Playing O.J.

The subject of this final chapter is the visual rhetoricality of Simpson's involvement in the double murder narrative of Brown Simpson and Goldman. I intend to read Simpson's self-commodified presence as a determinant in the play of appearances (and disappearances) that produced the Brentwood murders as a cultural mise-en-scène for the gaze and spectacle. The O.J. Simpson story was spectacular and spectable, ready-made for the strategies of mass media attention and dissemination, and the spectatorial practices of consumers.¹ The following analysis was provoked by a claim Simpson makes in *I Want to Tell You*: "I'm the same guy on and off the screen. I don't play O.J. when I'm on TV. I'm always me" (89). This is a straight-faced misreading of the celebrity self, a mis-diagnosis of his professional condition. The celebrity self is a performance. It is an autobiographical prosopopoeia. In "Autobiography as De-Facement," Paul de Man states: "Voice assumes mouth, eye, and finally face, a chain that is manifest in the etymology of the trope's name, prosopon poien, to confer a mask or a face (prosopon)." Prosopopeia (sic) is the trope of autobiography, by which one's name [. . .] is made as intelligible and memorable as a face" (76). Rhetorical strategies primarily to do with the visual, ways of looking, ways of seeing and being seen identify and determine Simpson, "O.J.," as a public figure, a text and a genre. A reading of Simpson as text requires the identification of his genre as African-American male sports celebrity. As a genre, Simpson embodies a convergence of aesthetics and history.² Reading Simpson's activity as an alleged murderer, as suicidal, as a fugitive from police

¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "Spectable" as: "1. Presentable to the sight; worthy of being seen or contemplated. [. . .] 2. Capable of being seen; visible" ("Spectable," def. 1, 2).

² De Man writes: "the concept of genre designates an aesthetic as well as a historical function" (67).
custody and as the author of a "suicide note" and a memoir, is affecting and captivating. A violent double murder (an alleged domestic and colour-coded crime of passion), a freeway car chase, attempted suicide and celebrity are inherently, undeniably conditions for spectacle and speculation. They produce compelling images for the fascinated, curious gaze of scopophilia, for pleasure in looking, particularly at the human form. These sensationalised sites and sights involve human beings as agents, victims, captives, commodities and discursive constructs. As scenes of human life they elicit an insatiable, sometimes unwilling, desire to look and they challenge us, unsuccessfully, to look away. The contagion of this high-end affect has a fixative power.

In this chapter Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" and Guy Debord's Society of the Spectacle are appropriated as theoretical lenses for regarding Simpson as an object of study. Mulvey’s spectatorial structures prove useful for an analysis of masculinity as performance and spectacle. Cinema and spectator sports correlate in terms of their signification of male desire and the coding of spectacle. In an analysis of classic Hollywood cinematic representation, Mulvey states: "In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (19). In the visual arenas of spectator sports and contemporary mainstream cinematic representation men also perform in an exhibitionist role, for male and female audience members. Men are also "simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 19). "Mainstream film neatly combines spectacle and narrative" (Mulvey 19). Spectator sports also combines spectacle and narrative. Sports commentators are
narrators. Team members are players with identities and on-field personas. The dramatic action of the play proceeds according to a strategic game plan and tactical improvisations. Audiences watch the action live from their seats in the stadium or broadcast on television screens. Both film and sports as entertainment industries generate stars although athletic ability is more meritorious than acting talent. A physical aptitude and a pleasing appearance are requisite for career success in both industries. Simpson's on-screen appearances as a Pro American football star and an actor in mainstream films have been "coded for strong visual and erotic impact" (Mulvey 19). He has performed as an object for the projection of a controlling male gaze and its fantasy. "Man is [not] reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like" (Mulvey 20) on the gridiron. Simpson's public currency as a star football player and an actor was styled according to what Mulvey calls a passive figuration. Prior to the Brentwood murders, Simpson connotated "to-be-looked-at-ness," a "to-be-looked-at-ness" familiar to most Americans and enjoyed by them, a "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 19) based on racial recognition. After his arrest for the murder of Brown Simpson and Goldman, Simpson's "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 19) was reconceptualised.

As the rhetoric of colour also guides a cultural reading of Simpson, I integrate into my analysis the historical socio-economic impositions on the African-American body as a captive body, as discussed by Hortense Spillers in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." With the publishing of I Want to Tell You Simpson made a spectacle of his captive and captivating state. The mainstream American media made a spectacle of Simpson's captive and captivating state in its reporting of Simpson's involvement in the Brentwood murders. I utilise Spillers' racial conditions of identity to explain Simpson's defensive manoeuvres as a celebrity, his experience and performance as the split subject of celebrity: as being and thing, person and commodity, a
subject or figure for reification and what Spillers calls "pornotroping" (67). Mulvey’s Freudian psychoanalytic account of the classic Hollywood cinematic screen image "splits" the dynamic of the spectacle and its viewing positions according to an ideological and psychical "active/passive heterosexual division of labour" (20). "The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the [passive] figure, which is styled accordingly" (Mulvey 19) as other. Spillers’ account of the captive body splits the dynamic of North American slavery into a captor/captive division of labour. The determining gaze of the captor imposes its economic, social and sexual fantasy onto the captive being "by eternally imposed meanings and uses":

1) the captive body becomes the source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality; 2) at the same time - in stunning contradiction – the captive body reduces to a thing, becoming being for the captor; 3) in this absence from a subject position, the captured sexualities provide a physical and biological expression of ‘otherness’; 4) as a category of ‘otherness,’ the captive body translates into a potential for pornotroping and embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into a more general ‘powerlessness,’ resonating through various centers of human and social meaning.

(Spillers 67)

Taking the determining subject position of the active spectator from Mulvey and the determining subject position of the captor from Spillers, I would like to tie these two positions together and make them one: spectator-captor. In the split dynamic of the gaze the spectator becomes a kind of captor of the image of the other. Subjected to the determining gaze of the spectator-captor, the captured or captive body of the other is objectified, de-humanised, reified as "thing, becoming being for the [spectator-]captor" (Spillers 67). The trope of this denial from a
subject position is an inverse personification or inverse *prosopopoeia*. Lanham defines "*prosopopoeia*" as "1. An animal or an inanimate object is represented as having human attributes and addressed or made to speak as if it were human" (*Rhetorical Terms* 123). The captive body, the reified human being becomes a counterfeit person, symbolic of an abstract idea, "a collective function" (Spillers 65). Reification as a process (or practice) has more to do with economics and power relations than rhetoric. Synecdoche may be the closest rhetorical term. Lanham defines "*synecdoche*" as "G. `understanding one thing with another`: `[s]ubstitution of part for whole [. . .] or vice versa" (*Rhetorical Terms* 148). Lee Edelman writes that it is the "force of the objectifying gaze that reduces black male identity to the part that stands, in the racist imagination, for the whole.

Synecdoche, as this description suggests, can be read as the master trope of racism that gets deployed in a variety of different ways to reinforce the totalizing logic of identity" (44). The effect of synecdoche is disarticulation, displacement, a "severing" of the captive body (Spillers 67) and a dismembering (Edelman 45) of the African-American body, from itself and the human race. Both Spillers (67) and Edelman (44) acknowledge the discursive and psychological reductionism of synecdoche. Reification is a kind of rhetorical figure or trope in the sense that reification is to do with the marketplace, social and personal fortunes, psychological and biological conceptualisations and commodity fetishism. Reification can be used in a rhetorical way. It can have a persuasive and affecting function and legal ramifications. The North American socio-economic system of slavery was reinforced by the reification of a race. Reification is also the trope of celebrity. In the marketplace of desire and commodity fetishism, the celebrity and their celebrity has exchange value, their celebrity persona and their celebrity status (their fame or notoriety) is a thing that is bought and sold. What distinguishes Simpson's performance as spectacle as fascinating and what makes it uncomfortable and tricky terrain for interrogation and exploration is the naïve racial
unconscious of his selfhood and his always, already racialised, lasciviously fetishised black male body.

In *Society of the Spectacle* Debord explains the spectacle as a condition of capitalism (par. 1), a "world vision [or world-view] which has become objectified" (par. 5). The society of the spectacle is the society of commodity fetishism: "The spectacle in general, as the concrete inversion of life, is the autonomous movement of the non-living" (Debord, par. 2), the reified, things. And yet the spectacle is enterprising. According to the logic of the socio-economic market of needs and desires, the spectacle produces itself, presents itself, for visual consumption and psychological contemplation. The spectacle is an autonomous system within the social body concomitant with the governing economic structure. Its forms may vary but its logic of substitution for the real is dominant and hypnotically persuasive. Debord writes:

The spectacle, grasped in its totality, is both the result and the project of the existing mode of production. It is not a supplement to the real world, an additional decoration. It is the heart of the unrealism of the real society. In all its specific forms, as information or propaganda, as advertisement or direct entertainment consumption, the spectacle is the present model of socially dominant life. It is the omnipresent affirmation of the choice already made in production and its corollary consumption. The spectacle's form and content are identically the total justification of the existing system's conditions and goals. The spectacle is also the permanent presence of this justification, since it occupies the main part of the time lived outside of modern production. (par. 6)
For Debord, the spectacle is ontologically and existentially captivating, imprisoning, debilitating: the "spectacle is nothing other than the sense of the total practice of a social-economic formation, its use of time. It is the historical movement in which we are caught" (par. 11). The spectacle operates within modern entertainment sectors, it is diverting and distracting, a leisure activity, a non-productive labour. It has a persuasive and manipulative possibility. Its use is a waste of our time, a loss that is ours, societal and individual. We are consumed by the spectacle, lost in it. We can lose time, we can lose touch with reality and we can lose ourselves, the cohesiveness of our individual identity to its captivating force. The separating function of the spectacle generates a "deceived gaze" and "false consciousness" (Debord, par. 3).

The spectacle constructs its own sense of time, a time out, a vestibular, contemplative space generated by the spectator's absorbed contemplation. An impossible temporal, existential fold, a vestibule is produced by the giving-taking exchange between spectator and spectacle. The spectacle takes, consumes our time and attention. Its very existence and survival is dependent upon it. The spectacle does not utilise our time or waste it. It utilises our attention but does not waste or squander the energy of our gaze. The spectacle is interesting, productive. It accrues interest. The spectacle relies, for its very existence and survival, on the reading of a visual rhetoric; readers are the requisite of its ability to be spectacle. Equally, the spectacle is a kind of knowing, a kind of recognition, understood through a visceral and psychological reading praxis. Spectatorial skills are to do with capacity and competency, acuity and acumen, not literacy or comprehension. The spectacle is a way of knowing and understanding the relation between self and other, a way of exploring and experiencing the identification with and objectification of otherness. It allows a reassertion of the "I" of subjectivity and identity that is connected socially, economically,
experientially to others, to external makings and markings of meaning. The spectacle is an illusion, a vision; a kind of lucid dreaming space for the mythic, the oneiric and the mundane; wishful, nightmare and surreal images. The spectacle is always a figuration or configuration of the human and its ways of looking and being seen.

The spectacle is captivating force. It holds the subject of the spectacle and the spectator captive in the flow of the gaze. I want to destabilise Debord's idea of the spectacle as an autonomous, non-corporeal entity and to consider the spectacle as an effect of the human gaze, an effect generated by autonomous corporeal human agency. The contemplative "I" of the contemplative eye is the captivating force in the dynamic of the spectacle. The spectator's gaze captures the spectacle. The spectator is the captor. The spectacle is the captive body. The spectacle merely performs, offers itself for spectacle, as spectacle. It does not determine the parameters of its reception, although it may proffer a preferred reading in its presentation. The spectacle is held captive in the moment of the gaze by an erotic contemplation, rapture. The spectator becomes both captivated and captor. The gaze suggests an ownership of the captive body subjected to its view, a proprietorial, spectatorial possessiveness. In being for the spectator-captor, the spectacle is subjected (subjects itself) to the imposition of external meanings and uses produced by the consumer. Severed from "its motive will, its active desire" (Spillers 67), the captive body is reconceptualised by the spectator-captor's interest and excitement, which Spillers advises is always sexual, libidinous and not gender differentiated or not "gender-specific" (67). This is how I understand Simpson's role as a spectacle within the spectacle of the Brentwood murders.
For the coloured flesh and the coloured body of the African-American marked by the "cultural vestibularity" (Spillers 67) of slavery there can only be the cultural seeing or cultural reading of a leering gaze. Simpson's African-American male body bears the marks of the cultural trauma of slave-ness. A legacy denoted and connotated by the hue of his ever-present racialised flesh. Spillers makes a distinction "between 'body' and 'flesh'" (67). She argues: "before the 'body' there is the 'flesh,' that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography" (Spillers 67). Simpson seems unable to embrace his heritage in *I Want to Tell You*. He declines to name the socio-economic conditions, the "biological, sexual, social, cultural, linguistic, ritualistic, and psychological fortunes" (Spillers 67) of his racial ancestry in his autobiographical act:

> My mother has Native American blood on her side, and on my father's side there is southern white blood. Sometime back then my great-grandmother was taken advantage of by some plantation owner. My great-grandmother's family raised the baby; the white man couldn't be exposed. Despite some mixed blood here and there, as a kid I just looked upon myself as being black. The word 'Afro-American' hadn't come into my vocabulary yet. (Simpson 114)

"The Arkansas Simpsons were a white family and yet we adopted that name - that was the custom then" (Simpson 184). This is not a symptom of denial but a rhetorical *occultatio*, a discursive terror. As Simpson speaks from the subject position of Los Angeles County Jail inmate 4013970 in *I Want to Tell You* there is an overdetermined and unbearable symbolic connectedness to an unimaginable historical ("ancestral") mode of being. Simpson's hands are free but he is physically

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3. This cultural vestibularity is represented and imposed by a linguistic vestibular mark: the hyphen in African-American.
shackled by a metal belly restraint cuffed "to a chain fastened to the floor" of the visiting room (Schiller, "Foreword" xi).

Schiller's white abolitionist introduction to Simpson's memoir presents Simpson's captive black male body as a spectacle. Schiller's contemplative "I" and his contemplative eye is the lens of the camera that positions Simpson visually and discursively for the readers' viewing. Schiller attempts to "humanise" Simpson but in order to do this effectively he must also reify Simpson, de-face Simpson, contemplate him as things – a prisoner, a criminal, a sight, a smiling face, a uniform, a book reader, an "eagle" ("Foreword" xi), a football player, body parts, facial expressions, movements, gestures, a fetish, a series of signs. Schiller must take Simpson apart, present him in parts, as parts and put him together not as a collage but as an image visually, discursively and psychologically complete or cohesive. The sentiment of Schiller's visual rhetoric is designed for the voyeuristic gaze, for the already fascinated. His representations of Simpson reveal a fascination with the fascination of the spectator, the reader of Simpson's text. It is as if Schiller watches the reader watching him watching Simpson. According to the logic of "[a]n active/passive heterosexual division of labour" (Mulvey 20), in the scene he constructs in his "Foreword," Schiller is the active narrative agent, he acts "as the bearer of the look of the spectator" (Mulvey 20) within the diegetic space. Simpson is passive, the spectacle. Schiller is free to move diegetically and extra-diegetically. Simpson is confined, captive to the space of this profoundly perverse intimacy of passivity and spectacle. He is a captive body produced discursively, visually, legally, physically. However, this is Simpson's captivity narrative. Although he may be physically powerless while incarcerated, this does not slide "into a more general 'powerlessness'" (Spillers 67). Simpson's celebrity status as a sports legend prevents it. In his embodiment as O.J. Simpson, in his embrace
of his black male body as a site and a sight for spectacle lies the potential for a self-serving pornotroping. A pornotroping defined by his role in the celebrity-fan or celebrity-spectator dyad.

Murder is a shocking human phenomenon. The murder of another person, even a complete stranger, can be bewildering and frightening. It is ethically, morally, physiologically, irrevocably affecting. Because of its potential for the high-end magnification of affect, murder is interesting, exciting and, so, newsworthy; it challenges and fascinates our sensibilities. The portentousness of true-crime murder narratives makes them a popular genre. They have cultural and social resonance because they witness the fragility of human bodies and human life, the precariousness of social relations and the vulnerability of the authority of reason. Murder threatens and warns of danger. It is an unsettling resetting device. The incomprehensible irrationality of the human capacity for murder perpetuates a sense of fascination and wonder with murder as an event, as a narrative and as spectacle. Murder is a symbolic and actual wounding. It signifies a corruption of and disruption to moral authority. Public responses to murder indicate a calibration of ethics and aesthetics. In Murder: A Tale of Modern American Life, Sara Knox writes:

The cultural resonance of the narrative of murder arises from its uneasy position at the borderline of ethics and aesthetics. In a culture wherein the communication and entertainment media are more varied and accessible than ever before, the ‘fact’ of murder and its representations grow close indeed [. . .]. Murder as a fundamental expression of immanence and abjection has a presence that consumes the corpse of victim and murderer alike. And yet the visceral, brute fact of murder is itself a false, or

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4 I apply Greenblatt's definition of resonance here. See chapter 1 of this thesis.
insufficient, foundation for narrative. All that is given in the tale of murder is the corpse; everything else remains to be found. (15-16)

In the O.J. Simpson case the captivating force of the presence of murder also consumed the American public. The Brentwood murders became a cultural diversion, an entertainment presented, narrated, mediated and communicated by the mass media. In its re-presentation as a true-crime murder narrative the predominant presence was not the murder or the victims. It was Simpson. In a metaphoric realignment, Simpson embodied the role of the consuming, captivating presence by association. Simpson's presence diverted and consumed the gaze. As the reified site of a mysterious irrationality he became a spectacularised sight.

Simpson's (alleged, "suspicious," fugitive, suicidal, defendant, inmate-author) activity alone may not be responsible for this effect. Knox's analysis of the figure of the murderer in modern murder narratives suggests that Simpson's to-be-looked-at-ness, his spectability, was the result of a subjective narrative turn: "the best evidence of murder [...] is a corpse, yet the modern tale of murder turns attention away from the victim to the murderer - the corpse becoming little more than a relic of another's transgression and transcendence. The metaphysics of modern murder makes the victim a sign of the murderer" (15). So, when Simpson mentions Brown Simpson (his ex-wife, the murder victim) in I Want to Tell You and in his "suicide note" it becomes a reference to himself. His utterance of her name can only be subjective, self-reflexive. It is a self-signification. This is also true when he mentions Goldman. The Simpson story reveals a tragic realism overwhelmed by spectacle. Simpson's most likely guilt as the perpetrator glamoured over the cold-blooded, grisly actuality, the abhorrent hands-on, bloodstained approach of his ex-wife's execution (virtually in her own home) and Goldman's incidental murder. The horror of Simpson's notorious "new celebrity
The violent murder of Brown Simpson and Goldman was shocking. That a mother of two can be attacked and killed on the front steps of her home while her young children sleep upstairs is a startling occurrence. It generates a societal and individual interest and excitement. Disgust and distress quickly develop into fear and anger. No one is safe. This could happen to anyone. This could happen to me, or my family, friends, neighbours. The identification of one of the homicide victims as the ex-wife of O.J. Simpson amplified and reoriented these affect responses. It personalised the murders, in a way, for the American public in general. Simpson's association focused, increased and expanded attention within the investigative body of the Los Angeles Police Department, the informative body of the media and the general body public. Simpson's presence attracted an audience and absorbed the attention of the audience it constructed through the sympathetic arousal of affect. Simpson's intimate involvement with one of the victims increased the newsworthiness of the Brentwood murders. From the very moment the dead bodies of Brown Simpson and Goldman were discovered, Simpson became the lens through which the murders were seen, experienced, viewed, deliberated, read, thought and explained. Simpson's reputation as a national icon, his familiarity to millions of Americans, generated a collective reaction of heartfelt compassion and sympathetic sadness for him and his children. This public empathic anguish was extended to the Brown family, Simpson's ex-in-laws and to the Goldman family, not only because Brown Simpson and Goldman were the innocent victims of a senseless crime, but because of their connection to Simpson and to his celebrity. The effect of Simpson's public profile...
elicited an attribution of affect to Brown Simpson's parents and sisters, most notably, and to Goldman's parents and sister, less notably. Goldman was a friend of Simpson's ex-wife. In the chapter dedicated to Goldman in *I Want to Tell You*, entitled "Unknown Soldier," Simpson suggests he did not know the man. I deploy here the idea of attribution as a tribute, the extension of emotion to the Brown and Goldman families as a mark of respect to Simpson, and consider affect as a display of courtesy or decorum, a required behavioural convention, relative to the context.

From another perspective within public consciousness, surely the shock of the murders mobilised a latent distress: the suspicion that Simpson may have committed the crime. The statistical "evidence" alone supported the consideration of Simpson as a suspect. On his immediate return from Chicago on June 13, the day after the murders, patrol officer Don Thompson handcuffed Simpson on the front lawn of his Rockingham home (Fuhrman 41; Lange and Vannatter 57, 63). Although the handcuffs were removed "[m]oments later" (Fuhrman 41) by Detective Vannatter, at Simpson's request, attentive media cameras had already captured an image of Simpson as a double murder suspect (Lange and Vannatter 57, 63-64). It was visual "evidence" with impact, enough for the media story of Simpson as guilty of murder to be written and disseminated to the American public. Simpson does not go so far as to call the media depiction of him a lynching, but he does liken it to murder:

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5 "Of the 5,745 women murdered in the U.S. in 1991, 6 out of 10 were killed by someone they knew. Half were murdered by a spouse or someone with whom they had been intimate" (Smolowe 23).

6 Fuhrman reports: "It has been previously reported elsewhere that Howard Weitzman, Simpson's attorney, asked to have the cuffs removed, but the truth of the matter is that Simpson himself asked" (Fuhrman 41). Lange and Vannatter report that Weitzman questioned Simpson's handcuffing (57) and clarify that it was not their intention to arrest Simpson at that time: "The act of handcuffing someone is a prelude to making an arrest" (63). Vannatter claims Thompson had misunderstood his instructions (Lange and Vannatter 63).
What hurt me on that Monday after I returned to L.A. from Chicago, adding to the death of Nicole, was the press and how they behaved. The first week almost killed me. Along with the grief I was having over Nicole's murder, I literally felt I was murdered. I felt there were three homicides. Some unknown killers murdered Nicole and Ronald Goldman; now the press was murdering me. (68)

The O.J. Simpson story had begun to present itself as spectacle and for spectacle, as a collection of visual and psychological images for consumption, contemplation, deciphering and mediation. The Simpson case seemed discursively and visually pre-arranged for the socio-economic practice of media coverage. It was suitable, fitting. Debord writes: "If the spectacle, taken in the limited sense of 'mass media' which are its most glaring superficial manifestation, seems to invade society as mere equipment, this equipment is in no way neutral but is the very means suited to its total self-movement" (par. 24). Debord seems to suggest that the spectacle, autonomous, self-concerned and self-serving, does not simply utilise the mass media as equipment or technology, a vehicular device for the presentation and perpetuation of itself. It supports and assists the mass media in a cannibalistic sense as a providore in order to reach its audience, its spectators, whose attention is its life-force. In self-serving sacrificial terms the spectacle provides itself as fodder for the mass media who monitor, guard and operate the large-scale communication channels, the means and access to information, knowing and display. Although the mass media would like to imagine it is the spectacle itself, the destination and the focus of the gaze, it is not. The mass media is a channel, a flow for the gaze. The gaze is a psychological phenomenon and a social epistemology. It is a mode of inquiry regarding the self and other to do with seeing and being seen. With the aid or complicity of the spectacle as an energy source, as the force for the flow, the mass media

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7 Simpson uses the term "press" to refer to the mass media.
attracts and maintains the gaze it re-directs elsewhere, to the human bodies it objectifies, reifies, for entertainment, as entertainment, in a self-righteous, market-driven morality and ethics.

The seemingly anthropomorphic characteristics and ontological properties of the spectacle as Debord describes it, are a condition of the linguistic inability to place it or explain it outside of human terms. The spectacle is a force created by human desire. The spectacle is affective, visceral, pre-lingual. We are held in thrall by the spectacle, captivated by it, but the spectacle exists for the spectator-captor. The will to see the spectacle as an anthropomorphic determination, to explain and analyse it in anthropomorphic terms may be the result of the spectacle being most often the site of the human body. This certainly is the case when I conceive of the spectacle and subject its principles, logic, operational strategies and tactics in this chapter and this thesis to Simpson. (For Simpson is the spectacle.) It may also be that to anthropomorphise, prosopopoeia is the only way in which we can conceive of otherness. We can never truly experience otherness as a mode of being. We can only imagine it and empathise.

The appearance of the handcuffs on Simpson turned attention away from the murdered victims, Brown Simpson and Goldman, to the image of Simpson as murderer. Enacted and retracted, this momentary gesture of handcuffing Simpson was the beginning of the positioning of Simpson as a captive body in the public imagination. A vision of alternately surreal (the wide-eyed gaze), nightmare (the wild-eyed gaze), or wish fulfillment (the leering gaze) proportions, it diverted and re-focussed, crystallised the gaze of the American public. It had a fixative power. This image of Simpson as a captive body signalled the portentous and anachronistic cultural text of slavery: a social praxis of ideological and psychical narrative structuring, a code for the human and social
meanings that proliferate and mark the coloured male body as coloured, as other. The rendering of Simpson as a captive coloured body mobilised the conditions of the captive body of slavery as identified by Spillers. The image of Simpson captured in handcuffs reconceptualised him in the American imaginary. In literally moments, repeatedly reproduced, Simpson as "the captive body becomes the source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality" (Spillers 67). His liberated, powerful coloured body as "the captive body reduces to a thing, becoming being for the captor" (Spillers 67). He is made potentially powerless, othered, physically and biologically, by a legal pornotroping and a mass media pornotroping that figures him, represents him as suspect, mysterious, guilty of murder. Spillers' "pornotroping" (67) seems akin to Debord's notion of the "immense accumulation of spectacles" (par. 1). Representation becomes "fact." The dominance of the economic in the codification of the social and personal results in human degradation (Spillers 67; Debord, par. 17). Pornotroping may be what Debord considered an example of the "obvious degradation of being into having" and the "sliding of having into appearing":

"total occupation of social life by the accumulated results of the economy leads to a generalized sliding of having into appearing, from which all actual 'having' must draw its immediate prestige and its ultimate function. At the same time all individual reality has become social reality directly dependent on social power and shaped by it. It is allowed to appear only to the extent that it is not." (par. 17)

When this observation is applied to a consideration of the human body, Debord's social praxis of "having" (par. 17) is a capture, reification. For Spillers this is "becoming being for the captor" (67). Debord's "appearing" (par. 17) is representation, a false imposition. For Spillers this is an "absence from a subject position, the [. . .] expression of 'otherness'" (67). Handcuffing Simpson made the true-crime double murder narrative his story. But the Simpson of this story was
unfamiliar and unrecognisable. Simpson's identity had been dislocated. John Fiske argues: "Racism is dislocated when it is apparently to be found only in the behaviours of a racial minority and never in those of the white power structure. Dislocating racism thus maintains the racelessness of whiteness" (272). Simpson's status as a "tame Black male" (Fiske 274) was made hypervisible as a false identity masking his true nature. As Morrison notes in "The Official Story": "Simpson was accused of multiple murder. But he was guilty of personal treason" (xiv). He was criminalised and re-racialised, figured as violent and threatening to white female vulnerability, "a metaphor for [white] social order" (Fiske 258).

In the space of five days the American public was confronted with a series of shocking revelations, compounded by their escalating force and propelled by Simpson's celebrity status. The fulcrum of spectacle and affect was achieved on June 17 with the public announcement of an outstanding warrant for Simpson's arrest, the reading of Simpson's "suicide note" by Robert Kardashian, and the televised escapade of the "Bronco Chase." The escalating, eruptive and disruptive force of this spectacular affect storm was propelled by Simpson, the Los Angeles Police Department, the media and a fascinated spectating public, actively engaged with Simpson's newly acquired status as an outlaw, wanted on a charge of double homicide. Simpson became hyper-spectable, a spectacle:

1. a. A specially prepared or arranged display of a more or less public nature (esp. one on a large scale), forming an impressive or interesting show or entertainment for those viewing it. [. . .] 2. A person or thing exhibited to, or set before, the public gaze as an object either (a) of curiosity or contempt, or (b) of marvel or admiration. [. . .]
Simpson polarised the American public as an object of contempt (guilty and lying) or admiration (innocent and wrongfully accused).

The American public fulfilled their spectatorial role in the *frisson* of the spectacle and the mass media mediated, as both spectator and vehicular device for the construction and generation of Simpson as spectacle. Debord states:

> The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as all of society, as part of society, and as *instrument of unification*. As a part of society it is specifically the sector which concentrates all gazing and all consciousness. Due to the very fact that this sector is *separate*, it is the common ground of the deceived gaze and of false consciousness, and the unification it achieves is nothing but an official language of generalized separation. (par. 3)

Simpson functioned as spectacle, as an "*instrument of unification*" (Debord, par. 3) in that he unified the gaze of a society as an everyday object of distraction and emotionally charged contemplation. Even if the affective states he induced were disparate between individuals and particular to individuals, Simpson was a useful instrument for the elicitation of general affect. He was susceptible and open to manipulation by media representation, by institutional representation and self-representation. It is this openness to manipulation that makes the sector of spectacle liable to misrepresentation, deception, untruth, mismanagement and misreadings. But I would suggest that reality and truth are always vulnerable texts. The presence of the real and the true is fragile and fleeting. All experience is narrative. It has a perspective, a point of view. The loss of
the truth of an essential individual self is what Debord claims to fear from the unifying (fascistic) condition of spectacle:

The alienation of the spectator to the profit of the contemplated object (which is the result of his own unconscious activity) is expressed in the following way: the more he contemplates the less he lives; the more he accepts recognizing himself in the dominant images of need, the less he understands his own existence and his own desires. The externality of the spectacle in relation to the active man appears in the fact that his own gestures are no longer his but those of another who represents them to him. This is why the spectator feels at home nowhere, because the spectacle is everywhere. (par. 30)

For Debord, the consumer is passive, powerless, enthralled and blinded by the sight of the spectacle: "The real consumer becomes a consumer of illusions. The commodity is this factually real illusion, and the spectacle is its general manifestation" (par. 47). He makes no allowance for the spectacle as a site for exploration, colonisation, manipulation, territorialisation or exploitation by the autonomous individual as a producer of self as spectacle or commodity.

Simpson's fecundity as a narrative scene, as spectacle, preceded the murder of Brown Simpson and Goldman. His symbolic and actual recognisability, a visual and discursive currency, was an invaluable resource for Simpson, the mass media and the American public. Simpson's image was already available for reproduction, for representation and media manipulation. The strength of his public image is what made him all the more vulnerable. Simpson's face was a familiar sight. He had appeared on television, originally as a star football player, then as a sports commentator, as an actor and as himself in commercials. He also appeared on the cinema screen
as a film actor. He was known affectionately by the initials O.J. It was a unique appellation in the American public consciousness. Operating on a personal, first name basis, no surname was required for identification. His nickname, "The Juice," is a linguistic play on the double meaning of his initials, O.J., also short for orange juice. It signifies the bi-association of a commodity relation, of a man and a beverage (both commercial products). The name "O.J." operated autonomously, separately and cohesively as a brand and an image in public discourse and public consciousness. Simpson's career originated in an arena and a commercial apparatus dependent and reliant on the generation and performance of spectacle, on a spectacular visibility. It is in sports that the beauty of the spectacle as good and worthy, as a noble display of the talented human body is fully appreciated and most actively acknowledged. Debord notes:

The spectacle presents itself as something enormously positive, indisputable and inaccessible. It says nothing more than ‘that which appears is good, that which is good appears.’ The attitude which it demands in principle is passive acceptance which in fact it already obtained by its manner of appearing without reply, by its monopoly of appearance. (par. 12)

Simpson's notoriety, his fame and celebrity were due to his athletic ability, rooted in his physicality. His sporting prowess on the football field as a running back, enacted in the stadium and broadcast, was a spectacular sight. Meritorious and entertaining, it was worthy of being seen and contemplated. The central site of this system of meritorious scopophilia and fascination was Simpson's body. The contemplation of Simpson's coloured, male and physically mobile body on the football field was an anticipated and cherished leisure activity, exciting, delightful, pleasurable. His moves thrilled College Football and Pro American Football audiences for over a decade. Simpson's professional talent made him a cultural hero. A hero of the kind Leo Lowenthal
categorises as "idols of consumption," as opposed to "idols of production" (115). In Lowenthal’s criteria, an idol of consumption is: "directly, or indirectly, related to the sphere of leisure time: either he does not belong to vocations which serve society’s basic needs (e.g., the heroes of the world of entertainment and sport), or he amounts, more or less, to a caricature of a socially productive agent" (115). Simpson's work as an actor, a sports commentator and a corporate spokesperson would also be included in this criteria. Simpson was celebrated, legendary as an idol of consumption.

Simpson's body was fitted into the social and commercial operational logic of American sports in which homo-erotic negrophilia (Mapplethorpism) and hetero-erotic negrophilia (Mandingoism) are sanctioned and encouraged (duCille 303-08). In the development of her Mapplethorpism theory in "The Unbearable Darkness of Being: ‘Fresh’ Thoughts on Race, Sex, and the Simpsons," Ann duCille states:

White homophilia can only countenance itself by feminizing the black male it desires. Thus the dominant/submissive, master/slave power relation of the peculiar institution [of slavery] was the perfect locus for playing out forbidden racial and sexual fantasies.

The sports arena, often dominated by beautifully athletic black male bodies, remains another. [. . .] It’s also interesting to note how professional sports repeats the language, though not the economic relations, of slavery: owners, players - sometimes called properties - buying, selling, trading. The playing field is one place - perhaps the only place - where men of different races can openly grab and fondle each other, while hundreds, thousands, even millions watch. Law enforcement represents a
possible third site for the exorcising of latent desires for the other: the black male body
under arrest, frisked, patted down, probed, cuffed, spread, and ordered to 'assume the
position,' which, after all, is the stance of anal intercourse. Placed under a certain
kind of scrutiny, then, the most manly arts, acts, and attitudes may well be exposed as
something else entirely. (307-08)

Simpson's career as a performer, athletic and otherwise, was based on an invitation to the
gaze of the spectator, on the pleasure and delight of display for the viewer. It was beholden to the
thrall and cultivation of a striking, inescapable "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 19). I bring Mulvey's
"Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" into an analysis of Simpson as spectacle and the Simpson
story as spectacle because there is an elemental cinematic quality to the scopophilic discursive
and reading practices that encapsulate these narrative sites. There is more at work here, more
exploited and deployed, than the strategies of the televisual, of telelitigation or media spectacle.
Strangely, this cinematic quality, an erotic way of looking, a control of the image and the invocation
of a curious gaze is an "exhibitionist role" (Mulvey 19) mobilised by Simpson himself as a weapon,
as both an offensive and defensive manoeuvre. There is a kind of vigilance and a kind of
innocence in Simpson's artful readiness to display himself as both an active and passive agent of
circumstance in his "suicide note," during the "Bronco Chase" and in his memoir. Simpson is the
captivating force in the logic of the celebrity-fan, celebrity-spectator, or celebrity-consumer dyad.
This is his power. Simpson is heavily invested in the commodity fetishism of celebrity as a

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8 In some instances, Simpson's football athleticism was incorporated into his acting roles. In the
television mini-series Roots, his character, Kadi Touray outruns Kunta Kinte across a grass field.
The scene reveals and references Simpson's running ability. He moves with a swift and agile
grace. He has a speed and light-footedness that seems unusual for such a tall, well-built man.
Simpson's character eyes his target as he would his opposing position on the gridiron.
business practice. He is dependent on our interest in him and our investment in him. The visual and discursive strategies of spectacle were utilised by Simpson, wittingly and unwittingly, as a tactical tool, a narrative device and a style for the performance of self as a captive body.

On the evening of Sunday June 12, 1994, Simpson caught an 11:45 p.m. American Airlines passenger flight from Los Angeles to Chicago (Lange and Vannatter 73). He was scheduled to attend a golf tournament organised for "special clients" of the Hertz car rental company the next day (Lange and Vannatter 72). Early on the morning of June 13, Simpson received a telephone call at the O'Hare Plaza hotel from Detective Ron Phillips, advising Simpson that his children were fine and his ex-wife had been killed (Lange and Vannatter 26). Simpson is reported to have responded: "Oh, my God! Nicole is killed? Oh, my God, is she dead?" (Lange and Vannatter 26). Simpson caught the next available flight from Chicago to Los Angeles and arrived home "just after 12:00 noon" (Lange and Vannatter 57). Simpson was handcuffed and unhandcuffed before entering the house (Fuhrman 41; Lange and Vannatter 57). From 1:35 p.m. until 2:07 p.m. that day, Los Angeles Police Department Robbery/Homicide Detectives Lange and Vannatter questioned Simpson in an interview room at Parker Center (Lange and Vannatter 67, 86). Simpson's immediate depressive state would seem to have been, understandably, the result of shock from the emotional devastation of having lost his still-loved ex-wife and his two young children having lost their mother. However, Kardashian's reflection on Simpson's state of mind that day, reconstructed in American Tragedy, explains his friend's "abnormal, scary" depression as more attributable to the fear of a loss of face; to the negative impact of the murder on his public

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9 This information comes from the police interview with Simpson conducted by Detectives Lange and Vannatter at Parker Center on June 13, reproduced in Evidence Dismissed (Lange and Vannatter 67-86) and Murder in Brentwood (Fuhrman 361-385).
Kardashian knew that Simpson held his public image close to his soul. Athletes are like that. Talent sustains them, but ego makes them champions. They may look and act like gods, but underneath they are often needy men and women who run faster, fight harder, and make that crucial extra effort for the applause. They get hooked on the cheers and acclaim. Image becomes everything.

Simpson's carefully nurtured celebrity persona was under siege. Instead of applauding, a hostile public, represented by shrill media hacks with cameras and notebooks, clamored at the gates. The tone of the television news made it clear that he was no hero. (Schiller and Willwerth 30)

Filtered through the organising authorial activity of Schiller and Willwerth, Kardashian's recollection is turned into a moralising commentary. It becomes a narrative set-up for the portrayal of Simpson as suicidal. It also maps the topos of Simpson's celebrity as ego-driven (self-serving) but also altruistic (for the fans); a co-dependency. Kardashian's concern highlights Simpson's place in American cultural history as an awarded football icon and the public currency he enjoyed prior to the murders and his arrest. Simpson's "public life was a classically American uphill thrust past limits, right to the shore of possibility. The rickets-afflicted ghetto boy destined for a hoodlum's life becomes America's most gifted football star, then a beloved and 'colorless' celebrity" (Weller 48). Prior to the murders, Simpson had political aspirations (Weller 108). As an athlete Simpson's fame was markedly different from that of a pop culture figure such as an actor, a pop star or musician, even a politician. Simpson's public persona was based on respect, admiration and awe for his sporting achievements. An authentic, super-human talent that cannot be manufactured and
is the result of honest, hard work, a "crucial extra effort for the applause" (Schiller and Willwerth 30) for themselves, but also for their team, the game and their fans. It is this ability to perform for reasons other than self (ego, money) that invests athletic achievement with a heroic nobility in public discourse and public experience. As a retired athlete Simpson's livelihood depended on the perpetuation of an established image, on an enduring, celebrated public history. There would be no more unbelievable plays that might countermand a shaken public image and promise forgiveness. As a retired professional footballer he was no longer actually needed. The public's attachment to Simpson, his popularity, was purely emotional, mythic, based on experiential memory and a strong connection to the joy of the past. The mythic psychological structure of Simpson's sports identity was resurrected and invigorated during the "Bronco Chase," the Los Angeles freeway police pursuit of Simpson and Cowlings: "thousands of drivers pulled over on the freeway and lined the overpasses to witness the Bronco pass by as if it were a kind of sports marathon, holding signs and cheering the men on yelling 'Go Juice Go!' and 'The Juice is Loose!'" (Sturken 189-90). The visible and vocal support for Simpson was an expression of affection, interest, excitement and enjoyment. Despite the absurd dissonance of its application, the obvious inappropriate trans-contextual use of a sporting cheer and the articulation of acclaim to motivate a man to commit an illegal act and risk his life, the spontaneous reaction seems somehow fitting, unavoidable, comic and tragic. This was the only way onlookers could relate to Simpson, the only way they knew how: as spectators, as sports fans and Simpson fans.

Although slow speed the police pursuit was not a game. It was serious and potentially dangerous. Cowlings had warned the police "to keep their distance since O.J. had a loaded gun and was threatening suicide" (Sturken 189). Simpson was not wanted for speeding - Cowlings
was driving and driving well below the speed limit at thirty to forty-five miles per hour (Thaler 7; Sturken 189) - Simpson was wanted for double murder. This public display enacted by Simpson and the cheering, supportive spectators who crowded freeways and massed outside his Rockingham home suggests that the tragic realism of the victims, the horrendous, fatal nature of the crime was forgotten in the craziness or the disbelief of the moment. Simpson's fate distracted attention. The inability to process the horror, the tragic realism of Simpson as murder suspect, suicidal and on the run produced the event as a spectacle. I refer here to the "Bronco Chase" not as media spectacle but as experiential spectacle, as it was actually lived within the affective witnessing experience of the participating, practicing spectators whose enthralled gaze was directed to the mesmerising display of Simpson, barely visible through the windows of the car. One young male spectator claimed: "This is the most incredible thing in my entire lifetime" (Los Angeles Times Staff 24). Simpson's pre-arranged gazeability, his exhibitionist role as an image of pleasure, coded as being for spectacle, generated a spectacular effect: the inability to avert one's eyes, to look or be elsewhere.

On Tuesday June 14, Kardashian moved Simpson to his home in Encino where Simpson remained until Friday June 17 (Schiller and Willwerth 31-38). Kardashian's intention was to protect Simpson, "to get him away from the press" and to monitor and deter any suicidal behaviour (Schiller and Willwerth 31). American Tragedy reports that Simpson had intended to kill himself the night before: his sister, Shirley and her husband, Benny slept "on the couch in O.J.'s bedroom, staying awake in shifts" (Schiller and Willwerth 30).

Until three A.M., their suicide watch was uneventful. Simpson tossed and turned, stared at the ceiling, muttered, slept fitfully. Then he got up. Shirley was awake as he
stumbled into the bathroom and failed to make the usual sounds. The nearby closet was full of guns. Shirley called out, 'Don't do anything crazy, O.J.' No response. She called out again, 'Your kids need you.' Another silence, but finally he answered her. If Shirley hadn't talked about the kids, Simpson told Kardashian the next day, that would have been the moment. Shirley knew he wanted to kill himself. He'd gotten up to do it. (Schiller and Willwerth 30-31)

Despite Simpson's confession, it took Kardashian until the morning of Friday June 17 to remove his own five guns, "three rifles, a Smith & Wesson .38 [. . .] and a pellet gun" from his house (Schiller and Willwerth 62); the supposed "safe haven" (Schiller and Willwerth 56) in which he had ensconced his suicidal friend. Kardashian's live-in fiancé, Denice Halicki had suggested the removal of the guns on the morning of June 17, when they were advised that Simpson was to be told a warrant had been issued for his arrest (Schiller and Willwerth 62).

The funeral for Brown Simpson was held on Thursday June 16. Recalling Simpson's psychological state on that day, Kardashian notes: "He seemed to be sliding between dark and darker moods, morose, out of reach. He was barely tracking" (Schiller and Willwerth 54). At the funeral, Kardashian was confronted with the blinding, realising force of his own naïveté or denial. He encountered the reality of a public perception and public opinion that had already intensely affected and emotionally debilitated Simpson, in anticipation.

Entering by the side door put him and Simpson squarely in front of hundreds of people who had all cared deeply about Nicole Brown. He felt their eyes immediately. And he understood instantly, perhaps for the first time, that his peers didn't share his feelings about his friend. These were close friends, acquaintances, business colleagues,
people whose opinions and respect he valued. Now he saw hundreds of faces sculpted in sadness and anger. He felt the collective accusation - Murderer!

Mourners whispered to each other. How brazen to come here, Kardashian imagined them saying. [...] O.J. Simpson was no hero in this room. (Schiller and Willwerth 56)

If Kardashian felt as confused, shamed, humiliated, distressed and frightened as this episode suggests, then Simpson would have been profoundly more affected by the experience, even if buffered by medication. According to the reconstruction of events narrated in *American Tragedy*, Simpson was moving into an emotional state of flat affect. The next morning, June 17, Simpson's attorney, Shapiro advised his client he would have to turn himself in to the police by 11:00 a.m. He was to be charged with the double murder of his ex-wife and her friend. "As Kardashian watch[ed], Simpson hardly react[ed]. His face [was] blank. He seem[ed] to be staring off into space" (Schiller and Willwerth 63). During his medical examination of Simpson shortly after, Dr. Michael Baden, "former New York City medical examiner" (Schiller and Willwerth 42), noted Simpson's unusual demeanour:

Baden tried not to be obvious about it, but he stared at the superstar. What he saw surprised him. Not the hard-charging bigger-than-life athlete he'd expected. Not today, anyway. The man was quiet, polite, almost meek. He was even charming. But there was something in his eyes. Or rather, something missing. Something so subtle that Baden almost didn't catch it. Like a migratory bird, Simpson was gone. [...] Baden realized that the odd expression on Simpson's face, disguised at first by his considerable charm, was what clinicians call flat affect. O.J. was deeply depressed. His emotional self had fled. Baden serves on a board that reviews prison suicides. He turned to Dr. Faerstein. 'We have to notify the jail people to put him on a
suicide watch.' The psychiatrist agreed, and he briefed Shapiro. (Schiller and Willwerth 67-68)

This assessment was made before Simpson disappeared with Cowlings, prior to the "Bronco Chase" and after Simpson had handwritten a series of letters, "one to his children, another to his mother" and one "To Whom It May Concern" (Schiller and Willwerth 67). As the police made their way to Kardashian's home to arrest Simpson, the 11:00 a.m. deadline for a quiet surrender had come and gone, Simpson continued to work up the courage to shoot himself (Schiller and Willwerth 70-74). Conflicted by his responsibilities, his loyalty to Simpson and his religious faith, Kardashian finally capitulated to Simpson's suicidal incapacity (Schiller and Willwerth 74). In *American Tragedy*, Kardashian rationalises Simpson's behaviour as driven not by guilt but by the fear of public disgrace:

Now Kardashian turns his back on his friend of twenty-four years. A man should be allowed to kill himself if he wants to, he growls to himself.

Kardashian knows athletes are monstrous and magical beings for whom fame comes very early. Many have no life experience to prepare them for legions of worshipful fans and staggering wealth. They become dependent on praise and public attention. No street drug is as powerful, and Kardashian has understood his friend's addiction for decades. Few experiences in his life have been quite so sublime as hanging with O.J. The pleasure Simpson experiences when people focus on him is almost incandescent. O.J. so loves the attention you pay him that he makes you feel good.

Now his larger-than-life friend faces a fall so steep that Kardashian can't imagine it. Nicole is gone. And his other great love, the public, has turned on him. They will see
him handcuffed. The humiliation and loneliness facing this man are beyond words. There is nothing left.

Kardashian walks upstairs to rejoin the doctors. The police should be here any minute. His last act as a friend is to leave the athlete alone to define his life as he wishes. (Schiller and Willwerth 74)

As it is contextualised by the story told in *American Tragedy*, Simpson's four-page letter handwritten on a yellow legal pad, placed in a "sealed envelope [and marked] ‘To Whom It May Concern, press or public’" (Schiller and Willwerth 67) demands to be read as a farewell letter, a "suicide note." Other published accounts of the events of June 17 also support this reading. *Evidence Dismissed* reports that Paula Barbieri advised the Los Angeles Police Department she believed Simpson was "suicidal" (Lange and Vannatter 153). In the public body and the institutional body, the shock of Simpson's alleged guilt was compounded by the shock of his deliberate evasion of police custody. Simpson's disappearance became evidence of his panic, his fear and consequently, his guilt. Simpson's panic and fear was contagious. It spread throughout the Los Angeles Police Department, the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office, the media, the public, Simpson's family, friends and business associates, the victims' families and friends. At a 2:00 p.m. nationally televised media conference, the Los Angeles Police Department announced that Simpson was to be charged with double homicide and had not surrendered to police as arranged: "The Los Angeles Police Department right now is actively searching for Mr. Simpson" (Lange and Vannatter 156). The involuntary affective reflex of the media to this announcement was palpable, collective and contagious. It is noted in *Evidence Dismissed*: "The gasp from the audience of journalists [was] felt and heard throughout the room and on television" (Lange and
Vannatter 156). It was a shock wave of sentiment. The gasp of the journalists would have been synchronous with the affective response of the viewing public, a wide-eyed, open-mouthed intake of breath followed by a murmuring interest and excitement. At a 3:00 p.m. media conference, Los Angeles County District Attorney, Gil Garcetti announced that Simpson would be found and brought to justice (Los Angeles Times Staff 22). Garcetti’s vow was ominous, threatening and portentous. It fuelled the mobilisation and contagion of affect - fears for Simpson’s safety, and enjoyment, excitement, amusement, anger, disgust and astonishment at Simpson’s behaviour. In Pursuit of Justice observed the effect of the spectacle as a social relation:

In sports bars and newsrooms, in barbershops and on street corners, people stared at one another and repeated the news. O.J. Simpson had vanished! Some yipped and hooted with glee: ‘The Juice is loose!’ Others moaned in disgust. And some just seemed stunned. O.J. Simpson on the run? How could that be? Yet the all-points bulletin flashed: ‘Suspect wanted for a double homicide. Suspect Orenthal James Simpson ... possibly armed, use caution.’ (Los Angeles Times Staff 22)

The spectacle of Simpson’s disappearance was not an image at this stage, it was a spirit, a feeling invading and pervading public consciousness and experience. A spectator ready-ness or alert-ness was developing. The spectacle was emerging as a promise, a very real possibility. As yet, there was no visual image to accompany the news of Simpson’s disappearance, no way to actually present it. There were only past shots of Simpson as hero, memories, nothing to attach to this new sense of Simpson as alleged murderer and fugitive. But the demand, the desire had been deployed, awaiting Simpson’s performance as spectacle to fulfill it. The appearance of Simpson’s "suicide note" was to alter the course of public expectation and the nature of the fermenting
spectacle. Anticipation reached fever pitch but events were strangely attenuated by a sympathetic, careful consideration for Simpson's welfare by law enforcement officers. Perhaps Simpson's confusion, the state of flat affect which incited his own incendiary action, prohibited or inhibited any overt, confrontational or aggressive responsiveness in his lawful pursuers. It is more likely, however, that the surveillance of the un-averting, transfixed gaze of the media and the general public protected Simpson, preventing the Los Angeles Police Department from proceeding with anything other than a self-conscious, life-preserving caution and responsibility to ensure Simpson's safety; even if for their own benefit. The logic of the spectacle invested the scrutiny of the spectators with an authority and control over the dramatic outcome of the scene. During the "Bronco Chase," the media made "panoptic power public" (Fiske 260). The recording and witnessing presence of the general public challenged the Los Angeles Police Department to act appropriately, delicately, to proceed with care and caution, mindful of the fact they were being monitored. Simpson's death, whether self-inflicted or an option deemed necessary by the Los Angeles Police Department should an armed Simpson become a threat to public and police safety, would be classified as a death in custody and considered an assassination. The fear and panic elicited by this subject positioning of the Los Angeles Police Department is registered in the over-compensatory contingent deployed to deal with the Simpson situation. Two black men (Simpson and Cowlings) in one white car with one gun (a pistol) required the tactical response of "two dozen squad cars" (*Los Angeles Times* Staff 23), police helicopters, "twenty-three SWAT officers and four sergeants" (Lange and Vannatter 166), a "vehicle assault team," four snipers, a "two-man negotiating team [. . .] and 'one full element' of well-trained Metro officers" (Lange and Vannatter 167). Simpson was not an anonymous fugitive black man. He was suicidal. His death, either way, was not an option. The reputation of the Los Angeles Police Department could not withstand
another racial indictment of overzealous policing, misjudgement or use of excessive force. Not after the Rodney King beating captured on video on March 5, 1991, the 1992 state trial of the Los Angeles Police Officers involved and the riots sparked by their acquittal, and the subsequent federal trial of the officers.

Simpson's suicidal intentions were revealed to the public at 5:00 p.m. in the "third press conference of the afternoon" (Los Angeles Times Staff 22). Kardashian read Simpson's letter addressed "To Whom It May Concern, press or public" (Schiller and Willwerth 67) to the captivated nation. He displayed the letter, holding it up for the media cameras as authentic evidence of Simpson's turbulent and frantic state of mind. A close-up photograph of a photocopy of the letter being shown to the media and the public is inset in a typed, corrected version of Simpson's letter in In Pursuit of Justice (Los Angeles Times Staff 23). In Pursuit of Justice reports that Simpson's letter was handwritten "on unlined white paper" (Los Angeles Times Staff 23), yet a facsimile of the letter in Murder in Brentwood clearly shows four pages with horizontal lines and a left-hand vertical margin on each page (Fuhrman 175-78). As the Murder in Brentwood copy of Simpson's letter accords with the markings on the pages of a "yellow legal pad" (Schiller and Willwerth 67), the letter in the photograph in In Pursuit of Justice must be a photocopy of the original. Simpson's writing is too level, too perfect horizontally, for him to have written on unlined paper.

Simpson's suicide letter is a very public show of self, in absentia (see fig. 9). It seems too private for public consumption or public display and yet it was produced precisely for this function and effect. Simpson's letter was a communiqué, "an official communication or announcement, esp.
Fig. 9. Simpson's "suicide note." Facsimile of original (Fuhrman 175-78).
to the press or public" ("Communiqué").\(^{10}\) In *I Want to Tell You* Simpson himself refers to it as "my open letter read on television on June 17, 1994, by my friend Robert Kardashian" (13). Whether Simpson meant it to be a suicide note, a farewell note or an apology note, his letter is a public pronouncement designed and intended for a mass audience. It is a kind of acceptance speech. Perhaps it is the spontaneous immediacy, the inescapable originality of Simpson's handwriting that makes his epistolary expression seem too real, too raw to be a staged performance. We are given no clue for how it should be read or received. Is this letter an act of courage, cowardice, thoughtfulness or thoughtlessness? There is evidence of an anxious self-consciousness in Simpson's desire to please, to do the right thing, to say what is expected of him in this parting gesture. He professes, confesses, self-discloses, thanks, apologises, advises, self-justifies, questions, regrets and sends his peace and love to everyone. Simpson's *communiqué* is messy, untidy, but not chaotic or incoherent. There is a structure to his list of statements and requests. He addresses and dates his written work. The paragraph layout signals the organisation and arrangement of his thoughts as points for discussion. Firstly, his innocence and his love for Brown Simpson, his admission of their mistakes as a couple, his shortcomings as a husband. Simpson chides the press and asks them to leave his children alone. He remembers to thank his friends, golf buddies, football teammates, his first wife, Marquerite and his girlfriend, Barbieri. In conclusion, Simpson offers advice and condolences. His authorial activity demonstrates an attempt to console a self in emotional crisis; himself, the media, the public, his fans, his friends, his first wife, his girlfriend, whomever it may concern. There was no need to address his family in the letter, he had written separate, private letters to his children and his mother (Schiller and Willwerth

\(^{10}\) This apt description of Simpson's "suicide note" is *The Collins Paperback English Dictionary* definition for "Communiqué." *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines "Communiqué" as: "An official announcement or report, esp. a report of a meeting, conference, etc."
Simpson justifies his leave-taking as a sacrifice he must make and is willing to make for his children and his sense of self-worth:

I CAN'T GO ON, NO MATTER WHAT THE OUTCOME PeoPLe WiLL LOOK AND POINT. [. . .] I CAN'T TAKe THAT I CAN'T SUBJeCT MY CHILDReN TO THAT. THIS WAY THeY CAN MOVe ON AND GO ON WITH THAiR LiVeS PLeASE IF I'V DONe ANYTHiNg WoRTHWIIHi iN MY LiFE. LeT MY KIDS LiVe iN PeACE FROM YOU (PRess). (sic) (Fuhrman 177)

He does not make excuses or ask forgiveness:

DON'T FeeL SORRY FOR ME. I'V HAD A GReAT LiFE MADE GReAT FRieNDS. PLeASE THiNK OF THe ReAL O.J. AND NOT THiS LOST PeRSON.

THANK FOR MAKING MY LiFE SPeCiAL I HOPE I HeLP YOURS.

PeACE & Love

☺ J. (Fuhrman 178)

The graphology of Simpson's signing off is poignant. It is pathetic, not tragic. The very human marks of the pen on the page have an uncontrived integrity, an unselfconscious honesty. There is no shame in the numerous spelling mistakes, in the grammatical and syntactical errors, in the inconsistency of upper case and lower case lettering or lack of punctuation. Linguistically, Simpson expresses a wistful sadness, defeat, loss and regret. Graphically, Simpson expresses a libertarian joy, the freedom to write unrestrained and unedited, without orthographic fear. The discrepancies in Simpson's penmanship are not inadequacies. As Barthes argues in "Freedom to
Write*: "legalized spelling keeps the *scriptor* from enjoying writing, that euphoric gesture which permits putting into the tracing of a word *a little more* than its mere intention to communicate" (45).

What else could the playful, friendly smiley face in the "O" of O.J. signify if not "that euphoric gesture" (Barthes, "Freedom to Write" 45) of creativity, a utopian longing, the momentary forgetting of self as O.J. the murder suspect? This simple self-portrait, "☺ J.," this congenial physiognomic signature, is a sign of Simpson's "natural" public persona: "Iv ALWAYS TRYed TO BE UP & HeLPFUL" (sic) (Fuhrman 177). It is the mark of an autobiographical *prosopopoeia*, the voice, mouth, eye, face and name of Simpson. Simpson masks his sadness and fear. He does not want to forget his former happiness and joy, the person he was. It is an act of image restoration. This *prosopon* is the "real O.J." (Fuhrman 178), the person he wants the press and public to remember. The "lost person" (Fuhrman 178) he has become is unintelligible to himself, a stranger.

Simpson's crossing out suggests the recognition of a need for self-control, for coherence and dignity. The obvious marks of erasure, rectification, clarification and revision signify a desire to be understood. To number the first two pages but not the third and fourth pages, to write the incorrect date, suggests a semi-rational ordering, a semiotic trace (a symptom). Such a disciplined presence of mind or adherence to convention is lost or discarded in the wake of the impulse to write, to make a final public statement. As Simpson's last words they are without gravitas or ceremony. Simpson's desperation and suffering is expressed in a melodramatic shout, an effect of the upper case lettering format: "I CAN'T GO ON" (Fuhrman 177). His orthographically incomplete promise to Barbieri intimates his commitment to a drastic course of action: "PAULA. WHAT CAN I SAY YOU ARE SpeCiAL I'M SORRY We'Re [. . .] NOT GoiNG TO HAVe OUR CHANC [. . .]. GOD
Simpson's parapraxes indicate haste, the urgency of his activity; and yet the length of the letter, four pages on a yellow legal pad, does not indicate brevity. This paradox reveals the anxiety of a paucity of time, a defiance of its demands. The scarcity of punctuation gives Simpson's expression a breathless quality. The register is informal, excited, speakerly. Yet with careful attention to a technical grammatical detail, Simpson includes an apostrophe in his contractions. Such precision is absent elsewhere. In contrast to what is forgotten, orthography and punctuation, this correctness, this proper execution seems irrational, transgressive, neurosis. It is the inversion (perversion) of orthographic principles as Barthes describes them in "Freedom to Write": "once spelling is made uniform, legalized, sanctioned by state means, in its very complication and its irrationality, it is obsessional neurosis which is instated: the spelling mistake becomes Transgression" (45).

The written physiognomy of Simpson's lexical dexterity cannot escape the humiliation of our discrimination, accusation and judgement as readers. But perhaps Simpson's slips of the pen deserve the courtesy of an unconventional critical contemplation - understanding, not forgiveness. Aware of his impending arrest for double homicide, contemplating suicide, the last thing Simpson would have worried about was public scrutiny of his literacy skills. In Pursuit of Justice features a transcribed, one-page-to-view, word-processed version of Simpson's letter with a close-up photograph of the first page of the handwritten letter inset in the top left-hand corner (see fig. 10) (Los Angeles Times Staff 23). The corrections reveal an embarrassment for Simpson, whose
To whom it may concern:

First, everyone understand I had nothing to do with Nicole’s murder. I loved her, always have, and always will. If we had a problem, it’s because I loved her so much. Recently we came to the understanding that for now we were not right for each other, at least for now. Despite our love we were different and that’s why we mutually agreed to go our separate ways.

It was tough splitting for a second time, but we both knew it was for the best. Inside, I had no doubt that in the future we would be close friends, or more. Unlike what has been written in the press, Nicole and I had a great relationship for most of our lives together. Like all long-term relationships, we had a few downs and ups.

I took the heat New Year’s 1989 because that’s what I was supposed to do. I did not plead no contest for any other reason but to protect our privacy. It was advised it would end the press hype. I don’t want to belabor knocking the press, but I can’t believe what is being said. Most of it is totally made up. I know you have a job to do, but as a last wish, please, please, please leave my children in peace. Their lives will be tough enough.

I want to send my love and thanks to all my friends. I’m sorry I can’t name every one of you. Especially A.C.—man, thanks for being in my life. The support and friendship I received from so many-Wayne Hughes, Louis Marks, Frank Olson, Mark Packer, Bender, Bobby Kardashian—I wish we had spent more time together in recent years. My golfing buddies-Hoss, Alan Austin, Mike, Craig, Denver, Wyler, Sandy, Jay, Donnie—thanks for the fun.

All my teammates over the years: Reggie (McKenzie), you were the soul of my pro career. Ahmed (Rashad), I never stopped being proud of you. Marcus (Allen), you’ve got a great lady in Catherine, don’t mess it up. Bobby Chandler, thanks for always being there. Skip and Cathy, I love you guys—without you I never would have made it through this far.

Marquerite (his first wife), thanks for the early years—we had some fun. Paula—what can I say? You are special. I’m sorry we’re not going to have our chance. God brought you to me, I now see. As I leave, you’ll be in my thoughts.

I think of my life and feel I’ve done most of the right things. So why do I end up like this? I can’t go on. No matter what the outcome, people will look and point. I can’t take that. I can’t subject my children to that. This way they can move on and go on with their lives. Please, if I’ve done anything worthwhile with my life, let my kids live in peace from you, the press.

I’ve had a good life. I’m proud of how I lived. My mama taught me to do unto others—treated people the way I wanted to be treated. I’ve always tried to be up and helpful. So why is this happening? I’m sorry for the Goldman family. I know how much it hurts.

Nicole and I had a good life together. All this press talk about a rocky relationship is more than what every long-term relationship experiences. All her friends will confirm that I have been totally loving and understanding of what she’s been going through. At times I have felt like a battered husband or boyfriend. But I loved her, make that clear to everyone. And I would take whatever it took to make it work.

Don’t feel sorry for me. I’ve had a great life, great friends. Please think of the real O.J. and not this lost person. Thanks for making my life special. I hope I helped yours.

Peace and love, O.J.

Fig. 10. Simpson’s "suicide note." Reproduced in In Pursuit of Justice

(Los Angeles Times Staff 23).
linguistic and graphic "ignorances' and 'blunders,'" "aberrations or debilities" (Barthes, "Freedom to Write" 45) are mis-treated, reproved rather than improved. Simpson's physiognomy, his autobiographical character is erased, de-faced. His smiley face (mouth, eye) is removed from his signature as O.J. His voice is lost. The imposition of a decontextualising, standardising, sanitising journalistic practice certainly abates the authentic efflorescence of Simpson's subjectivity. It eviscerates the heart and soul, the unconventional poetic resonance of Simpson's message that lies in his graphic marks of the body transposed to the page. It is the realisation of Simpson's fear. The "real O.J." becomes a "lost person" (Fuhrman 178). What is lost in translation (in the shift from autobiographical to biographical) is the sensual trace of a person, the personal, Simpson's personality, the authenticity inscribed in the corporeal wonder and delight of the signatory smiley face. In the inky evidence of the hand-held pen as it traced and scribbled guided by the size, shape and lines of the paper. In the emphatic underlining, the artful, incidental use of the margin and the creases of the paper folded for insertion in an envelope for delivery.

The unaltered facsimile of Simpson's "suicide note" included in Fuhrman's *Murder in Brentwood* (175-78) (see fig. 9) is infinitely more arresting, exciting and captivating than the version reproduced in *In Pursuit of Justice* (*Los Angeles Times* Staff 23). The expressive uniqueness of the original with its individual, identifying quirks of Simpson's handwriting, his grammatical and orthographic mistakes, indicative of the demands of the moment and idiosyncratic creativity are a sight for fascination. Errors, obvious and crossed out, unreadable, fascinate for not only their content but for their form, for their very unapologetic presence. There is something true in the unmediated inept and unrefined virtuosity of Simpson's "open letter" (Simpson 13). It signifies the "scriptor's phantasmatics" (Barthes, "Freedom to Write" 44), a physiognomy of the expression of
emotion, a desire for liberty soon to be lost. A liberty, an expression of life, possibly explained by Barthes in "Freedom to Write":

If orthography were free - free to be simplified or not, according to the subject's desire - it might constitute a very positive practice of expression; the written physiognomy of the word might acquire a properly poetic value, insofar as it emerged from the scriptor's phantasmatics, and not from a uniform and reductive law; just think of the kind of intoxication, of baroque jubilation which explodes in the orthographic 'aberrations' of old manuscripts, of texts by children and the letters of foreigners: might one not say that in such efflorescences as these the subject seeks his freedom: to trace, to dream, to remember, to understand? Are there not occasions when we encounter particularly 'happy' spelling mistakes - as if the scriptor were obeying not academic law but a mysterious commandment that comes to him from his own history - perhaps even from his own body? (44-45)

I do not mean by "true" that Simpson is telling the "truth" about his innocence. His undiminished love for Brown Simpson does not deny the possibility that he may have murdered her and Goldman. While I agree with ex-Los Angeles Police Department Detective Fuhrman that Simpson's "suicide note" "is a strange document and deserves consideration" (174), I do not think we can assume or infer Simpson's guilt from this document, as Fuhrman does:

Simpson is obviously racked with guilt. He is trying to confess to himself without making any incriminating statements. His claims of innocence ring hollow, and while he does show some concern for his children, it is clear that he is mostly worried about himself. He feels guilt and remorse, but not because he murdered the mother of his
children. His biggest regret is that he will no longer be able to hang out with his friends. His life as a famous celebrity is over. When he says goodbye to his friends and family, is it because he is planning to kill himself, or because he knows he is going to jail for a long time? (174)

I do not think Simpson knew the answer to Fuhrman's question himself at the time, which is why what Simpson means by "AS I LeAVe" (sic) and "THiS WAY" (sic) (Fuhrman 177) is ambiguous, ambivalent, tentative rather than definite. I do not think we can read this letter for what it says or does not say. I think we can read this letter for what it is - an ethnographic cultural artefact.

Simpson's "suicide note" does not provide irrefutable evidence of his guilt. It is irrefutable evidence of Simpson's knowledge of his impending arrest for the murder of his ex-wife and Goldman. He knew he was the only suspect. He had already been handcuffed the day after the murders, although the handcuffs were immediately removed (Lange and Vannatter 57; Fuhrman 41).

However, Simpson's note did become a source of anxiety for his defense attorneys during the criminal trial. The jury could have interpreted his epistolary appeal as self-serving and opportunistic:

Lee Bailey faxed Shapiro a memo. 'Like it or not, one of the most troublesome areas of this entire case is O.J.'s letter read by Kardashian on TV coupled to the gun-at-head 'chase.' Serious people - many of whom want to believe that O.J. is innocent - have told me that they simply cannot get by these two events as anything other than solid evidence of guilt.' Bailey's fax pointed out that the farewell letter sought sympathy for O.J. but expressed no indignation about Nicole's 'slaughter' or sorrow over her death. 'We need to face these problems squarely.' (Schiller and Willwerth 194)
Like the tapes of his conversations with Schiller and the publishing of *I Want to Tell You*, Simpson's "suicide note" was and continues to be a vulnerable text. It signifies vestibularity. According to *American Tragedy*, Simpson did attempt suicide. He just could not go through with it.

The inconsistency between the date recorded on Simpson's letter, June 15, and the *American Tragedy* report that Simpson wrote the letter on the morning of his arrest, June 17, is noted. The mistake on Simpson's part is understandable. It demonstrates his state of mind, his extreme anxiety, confusion and distress. It is an example of an everyday parapraxis: even persons not considering suicide or facing arrest for murder have been known to write the wrong date. It is possible Simpson did write the letter two days earlier, on the day before Brown Simpson's funeral. This seems to reduce the immediacy of effect if Simpson did write the "suicide note" two days before his arrest was authorised and carried out - two days before his "run." However, the lengthy delay only heightens the urgency of the escalating need for him to be saved from taking his own life. Simpson's "suicide note" is an incriminating private document made overwhelmingly public by two men entrusted with his care. As the letter was intended for the press and the public, Kardashian's media conference reading functions as the respectful execution of Simpson's final wishes. Simpson's farewell letter was his first textual production for public consumption. It was the draft for the themes and concerns of *I Want to Tell You*. The letters Simpson was sent while on remand at the Los Angeles County Jail were a response to this initial epistolary address.

In *I Want to Tell You* Simpson addresses the media spectacle of O.J. Simpson as murderer. He critiques his own newsworthiness as the commercial exploitation of a lucrative market:
From the very first, the press wanted to believe my guilt, that I was guilty of these murders. I could understand how easy it was for people to believe that I did this, but I realized that it wasn't the people who started believing that I was guilty, it was the press. My ex-wife is dead; Nicole is buried. Once she is buried, there's no more story. But if I can appear to be guilty, it's a great story, and it starts to make money for everybody.

What I became aware of quickly was that the press doesn't care about the truth, they only care about what sells. If two or three other guys showed up tomorrow - I mean, were arrested for these murders - forget it. White, black, half white, quarter black, maybe it would be headlines for a day or a week. Then in a month it's forgotten. But as long as O.J. is the suspect, this story is money. It's ratings, and ratings mean money. They wouldn't be doing this story if it wasn't for money.

(Simpson 68-69)

Simpson suggests a particular targeting of himself as a private citizen and an utilisation of his public profile by the mass media - newspapers, magazines, radio, television - for their own financial, publishing and broadcasting gain. He advises his readers that they are being manipulated affectively as consumers, that they are not only being mobilised but constructed as an actively consuming body, as ratings signifiers (for television and radio broadcasters), as circulation figures (for press publications). Simpson foregrounds his analytic business savvy with the comment: "What I became aware of quickly was that the press doesn't care about the truth, they only care about what sells" (68). But surely the idea of ratings and what drives them would be nothing new to Simpson. He has been a media player since 1967, when he began his career as a college football player.
What Simpson's comment reveals is an anxiety due to his lack of control over the portrayal of his public image, a public image that Simpson considers to be his own private property, his own financial investment. And indeed it is. It is Simpson's body, Simpson's face, his likeness, his name. It is a flesh and blood commodity that Simpson has invested in heavily. But it is a problematic commodity, not a real commodity in the true economic sense of the word. A commodity is a primary product, a unit of wealth available for exchange; it has a designated exchange value in a stock market. Perhaps we could call celebrity, the marketing of a public self, a faux commodity or the commodity fallacy. Simpson is commodious, an abstract commodity. As such, his use value and his exchange value are abstract, subject to the fluctuation of human desire. He works and operates within a faux commodity stock exchange as a "thing produced for use or sale, an article of commerce, an object of trade" ("Commodity," def. 6a). In the "Introduction" to Time and Commodity Culture: Essays in Cultural Theory and Postmodernity, Frow states: "the concept of the commodity is not itself 'real': it is a theoretical fiction which is more or less useful for setting up explanatory metaphors" (4). Simpson rents out his face and his name to sell products. The quality, the condition of his face and his name is convenient, suitable, available, fitting for this utilitarian, marketing purpose. Celebrity, one's celebrity status or fame is a currency. Yet, a celebrity is a human body and a human being. It is not an inanimate material, a thing. The public persona and the private self are not and cannot be dissociative experiential states, systems of being or modes of operating. In Simpson we find a pronounced confusion or difficulty of self because Simpson's public image is anchored to his physicality, the corporeality of his body and his face, his embodiment. His public image is the amalgamation and the promulgation of a bodily performance and ability, facial recognition and a formal and informal appellative identity as O.J., The Juice, O.J. Simpson, Orenthal James Simpson. Simpson's professional career is based on
the public persona of being himself, a personality. His celebrity self is an autobiographical prosopopoeia. As Kardashian notes, it is a "carefully nurtured celebrity persona" (Schiller and Willwerth 30). Simpson is the signified and the signifier, but he is not the sign. The sign is O.J. And this linguistic or semiotic detachment may be what makes the distinction between public persona and private self, between the rhetorical and the experiential aspects of self, problematic, unacceptable, schizophrenic, incomprehensible. Not just for Simpson but for the public and the media, as storytellers.

Simpson's critique of the media is unconsciously, obviously ironic, a metacomment. Simpson himself mobilises the very same financial objectives of his ratings driven adversaries. Writing and publishing I Want to Tell You is an exploitation and manipulation of O.J. as suspect and an appropriation of the double murder, the absent presence of the victims. Simpson's book business exploits and manipulates the market constructed by his new mass-mediated public image as murder suspect and his subsequent, new category of being as Los Angeles County Jail inmate 4013970. Simpson "wouldn't be doing [his] story if it wasn't for money" (Simpson 69). He admits this in the first chapter of I Want to Tell You (Simpson 10-11). Making defense fundraising the "second reason" (Simpson 10) or motivation for writing his memoir effectively, economically, morally, undoes the altruism of his primary imperative to answer all the letters he received in gaol. I Want to Tell You, quite literally, saved Simpson time and earned him necessary financial resources. The spectacular media coverage driven by the monetary motivation for ratings enabled Simpson to defend himself textually, publicly and legally (successfully). Simpson utilised the market constructed in part by the media. When Simpson lists his reasons for writing his remand memoir he does not state that he was forced to produce and publish an image restoration narrative
because the media enacted a discursive lynching in its biased, prejudicial portrayal of him as guilty of double murder. But it is obvious that he felt compelled to do so and this is certainly how *I Want to Tell You* functions. It allowed Simpson to respond to and contend the media portrayal of him as guilty, not only of murder but of betraying the trust of the American public and deceiving them as to his true nature. In response to Simpson, it was the Los Angeles Police Department who believed Simpson was guilty. He was arrested because the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office determined there was sufficient evidence to convict him of double homicide in a court of law. And the media ran with the story. It was a sensational one in the tabloid sense. Its seismic codes of murder, fame, wealth, race, sex appealed to a tabloid, mass-market sensibility. Simpson also took advantage of this spectacular codification of his story and himself even whilst decrying it and arguing against it. With the publication of *I Want to Tell You* Simpson not only sold his book, the tangible, to the reader. Simpson sold his story, his honesty, sincerity and a new public image of O.J., as a persecuted, incarcerated innocent. Becoming being for the spectator-captor Simpson sold himself as a captive body. Unconscious of the perverse sliding or degradation, Simpson offered the racialised flesh of his black male body as a site and a sight for narrative inscription within a marketplace of reification, desire, spectacle and the commodity fetishism of celebrity.

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11 It may be that the mass media attack on Simpson's character was the effect of their championing the victims' cause for justice. Fiske argues that the criminalisation of Black men such as "Simpson, Rodney King, Clarence Thomas, Willie Horton, Mike Tyson, and Marion Barry [. . .] whether found guilty or not [. . .] allowed the white social order to figure itself as the 'defender-victim'" (256).

12 "The four-page arrest warrant [was] completed and approved by Los Angeles District Attorney Gil Garcetti" (Lange and Vannatter 149). It was checked, authorised and signed by Municipal Judge Elva Soper (Lange and Vannatter 150).
Conclusion: We Are Still Talking about O.J. but Less Enthusiastically

In Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography, Barthes captions a photograph of a young man in handcuffs with the thought: "'He is dead and he is going to die ...'" (95) (see fig. 11). Barthes explains the photograph on the following page: "In 1865, young Lewis Payne tried to assassinate Secretary of State W. H. Seward. Alexander Gardner photographed him in his cell, where he was waiting to be hanged" (Camera Lucida 96). As I look at the photographs of Brown Simpson included in Simpson's memoir I am struck by thoughts similar to Barthes': how alive she looks (young, vibrant, strong), she has her whole life ahead of her and yet she is dead and she is going to die. The photographic portrait of Brown Simpson in her wedding dress taken on the day she married Simpson, February 2, 1985, is chilling and catastrophic (Simpson 36) (see fig. 12). Beyond the form and the detail of this image is the truth: she is dead and she is going to die. Brown Simpson's absent presence invoked by Simpson in his narrative is only really palpable when it is visibly rendered. Like Payne, Brown Simpson meets the gaze of her photographer and our gaze as readers of Simpson's memoir. On these pages amongst Simpson's family photographs Brown Simpson is placed as mother, wife, sister, daughter. Here she is historical and contemporary, real and imagined.

The photograph of Payne in Camera Lucida has more in common with Simpson's handcuffed and incarcerated state. Simpson could have faced the death penalty for his alleged crime. The District Attorney announced he would not seek the death penalty in the Simpson case on September 9, 1994, almost two months after Simpson's arrest (Lange and Vannatter 213). Although the crime of double murder qualifies for capital punishment under California state law, it
Fig. 11. Alexander Gardner Portrait of Lewis Payne. 1865. "He is dead and he is going to die..." (Barthes, Camera Lucida 95)
Fig. 12. Wedding portrait of Nicole Brown Simpson (Simpson 36).
was determined that "Simpson's alleged crime, although heinous, did not fulfill the requirements of
the DA's office to seek the death penalty" (Lange and Vannatter 214). Of course, Simpson is alive
and well today and a free man, living in Miami, Florida with his children with Brown Simpson,
Sydney and Justin. All that remains of Brown Simpson are these photographs, memories and the
fact of her (violent) death. Crime scene photographs of Brown Simpson's lifeless bloody body
reinforce the truth of the punctum of Simpson's family photographs (see fig. 13); they confirm it,
Simpson's defense fundraising memoir confirms it. The strange reality of the connection is that
Simpson could have been the very last person Brown Simpson ever saw, heard or touched:
"defense slash wounds on her hands show that she might have initially tried to ward off her
attacker" (Lange and Vannatter 108). Or Simpson could be telling the truth when he pleads: "I am
one hundred percent not guilty" (Simpson 13), a truth he claims he will speak until the day he dies
(Simpson 14). Although at times he jokes otherwise. An Esquire magazine story reports a
disturbing comment Simpson made to the writer, Celia Farber: "'Let's say I committed this crime,'
he says. 'Even if I did do this, it would have to have been because I loved her very much, right?'"
(Farber). In her Australian Magazine feature story on Simpson, Caroline Graham writes: "'So,' he
challenges, staring me straight in the eye, 'why did I kill Nicole?'" (32).

The public truth of Simpson's guilt for the murder of Brown Simpson and Goldman is a
question of credibility, of who to believe not necessarily what to believe. Truth and knowledge are
no longer objective, scientific fact. Fiske claims truth is "local and partial" (267). I would add it is
discursive, emotional, experiential. Fiske argues:

1 The Oxford English Dictionary defines "punctum" as: "1. A point in various figurative senses.
[. . .] 2. [. . .] b. A mere point of time, an instant [. . .]. 3. A chief or main point" ("Punctum," def. 1,
2b, 3).
Fig. 13. Crime scene photograph of Nicole Brown Simpson (Wilson and Wilson 475).
In our contemporary social conditions, the truths that occupy us most urgently are better understood as the products of decisions about what to treat as true. Truth becomes, in large part at least, the product of credibility and making credible, for ourselves and for others, is a complex process that involves forming alliances among believers. These alliances are informed, though not exclusively, by the social positions of those who form them, and thus by the commonalities both among their social histories and among their tellingly mundane experiences, of which a history is the aggregate. (267).

As an example of local and partial truths, Simpson's defense fundraising memoir provides a focus for the critical evaluation of credibility and what we can actually know and purport to know, as ordinary citizens, about significant social events and conditions. The mediatisation of the Simpson case reinforced that what we can know about a criminal case is always subject to media intervention and commodification. The formation of "alliances among believers" (Fiske 267) reflects commercial values and cultural values. The "force of the cultural narrative that [gave the Simpson story] its staying power" (Morrison, "Official Story" xvii) is the force of a dislocated racism. A dislocated racism, cultural and political, that clusters Simpson, Rodney King, Michael Jackson, Marion Barry, Bobby Brown, Mike Tyson, Kobe Bryant as figures of spectacle, whose racial identity is fodder for media critique, pillorisation and ridicule. Their criminalisation involved the racialisation of their masculinity as violent, threatening and treacherous. As Jackson continues to surgically reshape (de-face) his racial identity, it is discursively replaced, retraced. The tame African-American male is figured as predatory, not white. Fiske cites the proliferation of criminality, bad sexuality and narcotics as standard elements in the figuration of Black males in contemporary American culture and politics: "White America magnifies the threat that terrifies it by simultaneously
sexualizing and narcoticizing racial difference" (257). The cachet of the Simpson story for the media was that it involved domestic violence, illicit drugs, sex, wealth and murder. Simpson was accused of murder, an interracial double murder. This is what set him apart. For this reason Simpson stands out as a cynosure. Simpson was figured as representative, a part that stood for the whole of his race "needing correction, incarceration, censoring, silencing; the race that needs its civil rights disassembled; the race that is the sign and symbol of domestic violence" (Morrison, "Official Story" xxvii) and illegal drugs.

The Simpson story was a product of the Brentwood murders and the Simpson case, generated by a proliferation of mass-media attention and dissemination. The condition of Simpson's celebrity and the interracial nature of his alleged crime would seem to have been the catalyst for an unrelenting fascinated public gaze. Simpson was a well-known and well-liked public figure and his alleged crime was shocking. But it was Simpson's fugitive activity, his evasion of police custody that made the Simpson story spectacular. If Simpson had surrendered quietly to Los Angeles Police on June 17 as arranged then there would have been no "Bronco Chase." It was the "Bronco Chase" that rocked the American psyche as a thrilling and exciting national event. The hypervisible (racial) imagery of the "Bronco Chase" broadcast live instigated an insatiable panoptic public power. The general public became part of the surveillance process and refused to relinquish their spectatorial, speculating position in the witnessing of Simpson's captivity. I acknowledge Fiske's argument that "[s]urveillance has become a technology of whiteness," that the panoptic, "seeing eye" of the media is "white and its object colored" (260). I think the "Bronco Chase" made this distinction visible and knowable, uncomfortably so.
I have argued in this thesis that the cult of celebrity and commodity fetishism was the impetus for Simpson's defense fundraising memoir, *I Want to Tell You*. In conclusion I would like to add another element to Simpson's attractiveness or his spectability: the cult of criminality. Simpson's status as Los Angeles County Jail inmate 4013970, his criminalisation, made him hyperdesirable as an object of contemplation and fascination. Simpson received letters from people who had not been sports fans but became "fans," loyal supporters once he had been arrested and incarcerated on remand for double murder. Certain criminals acquire folk hero status amongst the populace.\(^2\) When Graham interviewed him in 2000 she observed this of Simpson: "Wherever he goes he is treated as a hero - despite the fact that most people we meet believe he killed his wife. Indeed, OJ seems even more popular now than he did at the height of his football fame, particularly, he says with a wink, 'as far as the ladies are concerned'" (30). Graham relates a scene that demonstrates Simpson's folk hero popularity with men and women:

FROM THE RESTAURANT, WE MOVE ON TO A (sic) sports bar. The place is packed with students from the University of Miami, watching their team play American football. When OJ walks in, a group of guys break into spontaneous applause. A grinning youth walks up and pumps OJ’s hand. He is besieged by offers of drinks. [. . .] OJ drinks free beer and treats himself to a shot of tequila. He revels in the limelight. Students walk up to him constantly with beer coasters, which he happily signs. Some ask him to pose for photographs. He doesn't refuse a single request. And so it goes on. In the 48 hours I spend with him, on the streets, in shopping malls, in cafes and bars, I hear not a single derogatory remark. [. . .]

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\(^2\) Examples include Ned Kelly, Frank Gardiner, Neddy Smith, Roger Rogerson, Chopper Read, Robin Hood, the Kray twins, Tony Soprano, Bonnie and Clyde, Don Vito Corleone. Oliver Stone’s film *Natural Born Killers* is a critique of the cult of criminality.
Three female law students - all white, middle-class - come to sit at our table. OJ flirts with them. They giggle. When he goes to the men's room, I put it to them:

'Okay, so do you think he did it?' With one voice they all say, 'Yes.'

'So why sit here with him, having such a good time?' 'Well,' says one, 'everyone knows he did it, but he's famous and he's funny and, to be honest, what does it matter?" (33)

The popularity of true-crime narratives in publishing, film and television, and the success of books written by convicted criminals such as Chopper Read in Australia attest to the commodification and fetishisation of crime. As does the success of Court TV and *The National Enquirer* and the August 2003 introduction of an "INSIDE CRIME" section to the Hollywood celebrity focussed Australian magazine, *NW*. We can even love fictional serial killers such as Hannibal Lecter, created by Thomas Harris and given charm on screen by Anthony Hopkins. There is a gothic romanticism, a fascination with what is taboo and psychologically other to this preoccupation. Simpson's mythology within the cult of criminality is still being perpetuated. Simpson boasted to Graham: "Since the case, women have been throwing themselves at me. They chase me. Someone should do a study on it. It has to be that women just love bad boys" (30). And Graham confessed in her article: "against all my better instincts - and while nothing has shaken my own conviction that O.J. Simpson is a murderer - I find myself captivated by him. He is still an incredibly powerful physical presence. When he speaks, he stares directly into your eyes. He is flirtatious and funny" (33). Only the victims of crime and those involved in law and order see through the popular glamorisation and charm of criminals and criminal activity. And, to be honest, it matters to them.
O.J. Simpson is (still) a polarising cynosure. As a public individual, he functions as a sign of murder and fame. Reading Simpson as a text and reading _I Want to Tell You_ requires a reading of Simpson from the rhetorical and visual point of view. Simpson as author and text operates within a culture in which the oral, the written, the image, the political and the popular converge. Simpson as text and his defense fundraising memoir are both the product of everyday rhetoric and the commodity fetishism of celebrity. Both texts, as examples of the popular, can be read through the lens of a critical eye. A critical eye that may approach the popular as an object of study relevant for the application of textual theory and the development of textual theory using interdisciplinary modes of thought and analysis. As a form of critical inquiry into contemporary issues and phenomena, cultural studies research is crucial to understanding who we are, in the present tense. Cultural studies entails reflecting on and writing about the popular, critically, not writing the popular. Popular culture is a very serious business. It has cultural and economic capital. The entertainment industry as a capitalist enterprise is a major commercial network of operations, which employs millions of people and bolsters economies, particularly the Australian and the American. Our cultural productions, experiences, processes and practices express what we think and who we think we are. This may be what makes cultural studies a little threatening, especially as it fosters a critical scrutiny, criticism from an informed perspective. A cultural studies approach that is active, rigorous and engaged is a cultural investment. It acknowledges futurity. Thinking critically and creatively about the popular may offer ways in which we can understand and address the "major humanistic issues of our time" (Lanham, "Elegies" 203).

_Reading O.J. Simpson_ is my contribution to cultural studies research and the cultural studies debate. This thesis uses the Brentwood murders, Simpson and his memoir to argue that a
theoretical approach to the popular as an object of study is valid and can be insightful. There is a marked absence of any scholarly work on Simpson's memoir, despite, or perhaps in part due to, its unique textual appeal. And yet, amidst all the texts published about Simpson's involvement in the Brentwood murders and his criminal trial it is Simpson's memoir that offers a view of him as a public figure and the event as a social phenomenon well worth considering in ways different to everyday or popular interpretations. Ironically, it is the everyday, its practices and rhetoric that are the focus of my scholarly analysis. Contemporary discourse is everyday rhetoric. Reading O.J. Simpson from the rhetorical point of view means understanding that contemporary modes of presentation and expression are an amalgamation of the written and the oral, the printed book and electronic media, the screen (Lanham, "Elegies" 202-03). Simpson is an oral man and a visual man. These are his preferred modes of expression and presentation. Although Simpson's "suicide note" was written, it was a form of public speaking, an oral delivery. Simpson's "suicide note" was meant to be heard, read aloud in a public context, which could explain why it was written "badly."

The aim of this thesis to describe the "nature of discursive action and exchange" in operation in the "dense tangle of our triviality" (Bender and Wellbery 25, 34) required the useful appropriation of interdisciplinary analytical tools and discursive re-territorialisations. As outlined in Part 1, comprised of chapters 1 and 2, Mauss' ethnographic work on gift-exchange economies provided the framework for an analysis of the process of production of *I Want to Tell You*. Mauss' reading of the gift as a social, religious, moral, ethical, legal and economic phenomena was useful for understanding the implications of the donation of the letters for inclusion in Simpson's memoir and the cultural and economic capital of the celebrity-fan dyad as a collusion of emotional and material terms. The emotional element of celebrity constructs a vulnerability in the fan, the "ordinary"
person, that is laid open to manipulation by the power of celebrity. To be fascinated with Simpson is emotionally rewarding (for the letter writer, for Simpson, for his readers) and financially rewarding (for Simpson).

Part 2 of this thesis, comprised of chapters 3, 4 and 5, addressed the emotional and social terms of Simpson's relationship with the public and the effect of his figuration as an alleged murderer. The military analogies of Certeau's sociological analysis of quotidian practices are appropriate for an interrogation of the extra-textual effect of Simpson's fan mail and hate mail, the subject of chapter 3. This more than 300,000-strong guerilla force invaded the Los Angeles County Jail where Simpson was being held captive (legally) and liberated Simpson metaphorically, temporarily. It certainly contributed to Simpson's eventual release from custody. An intense letter writing campaign provided Simpson with the means to generate the income necessary to fund a successful defense strategy. Chapter 4 considered how the inclusion of Simpson's fan mail and hate mail in I Want to Tell You generates a sense of conversational agora, a marketplace or meeting place. Simpson utilised the letters, representing the endorsement of the populace, to establish his credibility.

Simpson and Schiller's individual accounts of the diegetic and extra-diegetic arrangements of Simpson's memoir produce a visual presentation, a realisation in the cinematic sense. I reiterate that Simpson is an oral man and a visual man. As discussed in chapter 5, the visual rhetoric of Simpson's memoir is best explained through a Hollywood system of cinematic practices to do with spectacle and spectatorial positions. The correlation between sports and cinema as entertainment industries allows for further associations to be made between these two systems to do with the
gaze of the spectator and display for the spectator, and their constructions of masculinity as
spectacle. My idea of the spectator-captor is an experimental proposition that may provide new
ways for understanding these positions as performative sites and sights. It certainly allowed me to
read Simpson more clearly, to assess his textual performance of celebrity (prosopopoeia) as more
than reification and to understand the reconceptualisation of his re-racialised masculinity in the
guise of criminality. Simpson’s alleged criminal status has infused his celebrity with a cult-like,
fascinating appeal.