

**THE BLOG**

# Fact Is the New Fiction

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By Marty Kaplan

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For Bush administration members not facing indictment, it's never too soon to contemplate unemployment. But with sand in the gears of Tom DeLay's K Street project, and with too many lickspittles chasing too few "Republican Strategist" chyrons on cable tv, the job picture is looking pretty bleak for soon-to-be-former White House staff and Cabinet types.

The traditional recourse for newly-minted exes is to write a political memoir, but if the sales of Ari Fleischer or Karen Hughes are any guide to the future, the chances of getting a publisher to pony up more than pin money are slim.

Into this gloom now shines the blinding smile of OJ Simpson. He's writing a book called "If I Did It, Here's How It Happened." Even before this "hypothetical" work is published, Fox News is stunting a two-part interview with Simpson as the climax of November's Nielsen sweeps. Ka-ching!

There's a lesson in this for Republicans. Kiss-and-tell books can get decent advances, but when authors confront the consequences of bean-spilling — do I really want my kids to read this? — an insidious self-censorship can chill the urge to confess. What was promised as a searing tell-all can easily turn into a dreary cut-and-paste job padded with keynoters at the American Poultry Association.

But OJ's ruse puts a whole new ploy in play. Imagine Rumsfeld writing "If I Committed War Crimes, Here's How It Happened." Plenty of juice, but no risk of international prosecutions. Rove could get a ton of dough for "If Bush Had Been Impeached, Here's What For." George Allen would have a monster hit on his hands if he wrote, "If I Were An Asshat, Here I Am."

Hypothetical history is the perfect pomo alternative to checking into the Betty Ford Clinic, facing a grand jury, or fessing up to Oprah. The subjunctive conditional is the tense of choice in the state of denial.

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