INTERNATIONAL
journal *of*
CULTURAL studies

www.sagepublications.com
Volume 13(2): 205–216
DOI: 10.1177/1367877909356728

'He cannot get away from us'
Tautologies in police chases

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ABSTRACT The live police chase has become a staple – if not a cliché – of local television news in the United States in the last 20 years. But what are the psychoanalytical dynamics of this event? Why does an otherwise unremarkable property felony become elevated to a matter of instant civic importance merely by virtue of being broadcast, and why do viewers' sympathies often feel tugged toward the criminal rather than the state? This article examines one notorious case in Seattle and outlines the 'stages' of a police chase, as delineated by law enforcement, as an essential dramatic pattern redolent of Girardian release. The police chase is a live-broadcast panopticon in which every viewer is a participant in a triangulated tautology: the subject is running because he is being chased, and we are watching because he is running and he is being broadcast live because he is being chased.

KEYWORDS Jean Baudrillard • broadcast • police chase • crash • Michel Foucault • René Girard • helicopter • live television • Howard Rosenberg

'This guy just does not want to stop!' marveled the airborne cameraman of KIRO, a Seattle television station, broadcasting live images of a spectacle unfolding below his helicopter.[1] He then posed the open question that defined his whole broadcast, and many others like it: 'What is he going to do now?'

A car thief named Bryan Wade-Everett, 24, had become the subject of intense attention of the combined nexus of media and local law enforcement in Seattle for a 45-minute period on Tuesday, 18 January 2005. After being discovered committing the triggering misdemeanor crime of trying to break

into a silver Honda on a suburban street, Wade-Everett then hotwired a blue Subaru and led the police departments from three municipalities down major arterials, an urban interstate and, at one point, through a chain-link fence and over the fairways of a golf course, tearing trenches in the grass as he went. The entire spectacle was broadcast live, with running commentary that resembled the play-by-play of a sporting event, by the helicopters of at least two television stations.

'He is going to be pretty difficult to find if he can get onto those side streets,' noted the KIRO cameraman, almost admiringly, before adding this telling aside to his viewers: 'But *he cannot get away from us* [emphasis added] because we're going to stay on top of this guy.'

Unable to shake his uniformed pursuers, or the ubiquitous eye in the sky, Wade-Everett was later arrested in the yard of a house whose occupants had been watching the chase themselves and were interrupted only by the intrusion of the 'subject' into the hypnotic play of images on their screen.

'We were in the living room, having dinner, watching it on the news,' Terera Moen told another station, KOMO. 'And we just thought, "Oh my God, he's going into the park," and so we ran out onto the porch and he was in our driveway.'[2]

The Moens and other viewers of this Seattle drama were participating in a ritual most often played out in southern California, but which has captivated news directors and audiences from all parts of the country, despite the low news value of such events in isolation. Hundreds of criminal suspects are apprehended outside the range of cameras every day in a major American city without any mention on the television news, and often barely in the newspaper. Yet add a car, a camera, an element of suspense and a sense of watching somebody's 'break for freedom' and the effect is riveting. One entrepreneur in Los Angeles used to sell a beeper service to subscribers which rang whenever a chase was being broadcast; there were 2000 reported subscribers (Bannon, 2002). That city's vast network of roads and aggressive spectacle-oriented media culture had created an ideal matrix. '[F]rom the cameras above, the customary vantage for tracking the city's televised pursuits,' wrote a correspondent from the *New Yorker*:

> … you could see that this most sprawling and motorized of our great metropolitan areas is a huge web that is easily apprehended from the air – some forty police and TV helicopters keep busy doing just that – and that it is not just the roadways but the surveillance that never ends. (Friend, 2006)

This is also the city that produces one of America's great exports, the motion picture, in which the car chase is one of the most robust staples of the medium, perhaps second only to the kiss. Aficionados of the form debate endlessly over which is the best ever put on celluloid (Huffman, 2008) – *The French Connection* vs. *Bullit* vs. *To Live and Die in L.A.*, etc. – and it is not insignificant that the staff of *The Guinness Book of World Records* (Robertson, 1980) once noted that the single most-used line of dialogue in

Hollywood history, appearing in an estimated 84 percent of movies, portends a chase: 'Let's get out of here.'

Southern California police began to suspect that the media coverage of the chases was fueling the existence of the chases themselves – a self-feeding golem. 'All of us have a gut feeling that it looks like some are trying to get their fifteen minutes of fame,' Deputy Chief David Doan told the *Wall Street Journal* (Bannon, 2002).

Indeed, after he was captured in the driveway of those who had been watching him, the Seattle car thief Wade-Everett was heard yelling out from the cellblock to his girlfriend that he had achieved an ambition of becoming famous ('Driver in Televised Police Car Chase …', 2006). The argument takes on a hazy circular form, a coiled tautology of multiple levels: the 'criminal' runs because he is being chased and they chase him because he is running, and he is broadcast because he is running and we are watching it because it is being broadcast. The television critic Howard Rosenberg points out the vacant center at the heart of most live law enforcement dramas, driven not by news value but by the technology itself. They happen because they *can* happen; their instantaneous quality overtakes all other values and becomes the thing-in-itself. 'You cover something,' writes Rosenberg, 'not because it's necessarily worth covering, but because you have the machinery to cover it. You do it live not because it makes journalistic sense but because you have the technology at your command' (2004: 66).

Yet no police chase *must* happen or *must* be broadcast; there is no mandate that officers should exempt themselves from the normal laws and manners of traffic to run down a fleeing suspect. There is also no mandate for television stations to spend enormous amounts of money to keep helicopters in the air for the live broadcasting of such ultimately insubstantial news. No official tabulations exist of the number of vehicular police pursuits in the United States, but one advocacy group Voices Insisting on Pursuit Safety, estimates the annual number at 70,000.[3] And of those, a striking number are for relatively petty crimes as measured on a conventional law enforcement index. A US Justice Department survey of the Omaha Police Department between 1992 and 1994 revealed that more than half of the drivers, or about 112, who used evasive driving techniques to avoid arresting officers were fleeing merely a ticket for a routine traffic violation (Alpert, 1997). Their dodging a ticket is what makes them 'suspicious' and worthy of being chased, and this may be considered the triggering point of what might be called the inherent tautology of police chases. Only 40 percent were suspected felons, and of those, a substantial number were suspected only to be driving stolen vehicles with the rest falling into a vague category of 'other felonies'.

As well as its dubious public safety value, there is ample evidence that this state-sanctioned suspension of traffic laws – and the implicit encouragement of the excited suspect – comes at a high cost. They are quite literally fatal. In the two-year period covered by the survey, 40 percent of Omaha police chases resulted in property damage and an appalling 14 percent resulted in an injury

to someone, whether an officer, fleeing suspect or (most commonly) an uninvolved driver or pedestrian. Using statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the group Voices Insisting on Pursuit Safety, has estimated that more than 3000 deaths of bystanders have been directly attributable to a high-speed police pursuit since 1982. It is difficult to believe that such a toll in lives would have accrued if police agencies had allowed most low-grade lawbreakers, such as Wade-Everett, temporarily to abscond for later apprehension. Some departments, in fact, have chosen to institute policies to limit or ban pursuits altogether. 'High-speed vehicle pursuits are possibly the most dangerous of all police activities,' is the blunt assessment of the Philadelphia police manual (Trotter et al., 2005). Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca, who chooses to allow them, nevertheless derides them as 'these mechanized bullfights' (Friend, 2006).

Yet they continue to unfold on live television – inevitably scoring big ratings, as the *Wall Street Journal* notes (Bannon, 2002) – and this raises provocative questions about the deep-seated appeal of watching a criminal suspect flee. First, it must be said that there exists a pleasure for the viewer in watching a disembodied suspect caught in the exciting limbo between 'freedom' and 'prison'. The object of the hunt is as anonymous as a contestant on *American Idol* (Cowell, 2003); and all the more so because he or she is invariably seen from above, encased in a moving cage – one might even say a mask – of metal. All we see of the suspect is the car: a fitting extension of self in an American city. Even when the car is abandoned (a late-stage custom) and the person leaps out to expose their body, we get nothing but a whirling scarecrow about to suffer the physical restraint of arresting officers, who are doubtless on their best behavior out of respect to the all-broadcasting eye above them.

These dramas exist in real time and create a fascinating interplay of virtual images: what Jean Baudrillard might have called 'seduction'. The spectacle begins to occlude the essential irrelevance of the event. Or, as Paul Patton writes in the introduction to Baudrillard's provocative collection *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1995), in which the French philosopher postulates, among other things, that the frenzy of live communication had superseded and deposed the events on the battlefield:

> This is not a war but a simulacrum of war, a virtual event which is less the representation of real war than a spectacle which serves a variety of strategic and political purposes on both sides. Here, the sense in which Baudrillard speaks of events as virtual is related to the idea that real events lose their identity when they attain the velocity of real time information, or to employ another metaphor, when they become encrusted with the information that represents them. In this sense, while televisual information claims to provide immediate access to real events, in fact what it does is produce informational events which stand in for the real, and which 'inform' public opinion which in turn affects the course of subsequent events, both real and informational. (Patton in Baudrillard, 1995: 10)

Again, it displays that deadly tautology reasserting itself.

Another helpful guide to understanding this idea might be found in the eventual legal denouement of the case of Mr Wade-Everett, who ended up pleading guilty to theft, burglary and attempting to elude a police car. He was sentenced to seven years in prison (Whitley, 2006). It bears repeating that conviction for such crimes is a common function of state courts in major cities, and would hardly warrant mention on newscasts or television absent a spectacular aggravating factor. That factor was the live broadcast – what Baudrillard would call the 'ecstasy of communication' – of Wade-Everett's misguided attempt to evade police. This was the primary fiber of the event. Viewers cared about Wade-Everett only to the extent that he was 'live'. Unless he shows up in our driveway, he is an abstraction and nothing more. Mr Wade-Everett himself cared about his own disposition in the chase insofar as it was broadcast live; hence his self-aggrandizing cellblock proclamation.

This somewhat alarming idea was also evoked in Johannes Maier's essay 'Being Embedded: The Concept of Liveness in Journalism' (2006), in which the quality of being broadcast in 'real time' was more essential to the product than the human essence of its subject or conduit (the reporter or camera operator). It should not be forgotten that the latter was never visible in the KIRO broadcast of Wade-Everett's flight from the officers; the man who spoke the words 'he cannot get away from us' was never once pictured and was thus a perfect symbol for the omnipresence of a surveillance apparatus of the type Michel Foucault would label a 'panopticon'. The camera operator was thereby serving at that moment as an agent of the state. It came as no surprise, then, when an anchor for rival station KOMO proudly noted during that evening's newscast that Seattle-area police were using information provided by the news station to hold Wade-Everett. The media eye and the omnipresent state-mandated modes of behavior were functioning as one. King County Superior Court Judge Mary Roberts watched the video herself before sentencing and proclaimed it 'shocking footage' (Whitley, 2006).[4] In the heat of televised pursuit, the eyes of the news helicopter become the eyes of the state pursuing an impurity, and the eyes of the viewer are forced to assume that same role: the eyes of a purifying Valkyrie. We see the quarry not just as an extension of our own illicit desires but also as an object of flagellation, held at a comfortable remove. In that sense, too, the panopticon elides into what Foucault would term as a synopticon: the one seen by the many.

It must be said that Wade-Everett's pathetic bid for 'freedom' through the fence of a golf course projects feeling familiar to any salaried commuter who has been overcome with the frustration of the slow (yet maddeningly orderly) flow of traffic and must repress an id-filled urge to break out of the socially ordered lanes, as well as the confines of proper behavior and manners. The televised chase thus provides a safe and sanctioned *trompe l'oeil* scenario for escapist tendencies, a kind of catharsis.

Like plays, they happen in acts. This revealing taxonomy of a police chase was outlined by a US Justice Department Task Force in 1998. I am quoting here directly from the executive summary:

> *The prepursuit phase* – the time between the officer's decision to stop a vehicle and the officer's recognition of the vehicle's attempt to flee.
> *The communication phase* – the period between the start of the pursuit and the arrival of assisting officers or resources.
> *The resources phase* – the period during the arrival of assisting officers and/or resources and an attempt to stop an in-progress pursuit.
> *The postpursuit phase* – the period encompassing any actions that occur after the suspect's vehicle has stopped fleeing or has eluded capture. (Pursuit Management Task Force, 1998)

Viewers will recognize the comfortable pattern, even without the benefit of police training. There is the initial 'break in' to usual programming (one pictures a thousand beepers ringing in Los Angeles), the focusing in from the air upon the hapless lawbreaker, the commentary and speculation from the anchors (from KIRO: 'I'm not sure, as I mentioned before, whether he's desperate enough to want to carjack someone …'), the flight onto familiar roads and bypasses that most viewers will recognize from their own cities, the police deployment of a spiked stick to pop the tires, the abandonment of the car, the endgame flight on foot, perhaps the armed barricading of oneself into a private home and then finally, inevitably, the moment of climax and release when the suspect's bid for 'freedom' (mirroring our own desires) is extinguished and he is placed in shackles and led away out of sight to face the wrath of the judicial process. Harmony is restored. Northbound lanes are reopened. The crowd can cheer the police for their good work in the field, throw them metaphorical flowers at the end of Sheriff Baca's mechanized bullfight. We can also congratulate ourselves for our law-abiding ways and be glad that Wade-Everett's fate is not our own.

We need not wait, if we are impatient, for the thrill of the live break-in, as the work of the camera *qua* predator is available on any number of reality shows of the *Cops* breed, in which either a film crew rides along with officers, or the footage from the side-mounted and state-funded camcorder is made available to the producers of the show. Few authority figures have been more successful or visible in this medium than John Bunnell, who served briefly as the unelected sheriff of Multnomah County, Oregon before finding a role in 1998 as the host/enforcer of the packaged series *World's Wildest Police Videos*, a compilation of the most entertaining crashes and the antics of the most adorably elusive suspects as seen from dash-mounted cop cameras in jurisdictions throughout the country. 'In the next hour we're going to show you trouble,' Bunnell said in one stern and staccato introduction, 'up close. The way that police see it every day. So fasten your seat belt. We're

going to take you for a wild ride.'[5] He is filmed speaking from the passenger seat of a speeding police vehicle, not in uniform but in casual clothes, and it is left ambiguous as to whether he is an impartial mediator in the chase, or a participant wearing the mantle of state. These videos are sometimes presented as 'training tools' for officers, made viewable to the public for educational purposes via the beneficence of TV Sheriff Bunnell. This is the introductory fiction which makes the id experience redeemable.

Chase footage – so entertaining and so satisfying – has changed the game even in a legal sense. One of those highway maneuvers practiced by police officers during the 'resources phase' is the Precision Intervention Technique, or PIT, which involves a calculated bump by a pursuing police vehicle against the bumper of the fleer. This led to unintended grief in a 2001 incident in Georgia, in which a man named Victor Harris was caught on radar doing 73 miles per hour in a 55 mile per hour zone. A sheriff's deputy tried to pull him over and Harris chose to make a bid for freedom. After approximately six minutes of chase, a deputy executed the PIT bump against Harris' back bumper, sending him careening off the road and into a crash which left him paralyzed. Harris called the bump excessive force and the case went to the US Supreme Court, where Justice Anthony Scalia, writing for the majority in *Scott v. Harris*, rejected the respondent's claims that he posed no danger to other motorists. 'The videotape tells quite a different story,' wrote an indignant Scalia.

> There we see the respondent's vehicle racing down narrow, two-lane roads in the dead of night at speeds that are shockingly fast.… Far from being the cautious and controlled driver the lower court depicts, what we see on the video more closely resembles a Hollywood-style car chase of the most frightening sort, placing police officers and innocent bystanders alike at great risk of serious injury.[6]

This seminal case did not turn on an interpretation of statutes, but on the viewing experience of a chase video. The tape wins the day, and it sounds as though Scalia may have enjoyed himself as much as anyone while watching.[7]

This leads us to consider the quasi-sacrificial role played by some of the televised quarry, and here we should turn to the work of René Girard. In his landmark work *Violence and the Sacred* (1977), Girard examines the role played by the target of popular state-sanctioned brutality and concludes that such victims exist for the sake of a controlled discharge of collective anger and a strengthening of the status quo, much as white blood cells attack a virus.

In a cogent summation, he asserts: '[S]ociety is seeking to deflect upon a relatively indifferent victim, a "sacrificeable" victim, the violence that would otherwise be vented on its own members, the people it most desires to protect' (1977: 8). And later: 'The purpose of the sacrifice is to restore harmony to the community, to reinforce the social' (1977: 11). Girard notes that the choice of victim is crucial: he or she must be *of* the community, but not *too close* to the vital center, lest damage be done to the whole (1977: 11). The

victim must embody both familiarity and 'otherness'. Mr Wade-Everett, 24, who had struggled with addiction to methamphetamine, but whose highway bravado might have impressed and thrilled even the most law-and-order Washingtonians, fit the bill for a ritual expiation to the hegemon.

In this sense, for that brief period of live broadcast, Mr Wade-Everett existed in a state of what Giorgio Agamben would call a *homo sacer*, that is, Latin for a 'sacred man', who can be sacrificed to the needs of the state. Though he appears to be leading a sort of royal procession – indeed Wade-Everett had three news helicopters, dozens of police cars and the eyes of metropolitan Seattle following his trail for those glorious 45 minutes – his legal fate has become disentangled from his 'naked life' as man; this was now predation and he was in the sights of the state as eventually embodied in the form of Her Honor Mary Robinson, who was as captivated as Justice Scalia by, as she put it, 'the footage'. Always, the footage.

The reader will recall that Mr Wade-Everett, like his companions in instant outlaw celebrity, was never seen in human form during his brief emergence into the consciousness of metropolitan Seattle. His visage was that of a car. And not even a car that belonged to him. He had hotwired a model on the street, thus acting completely in character, for in televised chases such as this the conveyances of 'freedom' are often stolen or violently carjacked, suggesting that the suspect has cloaked him or herself in new and borrowed garb for the event. One might even suggest the ceremonial robes of a sacrifice. Mr Wade-Everett has ceased to be 'himself' in that interregnum between freedom and the cellblock, in that frenetic sliver of time that law enforcement scholars call 'the resource phase'. He has become a hyperreal felon, a faceless anti-hero with a knife and a slim jim and an aggressive urge not unlike that experienced by each and every viewer. Television news, after all, exists to serve a market function, as John H. McManus has noted, and these types of daily crime stories which he concedes are 'emotionally moving' nonetheless belong in the 'cotton candy quadrant' of his taxonomy of news (1994: 123). Police chases and their attendant liveness are gripping to all segments of the product-buying public, rich and poor alike.

There may have been no more unifying moment for the American polity – and no finer moment for the airborne press corps – than the live chase of a singular criminal suspect who stood apart from the anonymous ranks of car thieves and burglars. This was football hero O.J. Simpson, accused of uxorious murder and half-heartedly attempting, it was said, to slip into Mexico ahead of the lawmen. In the white Bronco (giddyup, horse!) was $8750 in cash, a false beard, a loaded gun and a passport. No consumer of dime-store westerns could have missed the totems: this was a wanted man on the run, a projection of escapist yearnings, and an object of sublimated admiration and disgust. Ninety-five million Americans, slightly more than one-third of the nation, watched the Bronco cut through the fading California light on its well-understood Via Dolorosa toward ensnarement. 'This has been the most incredible series of events that we have ever witnessed,' said one TV anchor, grasping for superlatives on that night of supreme liveness (Friend, 2006).

Any discussion of libidinal highway behavior must, on some level, address the stock-car racing phenomena in America. The enormous popularity of National Association of Stock Car Racing (NASCAR) events – really a stadium version of the televised chase; Sheriff Baca's 'bullfights' without the bullfighter – provide a more diluted form of expiation and release for the viewer with Baudrillard's 'encrusted' layers of information, and it is no accident that some of the drivers happen to come from something of an outlaw heritage, or at least have the aroma of *homo sacer* about them. Tom Wolfe spent time with a former North Carolina moonshine runner named Junior Johnson for his 1964 *Esquire* essay, 'The Last American Hero', and examines the disembodiment involved in the viewing pleasure of the race, a seamless transition from the everyday activity of driving to the eruption of the wild and uncontrollable energies exhibited by Mr Wade-Everett that necessitate a state-sanctioned and highly visual sacrifice. Wolfe writes:

> Here was a sport not using any abstract devices, any *bat* and *ball*, but the same automobile that was changing a man's own life, his own symbol of liberation, and it didn't require size, strength and all that, all it required was a taste for speed and the guts. (1965: 135)

The ability of Southern boys like Junior (a former bootlegger, as his public biography gleefully made evident) to dodge the Alcohol Tax agents on their moonshine runs is what inspires the almost balletic precision of the sport of NASCAR and creates a harmonious order out of the mayhem that would otherwise spill over into the public byways and respectable side streets in which Mr Wade-Everett so desperately tried to lose himself during his own disembodied moonshine run in Seattle. It is the forbidden become vanilla, within the fantastic interplay of embedded forms and images. Wolfe again:

> Detroit is now engaged in the highly sophisticated business of *offering the illusion* [emphasis added] of Speed for Everyman – making their cars go 175 miles an hour on racetracks – by discovering and putting behind the wheel a breed of mountain men who are living vestiges of a degree of physical courage that became extinct in most other sections of the country by 1900. (1965: 163)

Here is an excellent example of René Girard's sacrifice selection: a man within the mythos-sphere of a community, but also not too close to its beating heart: a familiar other. Though Johnson's story was more sanitized, both he and O.J. anticipated Wade-Everett by four and three decades respectively, as surrogates for the restless wants and discontents of the viewing public. They are the embodiment of a type since enshrined in cinema as the charismatic Bandit outrunning the officious and bloviating Smokey – *viz.* 1977's bootlegging road/buddy movie *Smokey and the Bandit* – as well as the drive toward victory through spectacular public death, as seen in the dive to the bottom of the Grand Canyon by the reluctant outlaw protagonists of 1991's bank-robbing road/buddy movie *Thelma and Louise*. Among the last words spoken by the women to each other are the tenderest words of love in the script, illuminating

not just the bond of friendship forged in the chase, but the passion of the flight itself, which has become in this movie (not coincidentally) a massive police event. With the canyon in front of them and the lawmen at their backs, the once shy Thelma proposes they 'not get caught' and simply 'keep going'. This clear invitation to automotive suicide is met with a breathless, nearly sexual, 'You sure?' from Louise, and an equally surrendering 'Yeah', from Thelma. The cops are now helpless to interdict this *auto da fé* they have started. We have guessed the outcome by now. The plunge into the welcoming canyon, followed by the credits.

There is a final irony in our civic rituals of a televised police chase, shown in a ferocious and awful light in Phoenix on 27 July 2007, shortly after 23-year-old Christopher J. Jones stole a work truck, emerged from obscurity for a brief glittering sacrificial moment and led police on yet another of the high-excitement, no-news-value, desperate-flight-through-familiar-streets chases that regularly furnish a welcome spectacle for the broadcast press corps of the fifth largest city in the US.

Jones led the police and five news helicopters into a parking lot, and the anchor for KNXV adopted the knowing tones of an experienced play-by-play commentator as she related the unfolding endgame, live.

'He can't go much further,' she said. 'He's taking off running. Now he's jumping into another vehicle. They are closing in …'

At that moment, the pilot was heard to shout 'Oh jeez!' and there was a brief sickening burst of clashing metal and airwave static.[8] Distracted by the action on the ground, the KNXV helicopter had come up underneath that of another news station, sending both plunging to burn in a nearby park. Both pilots and both cameramen were killed.

'We're going to pull out now,' said the anchor, unaware of the carnage. 'We don't know what has just happened right there. It looks like the police have closed in on him. We don't know what exactly has transpired between the police …' She pauses briefly, as if confused. 'Stay with ABC 15 and we will bring you more information as we get it. Also check our website for updates, abc15.com.'

On another channel, KTAR, the view from the helicopter swung abruptly from the meaningless flight of Christopher J. Jones to burning wreckage in a city park. The stakes could not have been smaller, and the cost was suddenly graphic. It was as vivid an intrusion of the real as television could provide.

'Oh this is bad, this is very bad up here Scott,' said the pilot, audibly upset. 'We do have major breaking news. *Because of this chase* [emphasis added] we have lost two helicopters.'[9] At a press conference the next day, Phoenix police chief Jack Harris angrily suggested that Jones should be prosecuted for four counts of murder in connection with the deaths; no such charges materialized, nor was there ever a serious consideration within the Phoenix police department of revising the pursuit policy. No soul-searching articles about the validity of these dangerous and junk-news television 'stories' ever appeared in the local media.

The temple of sacrifice, as Girard reminds us, is never fully satiated. The televised flight of a car thief had instead created unintentional violence against the synopticon itself. This was a more serious 'intrusion of the real' than the quarry turning up in the driveway of those who had been observing his flight on Seattle television; this was the destruction of the observer itself and the apparatus of statist authority that it carried. The reassertion of hegemony had rebounded onto the hegemon; the invisible eye-in-the-sky had only emerged into full view and commanded attention as a supreme object in itself at the moment of its death (see Baudrillard, 1990).

The shocking and unnecessary consequences in Phoenix – that burning wreckage in the park, suddenly stripping all the attention and power away from the miserable *homo sacer* in his stolen truck – might not have surprised Jean Baudrillard, for whom the 'seduction' of ecstatic communication had grave implications. 'We will have shamefully merited everything which happens to us,' he wrote in his last article for *Libération* about the Gulf War: 'As a result, the more the hegemony of global consensus is reinforced, the greater the risk, or the chances, of its collapse' (1995: 87).

Notes

1 Video, with running commentary from the KIRO cameraman, can be viewed at: http://videos.streetfire.net/video/The-entire-televised-from_20825.htm
2 Moen's interview with KOMO can be viewed at: http://www.subarunews.net/news/news20051009.htm
3 See: http://www.pursuitsafety.org/mediakit/statistics.html
4 Though it would be impossible to plumb the mind of an individual jurist, it is worth asking, given her comments, whether Wade-Everett's sentence of seven years might have been more lenient if his flight had occurred outside the scope of the cameras. He may have been punished more harshly because he had been broadcast and archived and therefore to have 'existed' more.
5 Viewable at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SvKQdC_N8lE&feature=related
6 Scott v. Harris, US Supreme Court, decided 30 April 2007.
7 It can be viewed at: http://www.supremecourtus.gov/opinions/video/scott_v_harris.rmvb. In his dissent, Justice John Paul Stevens recorded different feelings about this footage. In an acerbic footnote, the 87-year-old wrote:

> I can only conclude that my colleagues were unduly frightened by two or three images on the tape that looked like bursts of lightning or explosions, but were in fact merely the headlights of vehicles zooming by in the opposite lane. Had they learned to drive when most high-speed driving took place on two-lane roads rather than on super-highways – when split-second judgments about the risk of passing a slowpoke in the face of oncoming traffic were routine – they might well have reacted to the videotape more dispassionately.

8 Viewable (though not recommended) at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0wPrf6aCBU
9 At: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76kDKOzCuGY&feature=related

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