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This Property has been Repossessed

by Christine Tamblyn

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES BY JOHN ADAMS

I must confess that I have never read Jacques Derrida's books. But I have read *Saving the Text*, Geoffrey Hartman's book (1981) about Derrida. To approach Derrida through an interpretive filter ought to be an appropriately (no pun intended) Derridean way to approach Derrida. Does Derrida not emphasize that texts are deduced from other texts, since all words come to us already used? Or, as Hartman (1981) explicates, ". . .the boundary between nature and art or primary and secondary, or even text and commentary — event and interpretation — is highly fluid" (p.1).

My reception of John Adams' INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES, a 60 minute videotape produced in 1985, is influenced by such quasi-Derridean notions. All that I have managed to find out about John Adams is that he is English, although the tape was made in Massachusetts. This leaves me free to invent a John Adams, especially since the tape itself is obsessed with the undecidability of authorship. Several authorial principles are constructed by the tape; each "ghost writer" purports to have created an indeterminate segment or aspect of the tape. One of the tantalizing traps the tape sets for the spectator is to induce arbitration of the boundary disputes of its many ostensible authors. However, any definitive survey of intellectual property lines is impossible, since the potential proprietors are ultimately characters in a fiction.

Each of the tape's five sections commences with an essayistic aside on the problems of intellectual copyright delivered by a talking head narrator. Ironically, he is also quoting from another text: *Copyright: Intellectual Property in the Information Age* by W. Plowman and L. Clark Hamilton.[1] My excerpt of these excerpts: "Copyright is used as a legal mechanism for the ordering of social and cultural life. Or, put another way, copyright is one method for linking the world of ideas to the world of commerce. . . . One of the prerequisites for copyright is the tradition of individual creation in the arts in which the goal of the artist is to attain recognition and fame. It is in a climate of competition for public acceptance with the attendant system of direct economic benefits that a class of professional authors and artists can be established."

The title that precedes this essayistic prologue is a metonymic deictic phrase without an apparent referent: "Those Heliocopters." Any connection between this linguistic fragment and the prologue is not evident, since the title is meant to function retrospectively to validate the attribution of this section to a putative author who has not been introduced yet. After the prologue, a syntagmatic flow of black and white shots melds the conversation of a man and a woman in a restaurant with cutaways to two men sitting in an adjacent booth. The man and the woman are young and fashionably dressed; he is blonde and wears a black leather jacket. Since he appears with the greatest frequency, he must be designated as the protagonist. Although his name may be "A.J.," she is never christened, except offhandedly when A.J. teases her asking if she is "Joan Wayne" during a conversation she paraphrases in the fifth section of the tape.

The editor of this special issue, Michael Renov (1989), also has a version of Derrida that it may be relevant to cite at this nominal juncture: "This borderline, as in all of Derrida's meditations on boundary conditions, is posited as a site of contestation; it is the place where the proper name or signature is staged. Derrida's sense of the signature as ruse or masquerade echoes the Barthesian injunction: 'In the field of the subject, there is no referent.'"

The paucity of verbal signifiers for the characters also has a pragmatic derivation: the montage is presented without synch sound. Instead, a jazz soundtrack imparts a vaguely suspenseful ambience. The plot thickens when "Joan" leaves the table and her place is taken by a stocky man in a T-shirt and sweatpants who is later associated with "John Wayne," the movie star. The entire sequence of interactions between the characters has been digitally processed so that it elapses in slow motion. This defamiliarizes the narrative and interferes with the spectator's absorption in the unfolding events or identification with the characters. Although the alteration in speed evokes an analytical response, it concomitantly frustrates the spectator's interpretive efforts by making the characters' body language harder to decipher.

The spatio-temporal continuity of the restaurant scene imparts a modicum of narrative coherence to the opening shots. However, the ensuing montage of images is edited without regard to syntactical conventions. It features the same characters in a variety of locations: on a waterfront, riding in a Rolls Royce, on crowded city streets and on Harvard Commons. This set of shots is reshuffled repeatedly throughout the remainder of the tape, and recontextualized in multifarious ways; it functions like a deck of cards that can used to play more than one game.

". . . writing as a fantastic machine, an antimirror mirroring device. . ." (Hartman, 1981, p. 27). Writing invested in the image: in a symmetrical trope, a series of titles flashes on the screen after the image montage ends. These titles are portions of narrations from later scenes that have been encoded as visual texts. Their proleptic appearance provides the spectator with the written equivalent of the preceding image bank: a mock vocabulary list. Whereas the images were juxtaposed in slow motion, the words flow rapidly, making them as difficult to read. The speedy pace also emphasizes the mechanics of linear succession, the tyrannical pre-emptions of grammar and syntax. What is a narrative if not the display of the metamorphoses of forgers, re-inscribing the traces of previous cursives into a dynamic palimpsest?

During Part Two, which is titled "Looking for John Wayne," the voice-over narration starts. A male voice inflected with a British accent tells an anecdote about an actor named "John" making a movie of THE GREATEST STORY EVERY TOLD. This actor is not emoting properly; his articulation of the line, "He was the son of God," is inauthentic. How could it be otherwise? As Hartman explains, ". . . those who put author

or ego down are still potentially mastered by the idea of presence itself, which persists even without the concept of a sovereign subject, because of the privilege accorded to voice . . . as the foundation of the written word" (Hartman, 1981, p. 5). But whose voice is it and in whose name does it speak?

The temptation to acquiesce to the authority of a univocal narrator, to imagine even that this narrator might be the British subject, John Adams, or to trust that he would tell the real story is immediately deflected. A second speaker intervenes with a counter-narrative, a narrative with its own claim to veracity, since it is told in the first person, the pronoun reserved for confidences. This new narrator, who also has a British accent, divulges some expository information: "And so what I really wanted to do was to go to America and make a feature film. The closest I ever got to that was working as a kind of casting agent for some kind of tacky little film company that made commercials."

The second speaker's assertion of authorship is reinforced by the addition of another diegetic element; besides being vocalized, his story is also shown, as a freeze frame from a previously utilized shot of a crowded street reappears. A female voice-over narrator interrupts the second speaker, but she seems to be the director of the commercial being cast by the second speaker. The crowd scene that had been presented earlier in a baffling context now fits into this commercial. A purportedly unambiguous correlation of images and texts unfolds; the director describes the events that comprise the commercial as they are simultaneously enacted by the extras in the cast.

But a seamless switcheroo has occurred, because it's no longer just the casting agent's story that is being illustrated. This segment of the tape must be credited to the female director, whose claim to proprietorship is substantiated when a male voice-over narrator supercedes her voice-over commentary to provide the commercial's tag line: "Lost in the crowd? If you want to get away, fly with us."

"All that I have managed to find out about John Adams is that he is English, although the tape was made in Massachusetts. This leaves me free to invent a John Adams, especially since the tape itself is obsessed with the undecidability of authorship."

The feeling of being tricked that the spectator experiences as a consequence of this substitution may be attributed in part to the incompatible rhetorical purposes of the autobiographical story and the commercial. While I thought I was being entertained by a narrative, I was actually being persuaded by a commercial. This confusion of genres mimetically reproduces strategies employed in the broadcast of real television commercials. Often, the makers of these commercials attempt to overcome resistance to their seductive appeals by obscuring the transitions between the commercials and the narratives that frame them. The spectator's trust that conventional cues will be supplied to mark the implementation of changes in the status of discourse is violated by this practice. The insertion of markers to indicate shifts in discursive modes or levels of ontological validity has been dubbed "keying" by sociologist Erving Goffman (1974).

Customary correspondence between "keying" procedures and authorial provenance are disrupted throughout INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES. Although INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES may be pigeonholed as an experimental narrative, it also possesses some of the aspects of the essayistic that Renov has delineated: "The now familiar assault upon the category of the subject, bastion of western metaphysics, is textualized in the essayistic; for if compositional coherence is undermined, so too is the knowability of the source and subject of enunciation" (1989).

A semblance of compositional coherence is provided throughout INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES by the formal closure of internally integral sequences with such conventional framing devices as the fade to black. The spectator is led to believe that eventually the tape will resolve into a Chinese box structure of neatly nested narratives. For example, the closing of one frame and the opening of another occurs at the culmination of the airline commercial, when the British first-person narrator makes a concluding remark: "Anyway, I did get to America." Nevertheless, the confusion of the knowability of the source and subject of enunciation that Renov diagnoses as symptomatic of the essayistic persists. Another female voice-over narrator is introduced, who tells a story about the humiliation stemming from a misreading of semiotic codes. A shy person moves to a big city. He doesn't speak to anyone until his confidence is bolstered by a self-help book titled *A Primer for Self-Starters*. Then, he rings his neighbor's doorbell and asks if she would like to borrow a cup of sugar. The denouement of this story must be inferred from details supplied about the neighbor: she communicates through the loudspeaker instead of opening the door, and her voice sounds angry and impatient. But the identity of the story's protagonist remains mysterious. Is he related to any of the characters who have appeared previously? Is this what happens to the British first person narrator when he arrives in America? No visual cues are available, since the shot that accompanies this narrative is a still taken from an already used image of a cityscape.

The spectator's anxiety increases during this segment. This emotional state is not merely the result of the spectator's identification with the shy protagonist. Lucien Dallenbach has formulated the concept of "mise-en-abyme" in his study of textual directives (Dallenbach, 1977). A "mise-en-abyme" is an embedded segment that

reflects either syntagmatically or paradigmatically the structure of a greater whole. Thus, it may serve as a skelton key to unlock the textual strategies being employed, or a map of the territory that controls the spectator's advance. If the story about the cup of sugar is interpreted as a "mise-en-abyme," then its function may be to warn the spectator to submit to the author's power. If the spectator is foolish enough to be a "self-starter" by deducing premature solutions to the hermeneutic riddles posed by the text, he will only be subjected to the mortification of failure.

At the conclusion of the story about the cup of sugar, the female voice-over narrator states, "Later, he decided to see a travelogue." The images that subsequently appear on the screen seem to be from the travelogue of Cambridge he is presumably viewing. However, the soundtrack takes us behind the scenes to the production of the travelogue. Another British female voice-over narrator is directing this scene. She explains to the actor who is waiting to read the scripted narration that the scene must be rewritten before it can be recorded. The actor, who has an American accent, complains that the writer is a hack. Then the soundman asks him to talk so a sound level can be set. The actor responds by telling a story about meeting a woman in a bar who tries to pick him up. He rebuffs her by telling her he will only sleep with her if she wears a bag over her head. As in the preceding story, the moral is that aggressive overtures made towards a stranger will be repulsed, although the story is recounted from the point of view of the recipient of the unwelcome advances. Is this a description of the encounter between the man and the woman in the earlier restaurant scene? The actor's story is left dangling without its punchline when the production of the travelogue recommences.

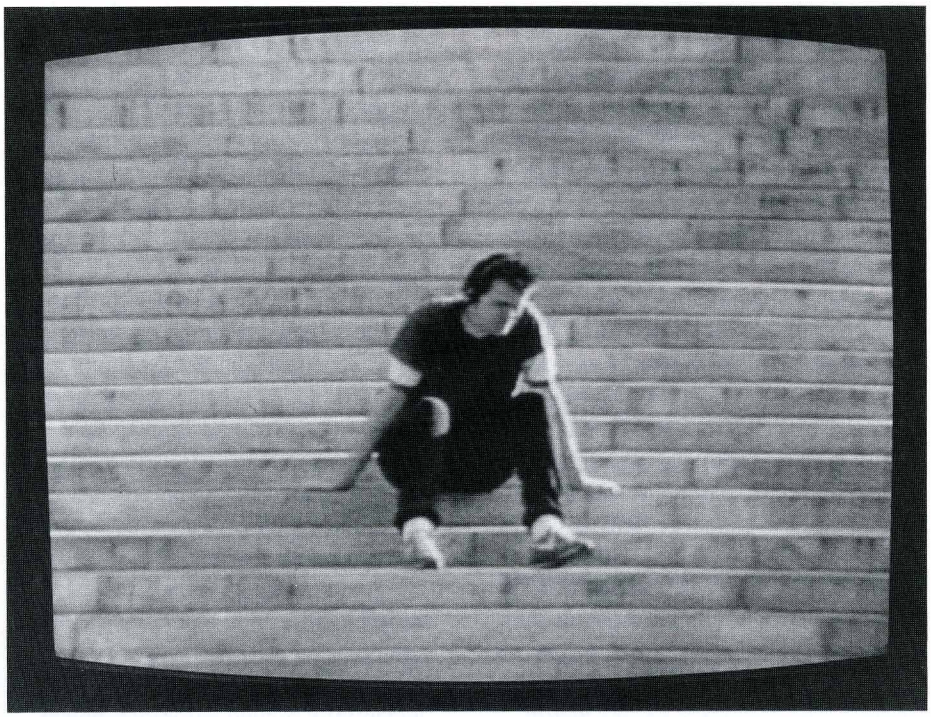
"And because of the way things are 'glued' together by the 'aleatory' method, we find ourselves in a maze of texts or fragments of texts that at once fascinate and bewilder. The disorderly philosophical conduct of this work is so magnificent that it defies linear exposition" (Hartman, 1981, p. 2). (The reader will find the source of this quotation in the references, a privileged site for intellectual copyrights.) Part Three of Adam's videotape is titled "Mediaocracy." It features a long story elaborated by the same female narrator who told the tale about the cup of sugar. No images illustrate this story, which is inscribed in text on the screen as it is vocalized. The story's premise is that its protagonist's analyst is showing him Howard Hawks' film, RED RIVER, without the soundtrack, having instructed him to assume the identity of any one of the characters and to improvise their dialogue. This is an appropriate task for the protagonist, since the narrator has informed us that he makes his living as a hack writer. Is he the writer who penned the travelogue? The scene that ensues would have to be credited to his oeuvre, according to one plausible interpretive framework.

The intertextual reference to RED RIVER in this scene is worth investigating. The previous section of the tape was titled, "Looking for John Wayne," and John Wayne stars in RED RIVER. An Oedipal fable, the film is also Hawks' celebration of the capitalist economic system. There are two versions of RED RIVER, neither of which can be proven to be definitive. In one version, Walter Brennan's voice-over narration serves as the segue between scenes. In the other version, visual imagery of handwriting on paper provides the essential narrative transitions. The two versions were produced because of a dispute between Hawks and Howard Hughes. Hughes accused Hawks of stealing the film's ending from Hughes' THE OUTLAW. However, it was Hawks who wrote the final scene of THE OUTLAW while he was working for Hughes. The ironies were compounded when the dispute was settled by having Hughes re-edit the ending of RED RIVER, introducing the changes he deemed necessary. Whether or not Adams was aware of this story, it certainly raises the issue of intellectual copyrights.

The issue of intellectual copyrights also comes to the fore when the voice-over narrator informs us that one of the writer's problems is that "he had absolutely nothing to say." The written version of the text which up until this point has coincided with the vocalization suddenly betrays a discrepancy; it reads, ". . . he has committed the sin of plagiarism." Thus, the analyst's exercise may have been designed to help her client overcome his writer's block. The task she has set might also be interpreted as a satirical reference to the prevalence of psychoanalytical approaches to film criticism. If critics have co-opted psychoanalytical techniques, then why shouldn't psychoanalysts return the favor?

As the scene dissolves into a complex embedded story, the spectator cannot ascertain whether this story is the writer's repsonse to RED RIVER or a tangentially related autobiographical anecdote. The omniscient female narrator explains that the writer had missed his last therapy session because he was recovering from a Percodan overdose. Just before he lost consciousness, he realized that he had forgotten to leave a suicide note. Puzzling over what to write, he had a flash of inspiration. But he only managed to scribble a few words, and then he had slipped into a hallucinatory state. The key figure in his hallucination was John Wayne. A moving hologram of John Wayne had been elected as the President of the United States. His speeches were synthesized from the dialogue of his films.

However unfashionable the French theorist Jean Baudrillard may have become as an intellectual property whose ideas have been over-appropriated, I cannot forego the temptation to invoke his name at this point. The John Wayne hologram serves as a perfect instance of simulation as Baudrillard (1983) has conceived it: the substitution of signs of the real for the real itself. The atavistic nostalgia for the real that Baudrillard identifies as one of the features of a political climate in which power circulates endlessly makes John Wayne the obvious choice for a prefabricated national leader. Wayne is the avatar of unambiguous authority and



INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES BY JOHN ADAMS

unbending moral rectitude: the father who *is* the law.

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Today I received a packet of information about INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES from John Adams. I had written to request clippings and a resume, but I had despaired of receiving them before I had to finish this essay. Adams' picture was included in the packet. Based on this extrinsic evidence, I can now assert that the actor who plays A.J. in the film is John Adams. I also realized that the initials "A.J." are a transposition of Adams' initials. Thus, it becomes feasible to categorize INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES either as an autobiography or as an experimental narrative. The autobiographical genre has the advantage of falling under the rubric of the essayistic. Renov's (1989) definition of the essayistic even draws on Derrida's insights into the nature of autobiography: "in discussing Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, Jacques Derrida has suggested that autobiography mobilizes meaning along a dynamic borderline between the 'work' and the 'life,' the system and the subject of the system."

Adams' resume states that he studied art at the Newcastle Polytechnic Fine Art Department, where he now teaches. Although this data did not clarify the tape's purview, one clipping Adams included in the packet did seem relevant. Unfortunately, the author's name was cut off on the xerox Adams sent to me. The review was titled, "The primal code," and it was published in *Mediamatic*, Volume 1, Number 3, January 1987. The unidentifiable author perceptively articulated the connection between the autobiographical system and its subject:

> Adams' world is one that is predicated on ambiguity and where that ambiguity can be exploited to give everyone a little of what they think they want whilst actually only giving them what you want to. That this function in art is constantly rewarded links the work to its own context and status, whilst allowing it to look out on a world (of money, power and advertising that is not really that different from its own. . . In Adams' work it is the processes of power found in desire and gratification, fear and rejection, possession and dispossession, and the ensuing paranoia/acceptance the subject must deal with that motivates his character.

As this improperly attributed quotation suggests, the shock of emotional rejection and the baroquely manipulative strategies the subject devises to evade it are encoded in the tape in a psychologically overdetermined manner. For example, the story of the Percodan overdose ends with the author returning to the site where he lost consciousness to find out what he had written in his abortive suicide note: "Right there in front of him, it says, 'Those helicopters.' As he was leaving, someone said, 'Have you got a light, buddy?' 'Sorry,' he said, 'I don't smoke.' The guy looked at him and sneered, 'Look, pal, I don't wanna know your fuckin' life story.'"

The writer's interrogator functions as a stand-in for the spectator, who is always engaged in a struggle for control with the video artist. The video artist is threatened by the spectator's inherent indifference; he must constantly invent new ways to pique her interest. The pathos engendered by the smoker's gratuitous rejection is emotionally engaging for the spectator. The video artist is playing a dangerous game by risking that the spectator will agree with the smoker's assessment. However, the spectator cannot avoid being moved by the injustice of the smoker's taunt, especially since it reinforces the disappointment the writer experiences when the profound insight he expected to discover expressed in his suicide note turns out to be an abstruse banality.

The video artist also has an extra ace up his sleeve, since the phrase, "Those Helicopters," has an unexpected meaning for the spectator. It supports the hypothesis the spectator has been forming about the writer's claim to have authored the tape, since "Those Helicopters" is the title of the first section. Of course, it is quite evident to the spectator that the writer did not really script the tape, since he is a character in it. Instead, it would be more accurate to describe the situation as one in which the spectator receives confirmation that the tape may be regarded as an autobiography constructed by an authorial principle who disguises himself by splitting into multiple voices. Renov

(1989) has hypothesized that polyphony is intrinsically essayistic: "One of the tactics that most characterizes the essayistic film or video work is the pluralization of voices. Unlike the relatively parsimonious voice-over narration, of the readerly documentary which implies a god-like agency and omniscience, the proliferation of voices undermines certainty by challenging univocal authority."

In INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES, the voice is capable of assuming myriad disguises, not only by blurring discursive registers, but also by being subjected to electronic processing. The voices of the narrators of Part Four, which is titled, "Watch Out for the Crazies," have been slowed down, so that even their gender becomes dubious. However, the narrator of the first story seems to be male. His story is accompanied by shots of a runner who enters from offscreen space and traverses successive street scenes, creating a disjunctive rhythm of appearances and disappearances. One of these shots shows a building covered with yellow plastic. This seems to be the building the narrator is alluding to when he tells the story of an artworld hoax. An artist pretends that he has wrapped a building in plastic, in the manner of Christo. But it is revealed eventually that the style of this psuedo-art object is really more Duchampian; like Duchamp's ready-mades, this art work has been linguistically appropriated as the artist's intellectual property, rather than materially constructed by the artist. A contractor who was renovating the building was responsible for covering it with plastic to protect the public from falling debris.

The character who jogs across the street scenes that illustrate this story looks familiar; he is "John Wayne," the man in sweatpants who sat down at A.J.'s table in the opening sequence. However, the woman who meets A.J. in a railway carriage in the next segment did not appear previously in the tape. In her voice-over narration, she describes herself as an aspiring writer of romantic novels. The prose style she employs to summarize her encounter with A.J. is suitably florid. When he invites her to be in a film, she dismisses his offer as a scam. Nevertheless, she agrees to see him again.

"My interpretation of the film's structure is borne out by its coda. A shot of a video post-production facility parallels a final voice-over articulation by the magnate's computer: 'He returned after completing his project and yesterday we had a screening. I showed him mine and he showed me his.'"

". . . multiplying citation and texts, framing them in unexpected ways. . . " (Hartman, 1981, xxv). These are the methods we employ: Derrida, Hartman, Adams, Renov and Tamblyn. In my reiteration of INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES, some scenes have already been omitted. A whole section will now be elided: Part Five, "The Modern Couple." The material in this section is not particularly relevant to my concerns. Besides, the events that unfold during Part Five are too complicated to be paraphrased in the limited space my editor has allocated for this essay. I will have to renounce a wonderful opportunity to cite a reference from the history of video art by not writing about this section. Making an allusion to Richard Serra's 1974 videotape, BOOMERANG, would enhance my academic prestige by confirming my erudition as a historian of video art. Nevertheless, it is not possible within the scope of this essay to address the parallels between Serra's videotape and the story in Part Five about the author who must take a test to demonstrate that he has lost his hearing.[2]

Part Six, "Power Plays, " begins with a recapitulation of many of the street scenes that were used previously. However, traces of another presence conducting a surveillance project become increasingly evident in these shots. Some scenes are abutted to a close-up of a Nikon camera as its shutter is being clicked. Other shots are framed in a viewfinder or are retaped as they are being played back on a video monitor. A new voice-over narrator is introduced who seems to be responsible for instigating these modes of surveillance. This narrator's voice cannot be attributed to a human presence; its disembodied method of verbalization was produced by a DecTalk computer. The narration explains that this computer is a vehicle employed by a wealthy magnate who claims to be completing an epic which may be presumed to include some or all of the taped material the spectator has already viewed.

The magnate aspires to a God-like omnipotence and omniscience. He relies on his computer to advise him about the probable consequences of his decisions. Many of the actors in his production never realized they were being videotaped. Even A.J., the star, only understands the scope of his role after viewing the edited footage. The magnate explains that A.J. is also a filmmaker: "I could see that his films were completely uncommercial, but the computer had already told me that he would be right for the part. So, I offered him a deal. I would finance him on condition that I received prints of all his footage, which I could use in any way I wished. . . . From that moment, I had him placed under constant surveillance."

Not only does the magnate spy on A.J. and appropriate the other filmmaker's footage for his film, but he also provokes incidents in A.J.'s real life so they can be incorporated into the project. Alluding to the encounter between A.J. and the woman he meets on the train, he reveals: "He had no reason to suspect that this meeting was anything but chance. However, everyone in the carriage was paid to be there. She was studying law, specializing in

copyright and software protection. . . . According to the plot, they would live together for three months. When she left him, he took it very badly."

The magnate makes the most encompassing claim to the tape's authorship. His frame story has the greatest explanatory power; it can account for all of the material the spectator has seen thus far. The spectator is inveigled into mentally replaying the scenes she has been shown up to this point to find out how these scenes tally with her new hypothesis about their significance. The videotape becomes a game of snakes and ladders in which the spectator must move backward in order to move forward, responding to the dictates of the board. The spectator's desire continues to be manipulated with a cogent interpretation offered as the ever-renewed and ever-deferred moment of satisfaction.

The structure of INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES may be compared to the structure of Raul Ruiz's OF GREAT EVENTS AND ORDINARY PEOPLE as adduced by Renov (1989) in support of his analysis of the elements of the essayistic: "Somewhere near the end, the film admits its fatal attraction for a text without end. Potential linkages among shots and the play along a vertical or metaphoric axis based upon associations in the mind of the filmmaker render the text as inexhaustible as language and memory. . . . At last, the film bites its tail. It begins again . . . condensing the film into a miniature version of itself. . . "

Like Ruiz's film, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES concludes by recycling its opening images. After the magnate's tale, which is accompanied by key shots that reinforce his assertions, the images from the initial bar scene are repeated. This time, however, they are shown with a soundtrack that is closely synched to the characters' dialogue. Although the earlier scene was in black and white and unfolded in slow motion, the reprise is in color and advances at normal speed.

The conversation between A.J. and "Joan" consists of a banal exchange of jokes. Their mundane bantering is again interrupted by cutaways to the two men sitting at another booth. The men's dialogue turns out to be comprised of sales pitches from commercials. The abrupt intrusion of advertising messages into the otherwise realistic scene the other characters are enacting has the same disconcerting effect here that it had when A.J.'s autobiography mutated into a commerical earlier in the tape.

The jogger who sits down at A.J.'s table after "Joan" leaves identifies himself as "Joan's" husband. He admits that he doesn't care about his wife having left him, except that she has also taken his car, which he would like to have returned. But the scene culminates with this menacing "John Wayne" clone confessing, "Hey, I was only kidding. I'm just an actor."

". . . the only way to exit from the labyrinth of language seems to be by way of the center. Or, as in Blanchot, the labyrinth is itself conceived to be a scattering of the center" (Hartman, 1981, p. 7). Because this film-within-a-film seems self-contained and internally coherent, it may plausibly be regarded as the work of A.J., the "non-commercial" filmmaker. If this is the case, then the magnate made his film by exploding A.J.'s images into atomistic fragments, and adding a new soundtrack. His behavior resembles Howard Hughes' in the story about RED RIVER. Because he could pay for Hawks' labor, Hughes was entitled to re-edit Hawks' work or take credit for it, as he pleased. Intellectual property rights are always awarded to the highest bidder.

My interpretation of the film's structure is borne out by its coda. A shot of a video post-production facility parallels a final voice-over articulation by the magnate's computer: "He returned after completing his project and yesterday we had a screening. I showed him mine and he showed me his." Yet this hopeful recovery of meaning at the eleventh hour must be qualified. The loose ends that adhere to the narrative reinvigorate an indefatigable hermeneutic quest. Repeated viewings do not resolve all the enigmas that have been posed by the perpetual motion machine of the text. ". . . all possibility of closure is denied. . . " (Hartman, 1981, p. 16). INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES may be deemed essayistic because it has the earmarks of other essayistic works cited by Renov; it may be characterized as "reversible," "hetereogenous," "fragmentary" and intrinsically "unfinished." It is this provisional status that allows the sense of proprietorship, of owning the text and controlling the rules of the game, to pass from the video artist to the critic, who always gets to have the last word.

FOOTNOTES

1. This source is acknowledged by Adams in the credits at the end of INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES.

2. For a description of BOOMERANG, the reader is referred to the author's "Reading between the lines", *Afterimage, 14* (8), 1987, 6-7.

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NOTES ON FILMMAKERS AND VIDEO ARTISTS

John Adams is an English video artist whose narrative videotapes are shown internationally. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES won 1st Prize at the Bonn Videonale in 1986 and received major production support from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities.