and the fallout at the municipal level from this internecine conflict. As Simon and others from the production team wrote in *Time* of the "unwinnable" drug war at the conclusion of *The Wire,* "If some few episodes of a television entertainment have caused others to reflect on the war zones we have created in our cities and the human beings stranded there, we ask that those people might also consider their conscience . . . remember that the lives being held in the balance aren't fictional."[6] As I argue in this essay, one of the ways the producers of *The Wire* approach their converging instructive and dramatic aims is through a carefully arranged choreography of images—the production, circulation, and movement of still photographs throughout the series. By borrowing and expanding upon Simon's description of this scene, I contend that to assess the producers' critical project one must attend to the directed movement and handling of images throughout the series. In particular, the "presence" of the dead of the show is made possible and meaningful through the traffic in photographs during the investigative process, even after the actors who appear in them leave the official cast. *The Wire*'s producers choreograph the movement of

these prop photographs for the characters within the show as a means to impart lessons in critical thinking to the audience, who encounter the same photographs but in the larger frame of the series.

The effectiveness of the lessons in critical thinking hinges on the viewer's ability to consider the show's produced photographs simultaneously through their fictional (on-screen) and actual (offscreen) referents. As such, *The Wire* remains somewhat skeptical of photographic truth claims, even as the show's producers consistently employ the medium to enable their dramatized critique. The peculiar duality of police photographs on the show as pieces of evidence *and* memorial images highlights and tests the limits of *The Wire*'s lesson in reading photographs. To fully consider the producers of *The Wire*'s use of photography is to understand the importance placed on directed movement occurring behind the scenes and on screen; this also means recognizing how photographs assist those who know, alternately, how to embrace their authority effectively and also when to let go of them.

D'Angelo is a paradigmatic figure in thinking through how *The Wire* explores the choreography of photographs. Beyond just the aforementioned scene, the character of D'Angelo (played impressively by Larry Gilliard Jr.) is clearly mediated through photographs, of him or in his possession, both in life and after his eventual death. The development of D'Angelo as a character depends on photographic corroboration, whether we imagine "his" photographs in *The Wire* at the point of capture, circulation, later retrieval, or even as fugitive images referenced but left outside the visual frame of the show. (The same logic applies to photographs involved with police casework in *The Wire*.) But, throughout, photographs serve a series of doubled purposes: as pieces of evidence and sentimental prompts; as powerful signs of humanity and reminders of criminality and death; as guarantors of institutional truth claims and emblems of fabrication and coercion. These strange couplings signal the possibilities and predicaments that arise when we encounter allusions to or representations of photographs within popular cultural forms such as television, cinema, or popular music, especially in relation to police investigations. In this essay, after first considering the framing of photographs within the medium of television, I follow D'Angelo's and the Major Crimes Unit's overlapping photographic subplots: the pursuit of mastery over images throughout D'Angelo's life and death, and then the choreography of his postmortem return. In each instance, I examine the ubiquity and importance of photography in the series to underscore the idea that D'Angelo ultimately cannot let go of photographs, and to explore to what evidentiary and memorial ends the show also refuses to fully let go of him.

II

The use of photographic props is itself common across nearly all of serial television and popular cinema. Alongside grainy flashbacks or backward-minded narration, producers often employ photographic images to furnish scenes with an "instant history," to register the existence of extraneous, but germane, visual information to a plot. As opposed to other alternatives, inserting a photograph into a scene need not disrupt the flow of the program, because an image can be implanted within the general environment of a set. One role of the production team is to coordinate the art department and the actors to obtain existing prints for on-screen use (a picture of the actor as a child, for example) or to shoot new ones that would believably fit within a scene. It is common within popular media to see photographs of characters depicted in adjacent contexts serving the purpose of offering a visual link to an imagined but plausible past. That past need not be a distant one, but must occur at some point prior to the "now" of the scene. The grammar of televised photographic prints is always in the past tense. Even as new digital photographic technologies emerge on and off screen, the allusion to or presence of printed (and transmitted) photographs still holds sway as convincing links to a related past adjacent to the narrative.

The sense of the printed photograph as containing historical information is connected to what Roland Barthes calls its *evidential force,* the notion that as a material entity "its testimony bears not on the object [that a photograph depicts] but on time."[7] Time is the measure of an image's credibility. (As Barthes emphasizes, its intended registers are both sentimental and historical. The encounter with a photographic print can provoke sadness or nostalgia for those who mourn the past, or a sense of reliability for those who aim to "ratify what it represents."[8]) Crime shows, whether fictionalized or reality based, especially rely upon carefully constructed photographic props such as mug shots, crime scene photos, and autopsy reports to corroborate their own plot aims. This is also the situation with shows that put a premium on high-tech forensic technologies and surveillance footage.[9] Images allow access to the remote past of the "cold case" and validate the real time of state-of-the-art police work. This sense of corroboration is true of *The Wire,* as well, but its photographs serve as more than illustrative props: meaning and plot development stem from the characters' persistent and active handling of camera equipment, film, and photographic prints throughout the series. Whether it's the emphasis of the sound of the shutter and freeze-frame of the viewfinder during rooftop surveillance, or the reappearance of particular photographs

over several episodes or seasons, *The Wire* disrupts the normative crime show time lines by exposing the relationship between the production and the circulation of images. *The Wire*'s photographs are imagined and encountered in a range of contexts: at the point of the picture being taken, within the context of archival retrieval, or at the scene of designed photographic displays by its characters. In doing so, they blur the line between photography's historical value and its subjective framing.[10]

If *The Wire* renders the burdened and unwieldy transition of a city and its citizens toward a globalized postindustrial era, it also explores photography's own evolution from analog imaging to digital reproduction. In each case, *The Wire* is cautious about valuing progress if it is at the cost of ignoring the instructive powers of the past. In both personal and political contexts, the series demonstrates the anxiety or tumult that arises from a lack of retrospection. Photographs on *The Wire* act metonymically to mark the uneven flows of time. The name of the series itself suggests the complicated nature of wiretapping emergent mobile technologies, but also airs the apprehension and attention toward the disappearance of materially grounded communication in a digital age, whether it is hardwired landline or the photographic negative. By staging the emergence of new photographic technologies in *The Wire* (namely, digital cameras, digital photo alteration, and mobile camera phones) as the series advances, its producers dramatize their misgivings about the idea of progress and the complications that arise from these presumed photographic upgrades. But one way *The Wire*'s producers and characters manage the passing of time is through the extensive deployment of traditional photographic equipment and prints throughout the series. The fact that photographs-as-props are embedded within the medium of a television show intensifies the producers' challenges to the narrative of progress. By placing photographs in the foreground, *The Wire* reminds us to *look back*. In the case of photographs that reappear within the series itself, the practice of looking back is not just a matter of principle but also is a visual motif of the show. One of the biggest critical payoffs and most looming ingrown challenges of *The Wire* is learning how to discern the series' multiple frames.

For more than 150 years, viewers have assessed both the historical and emotional value of photography. To think of its power, along the lines of Simon's formulation of being beyond words, is to envision the print as a space of extralingual interaction. Rather than elevating photography or separating it from other systems of meaning, photo historian John Tagg suggests the evidential force of photography was substantiated in the nineteenth century through a consolidation of its discursive meanings and a disciplining of its uses in institutional contexts. The criminal investigation

has been one paradigmatic apparatus to explore the uses of and ambivalence over photography's evidentiary value.[11] It is common understanding that a photograph is both indexical and iconic, a trace of the past and something that (merely) resembles it. Tagg, in more recent work, confronts the problematic of photography through an attention to the ways images are *framed*—"the elaborate visual, verbal, spatial, and temporal interplay of its larger machineries of staging."[12] Tagg also employs the notion of choreography in his approach to framing: to shift emphasis from the subject/object depicted in a photograph to the "subject of photographic seeing." In this way he suggests how we are implicitly directed to each encounter with a photographic image, whether in an art gallery or courtroom or elsewhere, to make sense of its meaning or truth by losing our awareness of its frames:

> The photograph has us hanging . . . [We say,] "I know it is only an image, but all the same" . . . somewhere in the murky violence at the edge of the shadow cast by the frame, we lose our sense of the photograph as a material thing. . . . Meaning prevaricates between two worlds. Their impossible juncture is masked by the invisible thickness of the frame . . . [T]his is power's persistent *alibi*.[13]

To intervene at the level of framing, the subject of photographic seeing must be able to simultaneously behold the image and the frames subordinated in its display or uses: to see its evidential force as necessarily being produced and upheld in this encounter. Tagg thinks we should reorient the potential outcomes of such encounters, whether as viewers of photographs or viewers of these meetings. He suggests the "viewer, image, [and] context" stand together, to break their "limited fields of play," to share in observation "where the machinery of scopic capture falters and the fetishism of the image no longer suffices."[14]

Through their own choreography, the producers of *The Wire* balance the singular depicted subject of each image with the idea that there are multiple perspectives of viewing. They do so by highlighting photographs as a copopulating element within the show's broader visual landscape. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin highlight this practice as remediation—the inclusion or subordination of one older medium into the service of another emergent one—as a means to bridge distances between viewer and content, "to put the viewer in the same space as the objects viewed."[15] This space is constructed through techniques of production, functioning through an "immediacy and hypermediacy" of forms. The critical success

of such a work occurs on the level of interaction made possible between forms "in which older media refashion themselves . . . to answer challenges of new media," even as they attempt to engage, transcend, or erase their antecedents.[16] The staging of remediated photographs offers the opportunity to sponsor seeing from overlaid perspectives in order to address the built-in distances between the show's constituencies.

To extend from Tagg's formulation, embedding photographs within another mediated work is also a way to differently choreograph the typical encounter with visual images: by taking them out of the viewer's hands or own direct field of vision and placing them in a shared area of observation with characters in the show. *The Wire* operates under this imperative of interplay, with one caveat: the most effective interchanges occur during the police investigation through its Major Crimes Unit's detectives. Others on the show, in particular those who are perpetrators of criminal activity, also turn to images or employ knowledge about photography. But *The Wire* ultimately construes their efforts as misguided and renders these figures' attempts to harness photographs ineffectual by means of expert-level investigation. What does it mean to confer police investigators on this show, already granted the power of the law, the authority of the photograph? D'Angelo's photographic subplots in particular demonstrate the complicated outcomes of this predicament. D'Angelo may be *The Wire*'s character whose own humanity and mortality is most dramatized through photographs, even while imprisoned and in death. This is in contrast to the Major Crimes detectives, who pursue an agenda most grounded in mastery over photographs, at times in spite of him.

III

The police department is the central institution explored throughout the series, and its success is far from a given. Each season includes an effort by Major Crimes to substantiate and successfully carry out a wiretap against a criminal target embedded within another institutional setting—the drug trade, labor unions, city electoral politics, schools, and the news media, respectively—despite department protocol. Photographs continually support and corroborate this process, and help map the expansive edges of the investigation. The need for mastery over photographic images, though, yields the detectives the critical skills to both revisit neglected crime scenes and eye its overlooked boundaries. The crime scene is the studied domain of these particular police detectives and therefore the site from which the show offers its broader institutional critiques. As the Major Crimes detec-

tives (including McNulty, Moreland, Lester Freamon, and Shakima "Kima" Greggs) hone their craft, we as viewers gain much of our own plot knowledge and critical acumen through their investigations. Photographs become one way to personalize and expedite this practice for these detectives and the show's audience. It makes sense that *The Wire*'s most adept investigators, and thus critical thinkers, wield cameras and folders full of prints.

Beyond *The Wire,* modern urban police work has evolved through a reliance on photography in pursuing evidentiary truths. Allan Sekula locates the social uses of photography in the late nineteenth century in relation to the efforts to "professionalize and standardize police and penal procedures." Photography was employed in this context as "a silence that silences," a form of incorruptible evidence that exceeded and "unmasked" the assumed duplicity of oral testimony of society's criminal class. In other words, proponents of the disciplinary uses of photography operated under the presumption that *people may lie but photographs tell the truth.* Sekula notes that garnering photographic evidence of a crime required evaluating photographs of the faces and bodies of potential suspects. One's social or criminal status was in part read through and produced by conventions of portraiture, which was a genre of photography also used during the same period to produce a "ceremonial presentation of the bourgeois self."[17] As such, the photographic portrait helped produce the criminal class and the bourgeois self, and in both instances operated "honorifically and repressively." Those in control of either set of images were determined to find the proper placement for the individuals pictured in a broadening public archive.[18]

The Wire's forging of a particular photographic practice also joins the sentimental and instrumental uses of images by finding uses for both new and repurposed photographs in pursuit of criminal targets. What seems to separate *The Wire*'s Major Crimes detectives from the rest of the police department on the show is their ability to locate their targets out of the opaque corners and corridors of the city's underworld—either through their own camera work, their access to photographic holdings in the municipal system, or their own access to private archives. Together, these photographs are used to identify, implicate, and then link suspected criminals to their criminal networks and to connect the story lines of each season. In the process, these detectives come to appreciate the shrewdness of the criminals' elusiveness and the craft of their own pursuits.[19]

There are at least two spaces in particular in which the encounters with photographs are choreographed toward achieving an interplay between the actors and viewers. In these spaces, viewers are encouraged to identify

with the characters by sharing with them particular photographic vantage points. The first is in the *viewfinder of a camera.* Throughout the series, we are invited to see as the operator of a camera sees. This occurs when the directorial camera is replaced with the vantage of an often black-and-white telephoto viewfinder, presumably held by one of the detectives as they attempt to focus on their surveillance targets. The viewfinder becomes an oft-visited shared space of observation for the investigators and the show's viewers alike. Clarity in these scenes, as is the case with manual focus photography, can be attained only when its operator adjusts the lens to attain the sharpest vision of its subject and then snaps a photograph. The legitimacy of the frame of the viewfinder (made even more solemn as it is oft displayed in black and white) is also confirmed in the pause that occurs at the moment of capture. That this is the only mechanism to make the show's own flow of time halt accentuates the camera's power. The notion that the viewfinder offers a credible sight line is underwritten by our seeing the detectives handle their cameras and adjust their lenses in the same scenes. The process of snapping a photograph is confirmed by many of the staged surveillance shots, or scenes like them, that end up as prints to be handled or displayed by the detectives in subsequent scenes.[20]

The second shared space, the *police bulletin board,* mounted on a reversible easel, is another investigative device used throughout all five seasons. This is one of the intended sites for surveillance photographs, as well as a host of other images, mostly supplied by police department, Department of Motor Vehicles, and social service records. The board exemplifies the process of building a case and the mapping of the series' criminal networks. Its amenable surface allows for variation, as well as the rewards of tacking and tracing the criminal ties. When the investigation builds, photographs are used to emblematize and link its targets. Pieces of paper bearing additional information such as a suspect's birth date, aliases, family relations, and criminal status are overlaid with the photographs on the board. The detectives gather close or wheel the board toward them when meeting about casework. Almost every scene set in a police facility has one, and, like the viewfinder, its legitimacy is established in the detective's ongoing adjustment and buildup of board materials. The casework mapping on the board culminates when the investigation ends. In these instances, viewers see that the tacked photographs go into storage and the bulletin board is cleared. The mapping of images on the bulletin board serves a purpose beyond that of providing viewers with an easy-to-follow visual representation, though it helpfully supplies that. These cycles of investigative construction and disassembly play out each season metonymically as investigators interact with and adjust the photographs on the

board. The snapping of photographs through the viewfinder and alternately displaying of them on the bulletin board connects the imperatives to locate criminals at the scenes of their crimes and then artfully study their movements and associations. The placement of photographs in places of display highlights the adjoining creative and critical contours of the investigation. The board becomes a site to behold.

The Barksdale crew is largely shown to be wary of photographs of all kinds, especially those that could be used to substantiate legal truths. The management of photographic images becomes a necessary cost of doing business. D'Angelo at first follows in his family's aversion to photographs. He is found not guilty in a murder trial that concludes in the first episode after one witness recants her initial identification of D'Angelo, as initialed on a mug-shot photo array after being paid off by the Barksdales. Once regaining a post in the family business following his acquittal, D'Angelo admonishes his underlings for the way they conduct business by failing to divide the different components of each drug sale. D'Angelo warns his subordinates, "Somebody snapping pictures, they got the whole damn thing" (1.1).

Despite his initial insights, D'Angelo is ultimately presented as emotional and reactive, especially when around photographs. The interplay between recognition and misrecognition drives many of *The Wire*'s uses of photography. In turn, D'Angelo's fate is determined in part through several dangerous misreadings of images, scenes in which he is choreographed with photographs in his hands. Photographs offer him temporary refuge from the world around him, but ultimately lead him to betray his best interests. For example, when detained for two hours regarding the death of a witness, William Gant, D'Angelo resists giving an official statement to Detectives McNulty and Moreland. But after fabricating a sympathetic story about the victim, the detectives succeed in breaking his composure with the use of a photograph as a central prop. In addition to a yellow pad of paper and pen, they hand D'Angelo a framed picture. In the picture are three young, smiling children, posed as though in a commercial Sears-style studio portrait. These are Gant's orphaned kids, Moreland tells him. They urge D'Angelo to write them a letter. Though he pushes the framed photograph away with his left hand, he at first doesn't let go of it, maintaining his hold (figure 4). D'Angelo then concedes, as he chokes on tears and writes a letter of apology to these children. As we later learn, the kids were not the murder victim's, but were Moreland's own. He had grabbed the frame from his desk to confirm a sympathetic story they concocted about Gant. The detective successfully leveraged the photograph's evidentiary and memorializing functions, which were made possible by More-

land's own imagined personal display at his desk. D'Angelo's lack of focus, and his trust in this framed photograph, ultimately led him to betray his own legal interests[21] (1.2).

If Moreland's framed portrait piques D'Angelo's sense of remorse, it might be because D'Angelo's own photographs on the show resemble such a familial display. D'Angelo is not the only character whose living or work spaces are furnished with personal photographs. Photographs are displayed on the desks of the most hostile bureaucrats and the cozy walls of

Figures 4–6. (4, top) D'Angelo Barksdale holds onto a frame during an interrogation in Baltimore (1.2). (5, bottom left) A photograph of D'Angelo's son is displayed on the refrigerator in his apartment (1.10). (6, bottom right) In his prison cell, D'Angelo holds a framed picture of his son (2.6).

drug mavens. But his domestic spaces on the show are clearly demarcated by photographs—primarily studio portraits or snapshots with his girlfriend Donette and their infant son Tyrell. While in the game, photographs litter his apartment. Prominently displayed on side tables and on the refrigerator (figure 5), they periodically become the focus of conversation or the camera's gaze. In his apartment, his accumulation of worldly possessions (including his abundantly stocked wardrobe and comfortably furnished apartment) includes his numerous photographic displays. Collectively, they symbolize the spoils of excess and illicit power that D'Angelo is unable to fully enjoy. In seeing the portraits, we are to imagine the time it took D'Angelo to arrange, sit for, frame, and later admire his pictures—and we are to view this ultimately as a restrictive and misguided luxury.[22]

As D'Angelo struggles with existential angst and the constraints of his own criminal genealogy, the presence of family photographs around him dramatizes his own desire to escape his circumstances, both in and out of prison. In his apartment, they taunt his desire to live differently from the life role his family business has provided him. While locked up after being found guilty of drug trafficking in season 2, family photographs in his jail cell mark his separation from his support system outside. The display of these photographs constructs his cell as an analogous space to his apartment—a false haven adorned with portrait images that also symbolize his limited options for independence. In prison, D'Angelo attempts to protect family interests but gains freedom and space from them. (His uncle's right hand, Stringer Bell, had arranged for a hit man to kill the recalcitrant D'Angelo in jail and to make it look like a suicide.) Even as tensions subsist with his uncle and mother, his family arranges for special considerations. He gets a coveted job working in the prison library. In his cell, he has a small personal collection of books, a Discman, and a supply of personal toiletries. Framed photographs of Donette and his son also endow this scene. For a brief period in prison, he seems to come to terms with the distance from his family and takes solace in it. In one of his final scenes, after telling family members just that, he holds a framed photograph of his son. The directorial camera pans over his entire cell before settling on D'Angelo with the framed photograph in his hands. The photograph had been shown on his refrigerator in the previous season (figures 5 and 6). At first we only see his fingers pressing on the photograph's surface. D'Angelo runs his thumbs over the frame and then we see him put the picture back on the shelf. His final moments are spent trying to move forward. Ultimately, he is moored to his circumstances. Soon after, in one of his last living moments, while discussing *The Great Gatsby* in a prison reading group, D'Angelo says, "The past is always with us. . . . it's like you can

change up, right, you can say you somebody new, you can give yourself a whole new story, but what came first is who you really are and what happened before is what really happened" (2.6). D'Angelo's place within and with photographs affirms this outlook. The presence of family photographs in each of D'Angelo's private living spaces underscores his challenge to create a new life for himself. His desires to "start over" are hampered by his inability to reject and relinquish the images that tether him to a life from which he could not escape.

Whether it is snapping photographs of properly executed surveillance or procuring images from an unwieldy and ever-expansive public archive, *The Wire* constructs a sense of police work that relies upon a mastery of photographic practices. D'Angelo, too, uses his own insights and finds solace in images. But, ultimately, the detectives strive to master photography's uses, whereas D'Angelo falls prey to his inability to let go of them. If the producers construct D'Angelo's character in part for us by showing how he makes use of and interacts with photographs, the circumstances of his death emphasize the struggles he faced while alive. D'Angelo is strangled from behind, with his murder displayed graphically to viewers. The directorial camera offers a painful close-up of his face as he loses oxygen and crumbles to the ground. The unnamed perpetrator, arranged by Bell, stages the scene as though D'Angelo hanged himself in a stockroom in the prison library, one of his other places of refuge within the prison. Not until the next season do we learn that there were no photographs taken of the crime scene.

IV

Detective McNulty has difficulty letting go of unfinished casework. In the show's third season, and presumably months after his unit initially moved on from the Barksdale case, he finds himself incensed by the police's inability to completely dismantle the Barksdale organization. One late evening, after the brass has gone home, he spills the contents of a brown file box and scatters the spilled folders until he finds several photographs. He hones in on (and the directorial camera reiterates this with a soft zoom) two images in particular that have already been shown in previous seasons—the crime scene photograph of the murdered Wallace and a color surveillance snapshot of D'Angelo. McNulty does not yet know that D'Angelo has been killed. He stuffs this photograph of D'Angelo in his rear pants pocket and walks out the door. His possession of this photo will lead him to the unexplored details of D'Angelo's death and ultimately a

refreshed case against the Barksdales. When asked by a fellow officer why he was poring through these old files, McNulty responds, "If you don't look at what you did before, you do the same shit all over" (3.1).

In the audio commentary accompanying the third season's DVD release, series creator Simon and producer Nina Noble discuss this scene. Seeing the recurrence of the two fallen characters through photographs, Simon notes, "If you are watching *The Wire,* you have to go back and watch every episode five or six or seven times." Noble responds, "Right, because any character could come back at any time . . . even the ones who are dead." Ending this exchange, Simon adds, "They can come back in photograph form, and you don't know who they are looking at. Everything connects, it all matters . . . [W]e try to teach and yet they don't understand" (3.1 commentary).

The "they" of Simon's formulation here refers to any of the other detectives who would question McNulty's need to return to old files, as well as any viewers who would ignore the instructive value in the producers' referencing the show's past and bringing back characters from the dead. Understanding, again, is a form of critical insider visual knowledge, a vehicle for revisiting the show's past as a way to overcome the roadblocks of the present for both its investigators and its viewers. But this understanding is also about developing patience and a varying perspective for both groups in order to see what new discoveries can be gleaned from steady inquiry. If a critical understanding springs in part from the ability to read photographs, the continuity of certain images throughout the series signals another facet of *The Wire*'s image praxis: photographs of deceased characters prompt new narrative action, as well as exercises in critical thinking. Such photographs become guarantors of an afterlife for both the characters and the photographs, often for the purpose of addressing the blind spots of police investigation and revisiting the former crime scenes for new truths. But how do the dead fare as postmortem witnesses, especially when their deaths remain unsolved? The afterlife imagined through the photographs in *The Wire* enables the show's critical investigatory praxis to proceed while attempting to reserve space to remember its own dead.

To jointly investigate and memorialize, however, *The Wire* must contend with the show's own uneven logic in regard to representing death. Death is inevitable for those in the game, especially for those who attempt to subvert its boundaries and logics in order to find another way, but certain characters continue to occupy important roles within the series once they are gone. We are told at once that there are no "special dead" (as one character, Duquan, says later in the series), but nonetheless ghosts haunt, and images and stories about the dead continually occupy esteemed places

within the show. So in this sense the deceased serve an important role from beyond the grave when they reappear in photographic form, sometimes seasons after they had been extinguished. They help bridge the show's own layered temporal stances between the past and moments of supposed progress. The murdered characters are played by the same actors who previously animated such roles, and photographs of them in life and death may appear in tandem. In the staged repetition of these photographs, we understand again the peculiar duality of such images—toward furthering investigative work and to memorialize the show's dead—and the complications involved in this liminal pairing.

The detectives in Major Crimes employ crime scene and autopsy photographs to revisit unsolved cases. McNulty is their embattled hotshot investigator. His casework often arises not from what is assigned to him, but from what cases he is moved to pursue. Photographs in several instances compel his work because he trusts their indexical value often over or alongside other forms of testimony.[23] An investigator, as we are told, is only as good as his or her informants. Yet the spoken evidence these informants offer may be circumstantial, coded, or lacking legal credibility. Witnesses bend truths, recant, and operate for personal gain. Forensic evidence is discredited, as well, in the series—not for its scientific value per se, but because the department is too cash-strapped to use it in a timely or trustworthy manner. Photographs grant McNulty and these detectives a more direct access *back* to their crime scenes. In particular moments in the series, through a mix of cognitive and emotional forces, the detectives are offered their best leads by alternately turning to and then transcending the evidentiary value of photographs.

It is not merely the detectives' access to the archive but the mobility and the opportunity to parlay photographs in their case files in various settings that serve their work. Throughout the series, the detectives wield folders of photographs, along with other details of the crime, from their offices back to the crime scenes to find closure on cases. In each instance, another investigator outside the Major Crimes Unit had failed to find evidence either at, or in the photographs of, a scene of a crime. As such, the new detective needs to employ a critical and portable rereading of the images, bringing them back to the original scene of the crime, often in a file folder, this time without the distractions of other investigators or the actual corpse itself. The detectives refer to this as going back with "soft eyes," or returning to the "start" of a case by letting go of preconceptions. However, to do so, they use crime scene photographs, which already links any new discoveries to old photographic evidence.

Early in the series, McNulty and Moreland, armed with folders from cases related to the Barksdale killing of witnesses, revisit a series of crime scenes. In an apartment once occupied by murdered Deidre Kresson, they reenvision the crime scene through the photographs, laying them across the kitchen floor where Kresson was found shot, to trace where her corpse was actually found. In this scene, deliberation through dialogue is replaced by a persistent utterance of the word "fuck" from each man, as each subsequent layer of understanding is revealed through profane epiphany. Again at the margins of verbal communication, several additional photographs are included in their process; these, however, are not from the initial crime scene. One is a school-style wallet-sized color portrait of Kresson, postcard sized, which Moreland holds in his hand. The other is a full-page autopsy photograph laid on the kitchen counter. Rather than being excluded as sentimental or irrelevant, these alternate photographs become part of the crime scene's photographic display. Eventually, Moreland and McNulty solve the case when they happen upon a visual pun in one photograph—traces of spilled milk—and find a bullet lodged in the refrigerator[24] (1.4). This case is only later fully corroborated for McNulty and Moreland in D'Angelo's New Jersey interrogation scene, in which they hear D'Angelo's version of events after they present him with the photograph of Kresson's corpse.

D'Angelo is once again a key figure in *The Wire*'s use of afterlife images. Yet, in his death, the choreography of his photographs mostly elegizes his eventual absence on the series. After his death, D'Angelo's image is first presented as fugitive or forgotten. His likeness is absent from the scene of his death and then his own funeral. Instead, a carnation-laid likeness of the 221 Fremont high-rise project tower he once commanded as a drug lieutenant is meant to symbolize the family's loss, though it more fully represents the family's endangered drug-trade real estate. At the wake at his mother Brianna Barksdale's home, her bedroom is shown with framed photographs by the door, but the camera does not present them with focus or clarity; instead, it is a box of tissues that she holds close. Not until McNulty retrieves D'Angelo's photograph at the beginning of the following season does the deceased character fully reenter the world of *The Wire*.[25]

McNulty's access to these images leads him back to fresh leads and provides an emotional impetus to pursue a new case against the Barksdales. Without the assistance of crime scene photographs—after all, there was no "crime scene" because his death was ruled a suicide—McNulty locates D'Angelo's autopsy photographs instead. Each photograph takes up a half of a letter-sized page. They are printed in color and feature close-ups of

the strangulation marks on D'Angelo's neck. McNulty brings D'Angelo's file first to the coroner. After establishing the medical possibility that D'Angelo was strangled, McNulty holds onto the manila folder full of autopsy photographs throughout the season on his own accord and without approval from his commanding officers. Like the photograph of D'Angelo stuffed in his pocket at the onset of the season, these photographs become McNulty's provenance. After McNulty has corroborated his hunches with the medical examiner, he makes a trip to Jessup Prison, where he is escorted by guards to the small storage room in which D'Angelo was killed. He attempts to reenact the scene with the help of the autopsy photographs and coroner's report, as well as the belt found around D'Angelo's neck that remained in evidence holdings. The guards look on in muted distress as McNulty acts out D'Angelo's death on himself. When McNulty realizes it would have been impossible for D'Angelo to hang himself in the position in which he was found, McNulty's findings confirm what viewers already know: D'Angelo was murdered. McNulty later totes this folder to meetings with various local and state investigators, as well as one with Donette in the apartment she inherited from D'Angelo. But he is neither able to alter the official findings of D'Angelo's death nor sway anyone toward fully sharing his concern. Moreland even reminds him of the cold protocol of police department politics: "We should be having less murders, not more" (3.3).

McNulty's attempts to reconvene the case seemed to be ineffective until he finally hears from D'Angelo's mother, Brianna. Though her exact role within the family organization remains vague in the series, she clearly is shown to be a key player in managing its assets and interests. When D'Angelo was initially imprisoned, she urged him to resist testifying, despite her anger that his uncle Avon put her son in harm's way. After D'Angelo's death, her guilt over doing so was exacerbated by her grief, as she breaks from the code of silence to speak with McNulty. When the detective enters an empty conference room at department headquarters to meet with her, he immediately tosses two manila folders on the table. He doesn't open them at first, but, as Brianna starts to walk away from the meeting, he reveals their contents: first, a black-and-white mug shot of D'Angelo and then the autopsy photographs and the coroner's report (figures 7–9). McNulty tells her that D'Angelo did not commit suicide but was strangled, and his death was likely covered up. Brianna looks across to the far side of the table where McNulty is standing and then casts her eyes downward toward the photographs (figure 9). The images seem to corroborate for her McNulty's claim. McNulty never directs attention or pushes the photographs toward Brianna, as he does with the others he

Figures 7–9. (Clockwise) Detective McNulty meets with Brianna Barksdale to discuss the murder of her son D'Angelo (3.8).

shows the file. Instead, they weigh heavy on McNulty's end of the table. "I kinda liked your son, you know," McNulty says. "All things considered, he was a pretty decent kid. And it grinds me that no one ever spoke up for him. Seems to me that nobody ever will" (3.8). He shuffles one of the autopsy photographs and then packs his folder up and walks out of the room. Brianna stands in place, shivering with tears streaming down her cheek, and says nothing.

Following this scene, the case against the Barksdales resumes and ultimately reaches culmination with the downfall of the syndicate. After this meeting, upon Brianna's suspicion that someone in the organization had planned her son's murder, Bell ultimately admits his own responsibility for the murder to Avon. A series of further betrayals spiral from there: Avon lies to his sister Brianna, who demands the truth about D'Angelo's death; Bell tips off the police about Avon's weapons cache; and Avon leads assassins Omar Little and Brother Mouzone to Bell. But what becomes the imagined fate of D'Angelo's photographs? The images of D'Angelo disappear presumably back into the institutional archive where they were previously stored. For Brianna, her access to these photographs is fleeting and complicated. Her brief but out-of-reach access to both the mug-shot and autopsy photographs dramatizes and ultimately reinforces D'Angelo's absence. They offer evidence that her son did not take his own life, a solace that pales against his absence and her complicity in his death.

If photographs mark the shared space of interaction of investigation and viewers' critical thinking, this is also a space where *The Wire*'s own frame becomes important to discern. Returning to John Tagg's formulation, "Somewhere in the murky violence at the edge of the shadow cast by the frame, we lose our sense of the photograph as a material thing."[26] How does *The Wire,* then, remind us that its photographs are at once not "material things" but produced within the context of the show as authentic-looking material props *and* are their own pieces of constructed evidence that frame the series in reference to the "murky violence" of the actual drug war? How are we to make sense of the authentic performances and production effects of the series against the knowledge of the drug war's real-life fallen casualties and incarcerated millions? Evaluating the drama of *The Wire* and the violent conditions that underwrite its narrative remains one of the most demanding tasks of viewership. The presence of photographs of the dead both facilitates and complicates the challenges of watching the show. These photographs that represent the show's internal past also represent the present—our present—for us in the audience. The on-screen appearance of printed photographs necessarily evokes both melancholic longing and the evidential trust compelled through encounters with the medium, even with the knowledge that they are produced objects. If we follow the path of D'Angelo's photographs, we are reminded again that D'Angelo is absent and estranged from the show, leading us to memorialize a character while potentially considering the lessons behind the producers' choreography of the D'Angelo's postmortem return. But in the process, if we fail to look for "the edge of the shadow cast by the frame" of *The Wire,* marked by the effects of production and the directed move-

ment of "trustworthy" photographic props, we may be less equipped to put the lessons of *The Wire* to use outside of the frame of the series.

For detectives like McNulty, the search for the truth, even if case by case, often occurs through a triumph over, and in spite of, images. But even as exceptional, critical, iconoclastic, and at times rogue police investigators, they still serve at the pleasure of the state and its power to construct burdens of truth. As such, artistry and authority become entangled. In a series full of ineffective or compromised institutional labor, these narratives of investigative success not only rely on produced reality effects of photography, but also trade in the notion that a detective's instinct can be corroborated through a prowess in photographic production, collection, and staging. There remains a one-sided efficacy in such choreography of police photographs. The postmortem photographs used by the detectives as portals to the past become the only way we are to imagine photographs aiding the work of characters in the series. The task of effectively employing photographs for pursuits beyond the investigation remains underassigned and unmapped.

V

In the opening montage of *The Wire*'s fifth and final season, D'Angelo's image reemerges. At the beginning of each episode, he is featured alongside a grouping of other "lost" characters, those either murdered or incarcerated in previous seasons. Photographs of D'Angelo, Wallace, longshoreman Frank Sobotka, and corner lieutenant Bodie Broadus—all murdered in *The Wire*'s past—appear, along with a square mug shot of Avon and a picture of fellow incarcerated hit man Wee-Bey Brice.[27] In seeing the flicker of D'Angelo's image across the screen, pulled from the scene in which McNulty scours through cases files, we recall how photographs appear and reappear throughout the series. Such images may conjure only a fleeting reminder of the show's old cases, but as with much of the choreography of the show they also signify toward some sort of memorial end. In showing these photographs at the beginning of each episode of the final season, *The Wire* reminds us, repeatedly, of D'Angelo's assertion that "the past is always with us."

The opening montage here seems to emphasize the relation between photographs and memory in the final run of the series. Photographs return in this season as a central plot point that powerfully pushes *The Wire* toward its close. But, in its final season's plot, the producers offer new conceptualizations of photography, again through directed movement. Here,

we are made more aware about the potential manipulation of photographs, due to the emergence of new digital editing and transmission technologies. In this season, Major Crimes detectives McNulty and Freamon fabricate a serial killer targeting the city's homeless by at first faking strangulation of several already dead-on-arrival corpses, tying red ribbons around their wrists, and subsequently snapping camera-phone photographs of a sleeping homeless man with the same detail. (After provoking a citywide dragnet, they avoid suspicion by leaving corpses alone, and instead promise, "No more bodies, just pictures" [5.6].) The detectives concoct this scheme to garner department resources to bust an actual murderer: drug honcho Marlo Stanfield. The possibilities and fears surrounding new photographic technology undergird this plot, as does the idea again that a mastery over photographs is an advanced investigative technique. (To add another layer, Stanfield's crew uses mysterious camera-phone pictures of clock faces to plot business deals, and the detectives need more time to break their code.) In the image world of the fifth season, it is the power to create and control the flow of images, even deliberately fabricated ones, that seems both schizophrenic and pragmatic.

An understanding of *The Wire*'s photographic praxis is again laid bare here through the spectacle of images of death. Even if this time the series' producers are more self-reflexive by letting us know McNulty and Freamon have also fabricated the "serial killer's" camera-phone pictures, the detectives' tactics do lead to some investigative closure on the Stanfield murder cases. Thus, the producers recertify the idea that there is a truth to be pursued through the encounter with photographs, a truth that closely relates to the art of police work and the afterlife testimony of the dead. For the criminal, a particular investment in photographs again ultimately becomes a trap. Even with new technologies, the outcomes remain the same: the authority of the investigation is again corroborated by photographic evidence. *The Wire* advances the idea that photographs can be choreographed to fleetingly access the past to take refuge or be empowered in its frames. This itself is an achievement of the show. But as D'Angelo's fate and the investigative outcomes suggest, the ability to employ photographs in the service of critical thinking hinges on two competing imperatives that we are left to imagine beyond the scope of an investigation: how to grab hold of photographs masterfully and at the same time know when to let them go.

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NOTES

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1. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982), 79.
2. *The Wire: The Complete Series* (New York: HBO Video, 2008), season 1, episode 1: "The Target," dir. Clark Johnson (i.e., 1.1), DVD. Similarly, all subsequent citations from the series in text refer in the same form to season and episode.
3. "Q&A with David Simon and Creative Team," *The Wire: The Complete Third Season* (New York: HBO Video, 2006), DVD.
4. For select examples of such work see: Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1989); Deborah Willis, ed., *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography* (New York: New Press, 1994); Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism,* Cultural Studies of the United States series (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Anthony W. Lee, *Picturing Chinatown: Art and Orientalism in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture,* John Hope Franklin Center Book series (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); and Sara Blair, *Harlem Crossroads: Black Writers and the Photograph in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).
5. David Simon suggests in his introduction to Rafael Alvarez's *"The Wire": Truth Be Told* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), "The show's point of view was that of the insider, the proverbial fly on the wall—and we had no intentions of impairing that point of view by pausing to catch up the audience. Consequently, all of the visual cues and connections would need to be referenced fully and at careful intervals" (22).
6. Ed Burns, Dennis Lehane, George Pelecanos, Richard Price, and David Simon, "*The Wire*'s War on the Drug War," *Time,* 5 March 2008, www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1719872,00.html#ixzz12AF9MCSY.
7. Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 89.
8. Ibid., 85.
9. *The Wire* also presents video surveillance as an important visual medium of contemporary crime fighting and another useful aesthetic for the producers to employ. This is an important motif from which the show criticizes the idea of an effective panoptic city-state. Its producers maintain a level of reflexivity regarding their own use of such video footage. The best example of this reflexivity is in the repeated use, for the purpose of the opening montage in each of the five seasons, of dealers Bodie Broadus and D'Angelo Barksdale throwing rocks at a police surveillance camera and cracking its lens. The imagery of this scene is primarily conveyed through the cracked lens itself. The directorial camera's field of vision, and therefore the viewer's, is aligned with the broken camera. In the following moments of this scene, however, Detective Lester Freamon confirms D'Angelo's pager number through on-site surveillance and provides

a new break in the case. Thus the image of the cracked lens represents only a temporary subversion of the police gaze. Such defiance pales against the triump of Freamon's applied investigative expertise (1.4).

10. Other photographic subplots in the series include the following: The broad surveillance involved with identifying the previously unknown members of criminal targets in every season; the attempts to turn potential collaborators by assessing their faces in photographs; the stolen digital cameras and trade in illegal goods at the docks; the construction of evidence and leads through photographs in the case of the trafficked women from Eastern Europe; the licensing and display of several prints of former *Baltimore Sun* photographer Audrey Bodine; uses of the Polaroid camera and prints as an anachronistic outlet for the digital and globalized eras; the dichotomy of photographic trustworthiness and manipulation in local politics and journalism; the honorific function of photography in marking status or memorial recognition; and the ramifications of the transmission of photographic images through camera mobile phones. Photographs of postproduction "ruins" of the set of the series in Baltimore, many of which are posted on the Internet through Flickr and LiveJournal sites, also extend these internal discussions of photography.

11. John Tagg, *Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

12. John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 3.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 3–6.

15. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 11.

16. In regard to television's potential for remediation, Bolter and Grusin posit, "Where the aim of film is to make us briefly forget the world outside the theater, the aim of television is to remind us of and to show us the world we inhabit" (ibid., 194).

17. Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (1986): 3–64, quotations on 4–5, 10.

18. As Sekula adds, modern police work also emerged through photographic techniques "that [were] central to the process of defining and regulating the criminal" and the development of a state archive as "the clerical-statistical system of 'intelligence.'" Sekula's notion of a shadow archive, a "generalized, inclusive archive . . . that encompasses an entire social terrain while positioning individuals within that terrain" is a way to draw the seemingly distinct archives of bourgeois portraiture and police photography in sharper relief (ibid.).

19. In building their initial case against the Barksdales, one major obstacle is that they cannot procure an image of its boss, Avon. Without a criminal record and a photograph to pull, the investigators turn to the housing department's archives for a picture. Two sluggish officers on the detail retrieve the wrong photograph, of "the only Avon Barksdale in the housing department file," as they report. Afterward, it is Detective Freamon who is able to procure a photograph of Avon from outside the state archive—a poster of a teenage Avon from a Golden Gloves boxing tournament, which had formerly hung in a local boxing gym. Freamon's ability to locate Avon's picture both implicates the fissures in the state's records project and highlights the investigator's ability to refashion the archive accordingly (1.3). This photograph reappears in season 4, in a boxing gym operated by Dennis "Cutty" Wise and originally paid for by Avon. While in

the drug business, Avon had initially scoffed at the idea of having his picture hung in the gym. When he left the cast of the show, the photograph reentered this gym solely as an honorific image. Freamon's ability to obtain images for the sake of an investigation goes a step further later in the season when he and Greggs conspire to figure out a way to gather information from inside the Barksdale business headquarters, located above a strip club. Freamon gathers a group of photographs of club employees (all dancers) and lays them out on the table. The challenge is to find one employee whom they might turn against the Barksdales. Freamon offers a lesson in image reading here to Greggs: "Interrogation is more art than science." Freamon's ability to procure images is related to his ability to read images. That the woman chosen does actually become a key informant, and eventually Freamon's romantic companion, adds a level of payoff to his instinctual reading. Whether it is snapping photographs of properly executed surveillance, procuring images from an unwieldy and ever-expansive public archive, or reading them with powers of instinct, investigation for these skillful detectives is marked by more than good police work; it is an art (1.8).

20. That many of the photographs resurface as color prints, and not black-and-white ones, is an unacknowledged effect of the production process.

21. This foretells Moreland's interrogation method used to open season 5, in which he helps connect a suspect to a "polygraph," which is actually a Xerox machine. In the process, several detectives compel the suspect to implicate himself in a murder. As Moreland suggests then, "The bigger the lie, the more they believe" (5.1). This serves as a complementary take on the ways images can be leveraged to tell a visual and temporal lie. I thank Chris Love for this observation.

22. Another figure involved in the game who is construed alternately, albeit briefly, is heist specialist Omar Little. When his apartment is ransacked by his Barksdale foes, they find Polaroid pictures of Little with his lover/criminal partner Brandon. In this case, Little's ability to leave the photograph behind evinces his ability to adapt beyond his sentimental urges (1.8). As suggested above, throughout the series the Polaroid camera is sporadically used as a model of instantaneous and anachronistic photographic practice, ideal for those who wish to take photographs and distribute them, but to be handled as images and objects of fleeting enjoyment.

23. In season 2, after McNulty, while working as a marine cop, finds a dead woman floating in the Baltimore Harbor, he locates a snapshot of hers, collected as evidence in the investigation of the deaths of women who were being smuggled into the port in a shipping container. McNulty assumes the burden of investigation, carrying around her picture in his pocket, even carrying a folder of all of the women's autopsy images to an out-of-state INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) facility for a potential lead. Even as the case itself seems unsolvable, his hope was always to identify her body so this woman's remains would escape medical testing and eventual incineration. But McNulty fails, and eventually tells the medical examiner to "let her go." He cannot, though, and even after we see him tear up her picture, he admits to Moreland that she haunts him in his dreams. Though unable to ultimately identify her, the result of this police work was that these women, in death, were recognized as more human than "cadaverous." In other words, without identification they become severed from any sort of lived history.

24. For other scenes in this mode, of bringing photographs back to crime scenes to solve cases through the five seasons, see Detective Greggs's solving of the Braddock homicide case in season 4 and, to a lesser degree, Moreland's solving of the Manigault (Michael Lee's stepfather) case in season 5.

25. The ongoing presence of D'Angelo's photographs in his old apartment affirms this and haunts the scenes staged there during his imprisonment and after his death. In the last

shot of his and Donette's apartment in season 3, though, it is a framed picture of Stringer Bell (Donette's adopted paramour), next to the old ones of D'Angelo and family, that finally elegizes the scene (3.12).

26. Tagg, *Burden of Representation,* 3–6.

27. In this montage is also a photograph of deceased Detective Ray Cole, played by production team member Robert Colesberry, who actually died during the show's third season. His framed photograph in police regalia, from *The Wire*'s wake for Ray Cole, appears in the opening montage to the shows final three seasons.