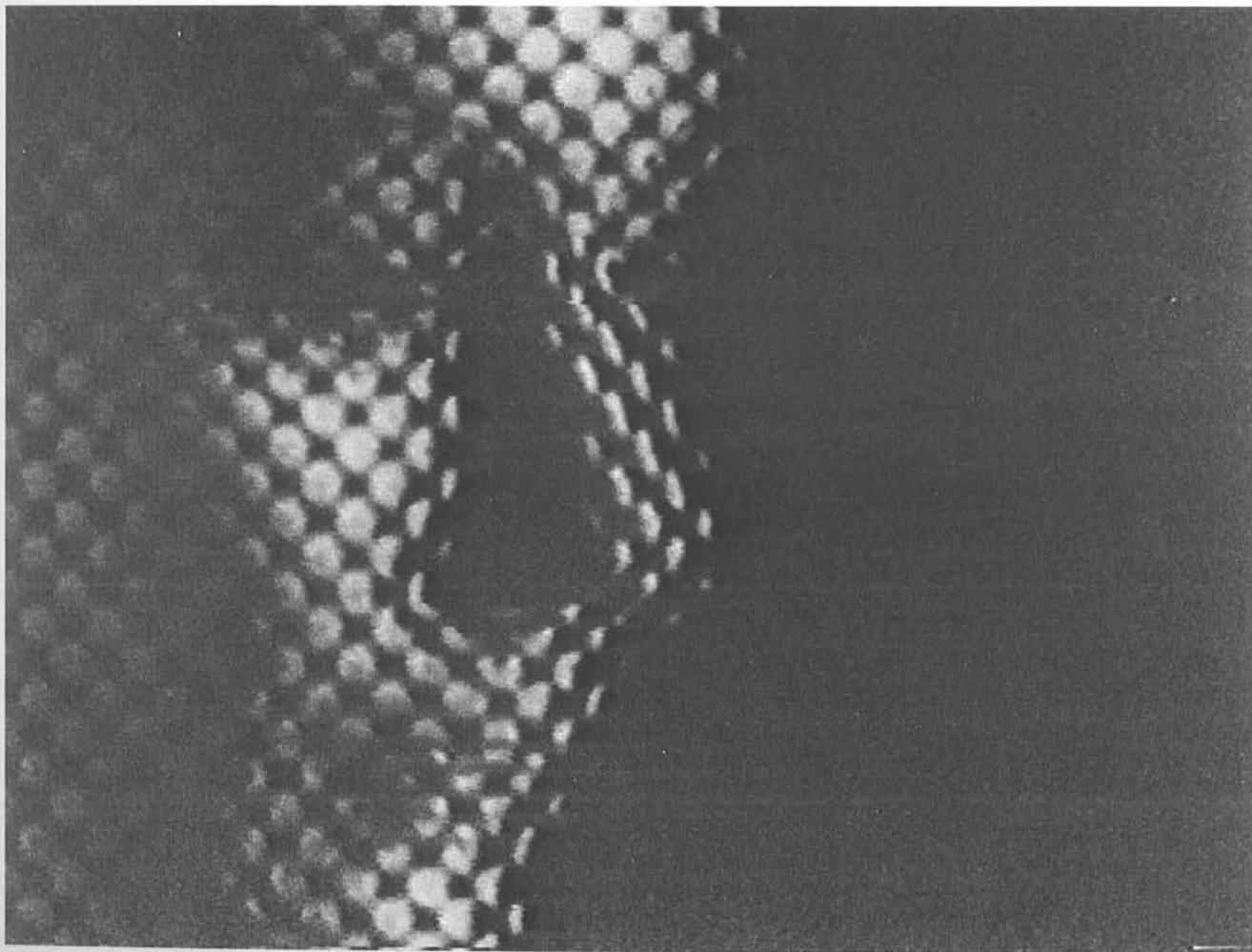fig 1 (above) "Take them out of the crate Joe".
fig 2 (below) The dots of a screen, both the mesh holes of a light filter and the indentations of a projection screen.

LAURENCE SIMMONS
"Take them out of the crate Joe":
The Surface of Detail in John O'Shea's *Runaway*

"You like things too much."
(Joe Wharewera to David Manning in *Runaway*)

"Only universal issues are thought."
(Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*)

A few preliminaries. This paper is a close, dare I say it, a detailed reading of the New Zealand film *Runaway* made in 1964 by John O'Shea, but I also hope to have something to say about detailism,[1] the theory of particulars and film (fig 1) in general. My title ("Take them out of the crate Joe.") is taken from a seemingly innocuous detail in the film and it is a detail that immediately reveals some important characteristics about details. First of all, they are cumulative: you have naturally added to your store of details on Kiri Te Kanawa in one of her first roles here since 1964, and now conjure up, I suspect, the more sophisticated image of a rolex-toting diva of opera in the park. Secondly, when focussed on in this fashion, details always seem incongruous and operate an effect of distanciation, and this occurs whether they are lifted out of context or out of time. Thirdly, if I can take up the metaphor of Kiri's opening challenge, in my attempt to unpack the crate of this film I have divided my paper up into three parts and these three sections correspond to the three rhetorical moments identified by Alan Liu in his wide-ranging discussion of the detail: detachment, commitment, immanence. Figures that ultimately, he suggests, blur together in a kind of "filmic dissolve" where the overall textual result remains one of "detached immanence."[2] Similarly I would argue, it is the discernment of a distanced, yet also nostalgic and immanental sense of reality within a detail, such as that of the haunting moment of Kiri and her crate of beer, which enables, but also as I shall argue ultimately entraps, my own critical interrogation here today.

Each of the three parts of my discussion also focusses on the contribution of a particular theorist to the processes of this 'rhetoric of detail': in Part 1, I make use of Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*; in Part 2, Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*; and in Part 3, I discuss the implications of Freud's 1927 paper on "Fetishism." As well, each of these three sections has as its subtitle a phrase uttered by a character in the film *Runaway*. Of course, making an epigraph of these phrases taken from the soundtrack of the film invests a casual detail with a truth-bearing function. And, naturally, here I begin to encounter one predicament of running the risk of detail where, as Naomi Schor has remarked, the danger is that "to write on detail is to become lost in it."(Schor, p. 6)

I

"Let us make a beginning... "

Let me begin as the film that is the object of my study here today begins with the question of 'beginning.' The dots of a screen, both the mesh holes of a light filter and the indentations of a projection screen (fig 2).[3] Also the elemental black and white dots that are the essential, meaningless, smallest possible units of a photograph magnified. Dots that announce the origins of film in the still photograph. Dots that also announce the apparatus of film projection without which the the celluloid origin of the image remains unreadable and intangible. Dots that mysteriously begin to focus or coalesce into the immobile profile of a face and have the immediate effect of signaling the presence of construction, the shaping of representation, the function of filtering, manipulating and objectivising events that is filming.

A voice-off that seems at first distorted and metallic, but then sharpens and focusses like those dots as it repeatedly calls out the name "Diana." First words that are also, as we will discover, the last words of this film. A voice that finds itself literally in the dark. Imprisoned perhaps? A voice whose

identity is unknown. A voice that could even be that of the director giving instructions to an actress. A voice that we spectators are also invited to identify with in its distanciation from the scene. A proper name from the edges of the screen, out of shot, that sets the story going, one that also puts into production the mechanisms of filming, signaling a moment of participation but also of witness after the events. For this is the only occasion that our film will jump proleptically forward. Or would it be more correct to say that the entire film which follows is an analeptic flashback to this sequence of beginning?

What happens when a film speaks to us like this in some way or another about itself from its outset, about its being cinema? When it speaks to us about a film that is being made, is gradually taking shape and is finally shown to us on the screen and where we are present at the effort of assembling a mise-en-scene. Such a film acquires a dual dimension, it takes itself as its own object of discourse and makes a mise-en-scene of its own existence. This can make it somewhat ambiguous, its centre may become elusive, a confession may slide into exhibitionism. The off-screen voice in the pre-credit sequence of *Runaway* introduces and shows the cinematic apparatus in both of its principle aspects - that of production (the director giving instructions) and that of consumption (a spectator commenting on the spectacle).

The woman's eyes shift to look in our direction as her body begins to turn mechanically 90 degrees to face the camera directly. The voice previously heard off-frame declaims the phrase "Let us make a beginning." What does this mean? Let us (these two characters, two lovers in the narrative) start again after all that has happened, make, as they say of lovers who have quarelled or broken off, a new beginning? Or is it let us (the filmmakers) *make* a beginning? For this is surely what they were literally engaged in. Or is it let us (the spectators) begin, or as recent spectator-response theory would more correctly have it 'make a beginning,' construct the moments of our beginning to view? For this is surely what *we* are engaged in?...

As she walks to our left Diana (by now we should have registered her name) is masked momentarily by a black pole and then moves further into off-screen space, paced by a panning camera through an indistinct and uncertain space, perhaps the jumble of a stage set. She turns around again to move aimlessly back through a doorway to centre frame and utters in a formal, almost ritualistic, tone another detail lifted from its context: a phrase taken from one of Desdemona's speeches in Shakespeare's *Othello*: "Our loves and comfort should increase even as our days do grow." (fig 3) Do we (spectators) recognise it as such? Perhaps not, but least we recognise it as cited and performative, functioning as an epigraph.

The opening strategies of enunciation, the beginning, of this film illustrate a conflict between two opposing structures. Let us separate for a moment the two components. The first one is fixed by the 'word': we have already noted how through naming the voice-off implicates the story to be viewed, how it sets the narrative going, and refers possibly to a narrative that has gone. The moment of verbal interpellation has the characters address each other and the film is modelled on a conjugation in the second person. So if we analyse the verbal register we find that the opening shot is a subjective one: this will be the story, yet another story, of two lovers, these events will concern individuals. The second structure is linked to the image: if we analyse the visual register we find that the opening shot (not a textbook establishing shot but one that nevertheless establishes) is turned directly towards the spectator in an attitude of revelation, just as the character portrayed is to turn as if in answer to an interpellation directed by us. The scene is seen by someone in the position of an observer, someone who lends his eyes to the spectator from a position 'out of frame' like that of the spectator. As such it metacinematically exhibits the workings of representation. The film in choosing methods of interpellation and shifting emphasis to the spectator conjugates in the first person: 'I/we are watching a film;' or in the participatory scenario I have outlined: 'We are making a beginning to this film.'

This is the fracture that cuts across the first shots of *Runaway*. Thanks to these opening strategies the 'I' of the film spectator, the s/he of the character and the you of subjectivity are placed together in apparent reciprocal equilibrium. However, this equilibrium will endure only for an
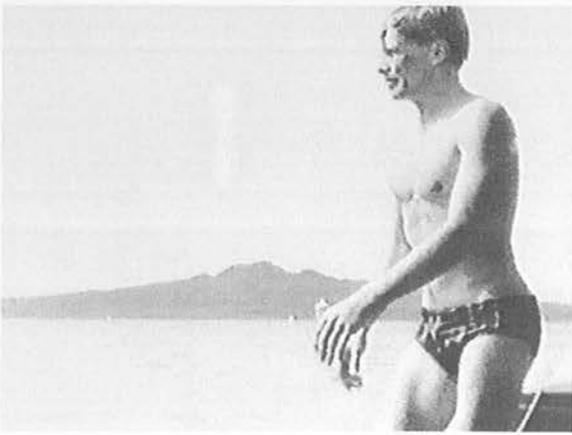
fig 3 (top right) a phrase from one of Desdemona's speeches in Shakespear's *Othello*: "Our loves and comfort should increase even as our days do grow"
fig 4 (top left) the male character we focus on emerges from the water
fig 5 (mid left) squared-off, chunky, white on grey modernist poster lettering that jumps position and increases in size
fig 6 (bottom) potent and recurrent associations between landscape and the male body

instant, the use of the first person will not continue, the moment of self-consciousness and interpellation will remain isolated. There will be a return to subjectivity, to representation folded back on 'you' and a victory of the second person.

Let us study in a little more detail how this victory of the second person is won. The second sequence of this film, its true opening, which contains the titles and credits ostensibly bears no connection with what we have just seen. In the establishing shot (and this time it is a classic establishing shot) the male character we focus on emerges from the water with Rangitoto in the background and the film titles play across his body (fig 4). In no way are we aware at this stage that he belongs to the disembodied voice we have just heard in our pretext. There is a further complication. Every filmtext is framed by its relationship to its introductory titles as the spectator becomes involved in 'a figuring out' of the graphic systems at work.[4] The title as genre points to the empty directionality of a sixties road movie - a 'David and Diana' to our own contemporary *Thelma and Louise*. The title as enigma - Who is the runaway? (The figure of David with the very word emblazoned across his chest would appear to confirm that he is. But he also seems curiously static and immobile here, anything but a runaway...) And running away from what? To where? And how does the title of the film inflect its theme song "Runaway" performed live in the first half of the film? These enigmas will find their solutions in the spectator's work throughout the diegesis and its images. Sometimes the experience of viewing confirms what is suggested in the apparent meaning of the title - David as runaway? Sometimes this will be betrayed: Does he really manage to runaway we ask at the end? Or the sense may be mutually reinforcing when the formal structures of a film and its title reinterpret each other: Does *Runaway* have a runaway narrative? Often the visual design, the stenographic shape of the credits, inflects the composition of the film as a whole: it may have an obvious extensive meaning displayed, for example, in the letter credits which drip blood so common in horror movies. But here with *Runaway* we have squared-off, chunky, white on grey modernist poster lettering that jumps position and increases in size (fig 5). And with its synchronisation to these shifts, the powerful role of Robin Maconie's music on the soundtrack of this film has already begun to be felt in these credits (fig 6). The superscription of title and credits above David's supine body, together with the previous image of Rangitoto - itself a reclined body rising out of the Waitemata - inaugurates potent and recurrent associations between landscape and the male body in this film, the potentiality of the male psyche to lose itself in the landscape.[5]

Let us stop for a moment to take some filmstock. What is the meaning of the small moves that I have revealed up until now? They all disclose the status of what is exhibited: the off-screen commentary, the titles, the character's frozen movement all remark, that is, the existence of film (the medium) within a film. Such detachment names the moment when the perceiver suddenly sees not 'reality' but the simulation Barthes calls 'the reality effect.'[6]

The effect of desublimation achieved by such a self-conscious reflection back to spectator space in this film is further enhanced by the many moments of interruption of movement within the image as opposed to movement of the image. Moments I would name as 'the freeze inside the image' rather than the freeze frame, or 'the image stilled' rather than the still. These are unique instants when cinema appears to be fighting against its very principle if this is defined, as Deleuze would have it, as movement-image.[7] For here the filmic is conceived not in the absolute of movement (Deleuze) but on the contrary, in the still whose dissociation from the dialectic of movement creates a space for an indescribable third meaning wavering between fixity and movement, the *not-quite-sure* of the image. This term 'third meaning' is borrowed from Barthes and initially comes from his encounter with several photograms taken from a film by Eisenstein.[8] For Barthes, opposed to the 'obvious' meaning where signification originates, is the fragmentary, exact and unpredictable 'obtuse' meaning whose aim is to be primarily indifferent to and even contradicts film movement in its *deroulement*. One can only reach obtuse meaning through the image that is brought to a standstill, film against the grain. Barthes is seeking a paradoxical object: a meaning prior to all signification, irreducible to articulated language which is nevertheless its vehicle and to which it is opposed. In *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* he reformulates the notion of 'third meaning' as the photographic *punctum*. In contrast to the *studium* or 'obvious meaning' of the photograph that leans towards its themes, its visible signifieds; the *punctum* designates the irrational, unnameable fragment that Barthes says "rises from

the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me."[9] It is the *punctum* that endows a photograph with the structure of a moving image:

> the cinema has a power which at first glance the Photograph does not have: the screen (as Bazin has remarked) is not a frame but a hideout; the man or woman who emerges from it continues living: a 'blind field' [*champ aveugle*] constantly doubles our partial vision... the *punctum* then, is a kind of subtle off-screen [*hors champ*] - as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see. (Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 55-57)

The filmic, then, is to be found in the play of trace between an absent and a present and the *punctum* breaks through or pierces the constraints of the assumed discrete system of signification that is photography to engage desire and the viewing subject. It 'punctures' the signifying surface and ruptures the space of representation. These instants where no movement is exhibited inside the image, instants of the image stilled or the body de-animated (fig 7), produce the spectral structure of photography where the image's referent is always called upon to share its space with a reference to death.[10] Unsuprisingly, *temps mort* is the technical term used in French to describe those moments when the camera dwells on a space after the character has left, or where, we could add, the actor has become frozen and immobile as if dead. They are moments where the structural distinction between the still and the moving image no longer holds. For given its insistent temporality cinema does move towards the future but, on the other hand, this is a future foreseen that we know will come to an end within the space of a screening. Within the present space and the present time of film, in other words, we are incessantly reminded of the spectre of the past that is death.

fig 7 These instants where no movement is exhibited . . . instants of the image stilled or the body de-animated

At the juncture of the visible and the invisible, the instant that stills the film gives to space the feeling of time[11] but also bears a relation to the film as whole. It goes way beyond its material inscription, reverting the film back on itself, emphasising that it cannot simply be reduced to the real time of illusion. These instants possess a quality of abstraction and of poignancy that seems to introduce a kind of paralysis, they are the pose but also the pause of film.

II

"The Hokianga is a big place but everything is small there."

1964, the date of release of *Runaway*, is also the date of publication of Pat Hohepa's *A Maori Community in Northland* by the Anthropology Department of Auckland University, a monograph on the 342 inhabitants of the Waima Valley situated on an estuary of the Hokianga Harbour. Originally part of an MA thesis, *A Maori Community in Northland* is one of the first attempts at what today would be classified, following the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, as a 'thick description' of a small Maori

community, and at the time of publication it represented a significant shift in the anthropological study of Maori society. Murray Groves in his foreword recognises the novelty of Hohepa's empirics and praises his study for abandoning;

> the traditional preoccupations of Polynesian anthropology and captur[ing] instead the authentic flavour of Maori life in the Hokianga area today. When it deals with such things as social security payments, the pecking order among siblings, the hui, the people's patois, attitudes to Jehovah's Witnesses, the tangi, debts at the general store, the consumption of beer, and complaints about the Department of Maori Affairs, this monograph deals with rural Maori society as it is, not as it was nor as it might be.[12]

Hohepa's monograph with its persistent piling up of detail is, to use de Certeau's phrase, progressively "encysted in particularity."[13] Let us take as an example the account of the annual cleaning of the Waima cemetery:

> Twenty-nine men and ten women, as well as eight boys and three girls, comprised the labour force on that single day in 1958. The equipment consisted of two tractors drawing mowers, one with a trailer; eight long-handled slashers; one scythe; eight spades; one hayfork; and ten maanuka forked sticks. Twenty six households were represented at the cemetery on that one day... While resting or while working, yarns, jokes, greetings and conversation continued, with people continually shifting from one task to another. Begun at 10 a.m., the work ended at 4 p.m., with an hour-long lunch break at 1.45 p.m. Lunch was also a convivial occasion, almost matching that of most households on Christmas day, for the workers had brought along pork, beef, mutton, peas, potatoes, and cabbage, preserved fruit, trifles, jelly, cake, and soft drinks, as well as tea and milk." (Hohepa, pp. 122-3)

We are immediately struck by the obsessiveness of these *ennumeratio* and the constant employfragmentary nature of the enterprise of listing implies that totalities may be gleaned from the scrutiny of detail, and that structures are somehow to be glimpsed through patterns subtending the contingency or gratuity of everyday events. Fragments are by definition parts of a whole. Working concurrently alongside, but also in some respects against, the narrative of historicism in Hohepa's text we find a non-narrative form of textual organisation in his use of the matrix and genealogy as the aggregate of detail. There is throughout Hohepa's account a literal or visual spreading out of the surface of detail to be seen in the interpolated arrays of particulars in his tables and in his diagrammatic accounts of the linking of the pool of *whaamere* ties. But as Hohepa indicates in his conclusion, the cumulative effect of the listing and mapping of these 'authentic' details of Waima is simply to show that there is cultural persistence in change: "Traditional cultural ways and cultural values persist in a modified way despite profound social and economic changes."(Hohepa, p. 129)

In so concluding Hohepa's study reproduces the structure of metonymy according to which much analysis in the tradition of New Historicism has been conducted. Metonymy is the trope of wholes and parts. It always presumes or posits an organic system, a 'field,' an 'episteme,' a 'culture,' or a 'text.' Only on such a presumption can the familiar strategy of New Historical analysis be justified: a strategy which begins with a close-up, a detail, then tracks back as if cinematically to discover in an increasingly broader sweep the context within which the detail makes sense and which it is shown to emblematise. Meaning is thus offered as a constant linking of the seemingly disparate elements in its view, and theoretically producible or deducible from any one of them.

But not only is the problem one of how to tell the story of Waima, and ground the epistemology of the narrative in the rhetoric of slippages between describing detail and narrating a whole; there is also the problem of the point of view of narration, of who tells the story. Here Hohepa's problem is that he was, as he confesses, both participant and observer:

> The bulk of the field research material was obtained by means of participant-observation: visiting and being visited by individuals and groups, attending and listening to speeches or gossip at ceremonial gatherings, at milking sheds, at the hotels in nearby localities, at the store and post office, at beer parties, etc. I also joined various groups on visits to other communities, on fishing or eeling expeditions, and in Youth Club activities, while during the gala-like days when monthly cream cheques or Social Security benefits were paid out at the local post office, I usually visited the household opposite the post office since it was a favourite meeting place for those people who wished to share a cup of tea, gossip, and their lunch (Hohepa, p. 13).

Hohepa's engagement with his subject is, as Alan Liu suggests of cultural criticism in general, "so close, so bit-mapped, or microbial that the critic appears no further from the cultural object than a
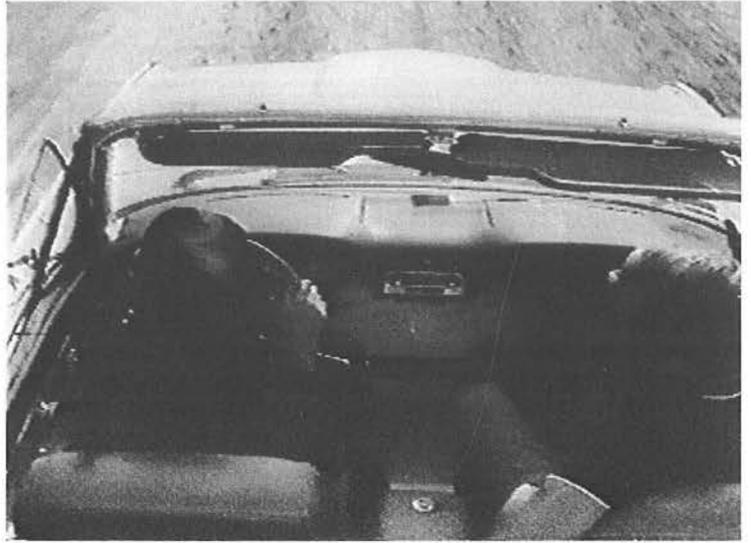
fig 8 (top left) a literal AA 'signing' of our location
fig 9 (top right) they are both filmed inside the car from behind
fig 10 (bottom) the camera is no longer directly associated with car and passengers

fig 11 (top) this point of view . . . appears to float
fig 12 (bottom) the subsequent tracking of the car's passage along the foreshore from what is now a definite non-associative point of view

cybernetic or biological virus from its host at the moment of code exchange."(Liu, p. 78) Yet as the linguist Emile Benveniste demonstrated long ago historiography aims at the exclusion of the existential relationship with language that is implied by the seeming presence of an 'I'.[14] The 'I' of involvement with which Hohepa opens his text becomes by its conclusion the foundation for a position that will authorise itself to speak in the third person in the guise of objectivity. By the prevalent use of the third person and a rhetoric of distanciation Hohepa attempts to transcend the irrelevance of the local and the contingency of discursive scenes through strategies of self-effacement.

Turning to *Runaway* and its depiction of the Hokianga we can uncover similar strategies at work resulting in an identical problematics. Both the anthropological monograph and the film represent small local Maori communities as their object and focus on the particulars of everyday life; both use a third-person 'objective' narrative but nevertheless exhibit the tensions inherent in that discursive mode; both are engaged in overcoming the object status that this third personhood entails. In the one case there is the ambiguity of a community member forced to assume the position of outside observer in order to understand the totalities that may be gleaned from the scrutiny of local detail; in the other we have an outsider, with whom both director and spectator are keen to identify, who wishes in some way to insert himself into the local through participation in the minutiae of its everyday existence.

Whereas Hohepa's 'camera' on Waima opens with the obsessive listing and grid matrix of detail to then pull back to discover the broad sweep, in true film style *Runaway* begins with an establishing long shot that then progressively zooms in on details to become in some way lost among them. But in a similar fashion the problematics of insertion into a local culture and the problems of positionality of both filmmaker and central character are inscribed at the level of *Runaway*'s camera. Let us look at several small moments where this is so. Our introduction to the Hokianga community is accomplished by the use of a number of high camera angles and constant recomposition of the frame together with a slippage and fluidity of point of view. At the opening of the sequence the hitch-hiking David, after a literal AA 'signing' of our location (fig 8), looks down upon the expanse of the harbour and its estuaries - a panorama that will subsequently be repeated and made familiar to us from many different angles. A panning camera position up higher on the cliff then follows the curve of the arrival of Laura Kosovich's white convertible. When David has accepted the lift (fig 9)they are both filmed inside the car from behind and very high up - this unusual viewpoint allows us to accompany them as characters rather than simply assume their point of view and so become them. By clever use of a simple camera tilt the filmmaker can then subtly shift this point of view to the road so that the camera is no longer directly associated with car and passengers (fig 10) at all and it appears to float (fig 11). This multiplication of quasi-objective viewpoints also allows for a smooth transition for the camera eye from the car over the edge of the cliff to the helicopter and the subsequent tracking of the car's passage along the foreshore from what is now a definite non-associative point of view (fig 12).

We further sense this multiplicity during David's first entry into the small community, as he walks past the shops while being observed intensely by its inhabitants: the man and child on the wharf (fig 13), Tana at work on his boat (fig 14), and Isabelle in the boarding house. It is as if they and our camera were waiting for him. This is reinforced by the way in which the camera at specific moments anticipates the action and jumps ahead as if to precede him and wait for his arrival (fig 15), giving us small moments of dead time that have no narrative function.

The narrative in these scenes is episodic rather than linear in its development and instead of incessantly moving forward, consequentially and causatively, *Runaway* oscillates between narrative and absence, the activity and fullness of story and the ordinariness and emptiness of the image. This conscious filming of interstices and inbetweenness as well as the multiplicity of viewpoints is in turn linked to the relationships between characters in *Runaway*. Separated and distanced from each other and disconnected from their context, this is a world where lovers touch each other momentarily, almost mechanically, and then seem to lose touch.

During the scene of the hangi at Joe's mother's house the camera wanders aimlessly picking up

fig 13 (top left) the man and child on the wharf
fig 14 (top right) Tana at work on his boat
fig 15 (bottom left) the camera . . . jumps ahead as if to precede him and wait for his arrival
fig 16 (mid right) the small details of flax food-baskets, beer crates, vegetables in the just-opened hangi
fig 17 (bottom right) the languid directionlessness of most of their lives

on and drifting from one character to another, one event to another, as if each time it might perhaps have caught the real, or the most important, protagonist, focussing on the small details of flax food-baskets, beer crates, vegetables in the just-opened hangi (fig 16). This camera movement emulates both the jerky telegraphic forms of communication with which the characters express themselves and the languid directionlessness of most of their lives (fig 17). The camera by continually wandering towards the apparently secondary and shifting its viewpoint thus refuses moments of audience identification.

So I am arguing that there is a fundamental division and tension in *Runaway* between narrative as a vehicle for meaning and the detail of the image as a means of dissolution of the narrative - the way in which the narrative dissolves into or stops on an image and details become no more than images. *Runaway* depicts a loss of centre and hence of meaning for its central character David Manning and at the same time it decentres itself by structuring within its narrative alternative places and details to focus on, this pluralisation of centres is not simply a matter of theme or of locations in the narrative.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* Michel de Certeau uncovers the ways in which disciplinary knowledges such as history and anthropology work to conceal the position and the interests of their enunciation. Using film term *mise en scène*, he has paid attention, for example, to the way that historiography stages itself by giving "itself credibility in the name of the reality it is supposed to represent, but this authorised appearance of the 'real' serves precisely to camouflage the practice which infact determines it. Representation thus disguises the praxis that organises it."[15] The problem, de Certeau maintains, is not only to account for knowledge as a product, but also for its production in an epistemic situation. This is a crucial issue for the ethnographic study of cultures and also for the study of popular culture. The rhetoric of ordinary conversation "consists of practices which transform 'speech situations,' verbal productions in which the interlacing of speaking positions weaves an oral fabric without individual owners, creations of a communication that belongs to no one."[16] Rhetoric is the broader term by which de Certeau designates the ruses, the jostling for position, the tropes and turns that characterise all semiotic practice and it is opposed, in de Certeau's conceptual mapping, to the myth of impersonal and disinterested speech, the fantasy of linguistic and scientific propriety that governs scientific and technocratic reason.

The practices of everyday life are coded by the same logic that informs the enunciative moves of rhetoric. In this day-to-day jostling of the texture of local irrelevance de Certeau makes a central distinction between 'strategy' and 'tactics.' Strategy, he says, presupposes the separation of the "subject of will and power" from its environment in order to make possible the imposition of this will. Strategy constructs places as fortifications, and thus as distinctly defined and possessed locations. Tactics, by contrast is a logic of momentary occupation without ownership; its place "belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance."(de Certeau, p. xx and xix) Both Pat Hohepa's monograph and John O'Shea's film strain towards a tactics in their attention to singularity and detail and the errant trajectory of their (camera) eye, but both remain entrapped in strategy as they reconstruct discourses of mediation from that detail. This is not to denigrate their efforts, the point is that as a critical insight, the character Joe Wharewera's comment to David Manning "You like things too much" might equally be voiced about Hohepa's cultural anthropology or John O'Shea's filming.

III

"I'd like to do that, disappear to nothing. Lose myself."

I would like to begin this section by taking up the distinction made by the 19th-century art historian Alois Reigl, today recognised as one of the precursors of the semiotics of the visual arts. This is the differentiation between reading a visual image either *haptically* (by touch, visual touch) or *optically* (according to the pure vectoriality of outlines).[17] Optical apprehension involves the scanning of objects according to their outlines, jumping from one point to another, haptics (from the Greek

haptein: to seize, grasp; and *haptikos*: capable of touching) focusses on surfaces and emphasises the superficies of objects. Filming viewing, I believe, is primarily a haptic or synesthetic operation. In *Runaway* the haptic attention to surface is contextualised and takes on a metatextual fascination, it becomes a subject all of its own. The film narrative as we have seen loops back on itself, simultaneously holding onto something, displacing it and letting it go, but never definitely arriving anywhere. With the vacant and distracted gaze of a passenger staring out of the window of a moving car, the engine humming soporifically, we roll past endless examples of the tourist or pictorial landscape that were much criticised by early reviewers of the film.[18] But the pictorial is not an idea to be proved here, this is not merely a tourist board exploitation of New Zealand scenery, the landscape fails to function as explicative or causal, but rather needs to be felt in its duration. It consists of the subject of the 'subject' dissolved, as figures become easily lost in a landscape or absorbed in a surface.

In contrast to those instances of the stilled image, camera movement in *Runaway* is a case of constant glancing, almost like a sketch just touching the surface rather than making an incision or mark, never fixing or taking possession. Like the water-skis that skim the surface of the Waitemata in the opening sequence (fig 18) or those of the aquaplane that touch down on the West Coast lake towards the end, the camera rubs over the reflective surfaces of things themselves. The many water sequences in the film, too, are part of a larger fascination with the functions of water and reflective surfaces: objects in shop windows, passengers' faces in train windows, silhouettes of figures in pools, dead faces shimmering hauntingly in the water (fig 19).

Reflections that are a shimmering, a losing of the outlines of things, for there is a flattening out of profundity in the seizing hold or shortening of depth in glass or reflective surfaces. Water, too, dissolves, shapes and transforms objects. Water is a false surface, below water there is only more water. Water is a changeable and variable surface that sucks in light and colour, a surface which when pierced swallows things up without a trace, but also brings them floating back to the surface like a corpse, as we are reminded in the sequence where Diana nearly drowns (fig 20) and the unfeeling, immobilised David is unable to help her.

Atmospheric qualities and matters of weather, too, can affect the shape or clarity, can erase or alter a perspective to the point of snow-blindness or whiteout. Unsettling, too, is the constant use of extreme close-up (fig 21) that renders the image indecipherable, where the proximity of objects to the camera, and the camera's almost-rubbing-against-them (fig 22), causes the image to lose all semblance of formal unity so that it blocks itself and becomes non-semantic (fig 23). This is the haptic or tactile camera eye that touches the surface of objects finding pleasure in surface and grain. Where the surface of the object is so close to the eye that the size and detail are no longer in

fig18 (above) the water-skis that skim the surface of the Waitemata

fig 19 (above) dead faces shimmering hauntingly in the water

fig 20 (above) the sequence were Diana nearly drowns and the unfeeling, immobilised David is unable to help her

inverse ratio to its distance from the observer as Albertian perspective demands. Where the slippage between a shoulder blade and a sand dune seems imperceptible (fig 24,25).

This fixation on surface in *Runaway*, often the surface of the body, and on how the displacements of detail determine the emplacements of character, is related closely to the mechanisms of desire and the structure of fetishism that underlies both film projection and film viewing. As Christian Metz notes in his important essay on the subject:

> the way the cinema, with its wandering framings (wandering like the look, like the caress), finds the means to reveal space has something to do with a kind of permanent undressing, a generalised striptease, a less direct but more perfected striptease, since it also makes it possible to dress space again, to remove from view what it has previously shown, to take back as well as to retain.[19]

Fetishism is also involved in the structure of oscillation between acknowledgement and disavowal that occurs in the cinema spectator who simultaneously disavows absence or the *not-there* of the cinematic scene while at the same time acknowledging its presence however illusory. As Metz notes again: "behind any fiction there is always a second fiction: the diegetic events are fictional, that is the first; but everyone pretends to believe that they are true, and that is the second."(Metz, p. 72) And there is also a fetishism of technique, the cinema apparatus is a fetish, a prop that disavows a lack and affirms it while doing so, a partial object that makes the object seem whole. Or there is the film star who in the economy of cinematic desire may become a fetish object for the spectator.

According to Freud's article of 1927 on the subject,[20] the fetishistic fixation arises from the refusal of the male child to acknowledge the abesence of the penis of the female (of

the mother). Confronted with this absence the child refuses (Freud used the term *Verleugnung* [disavowal]) to admit its reality, because to do so would permit a threat of castration against his own penis. This process of *Verleugnung* or disavowal is not as simple as it might first seem, for it contains an essential ambiguity in its operation. The conflict between the perception of reality which urges the child to renounce his phantasm and the counter-desire that urges him to deny his perception means that the child does neither one nor the other, or rather he does both simultaneously. With the help of this mechanism of the unconscious he disavows the evidence of his perception; on the other hand he recognises its reality and through a perverse symptom he assumes the anguish he feels before it. In so far as it is a presence, the fetish object is in fact something concrete and tangible; but in so far as it is the presence of an absence it is, at the same time, immaterial and intangible, because it alludes continuously beyond itself to something that can never really be possessed. As the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has pointed out the process of substitution undertaken is an example of the rhetorical figure of synecdoche: the substitution of part for a whole.[21]

If representation dictates a fracturing of that completeness which the child experienced with the mother, it nevertheless offers a substitute figure in the form of the other of desire. This might be a figure to direct the spacial co-ordination within the frame, one who automatically establishes the balance between distance and identification essential to cinematic suture. We see what he sees (and according to Laura Mulvey this spacial-come-narrative interpreter in classical narrative film is always a 'him').[22] We take pleasure in his pleasure, but his presence marks a principle of order and difference within the frame which allows for our own spacial autonomy from the image. On the other hand, it might be a Lacanian *petit objet a*, a fetish in which loss and lack can be inscribed, and which emphasises the fragmentary nature of cinematic experience:

> is it not obvious that this feature, this partial feature, rightly emphasised in objects, is applicable not because these objects are part of a total object, the body, but because they represent only partially the function that produces them.[23]

In either case suture is undone by the persistence of desire. Figures of viewing assume a bodily emphasis under the desiring gaze, they become corpsical, so associating spectatorship with death and the melancholy of absence (this is literalised in the thriller horror genre where our identification with the victim is confounded in violence and death). The body fragment informed as it is by the mechanics of fetishism, has an uncanny way of defiguring itself, disinvesting itself of the living presence with which the spectator would like to invest it. It becomes a de-animated body, or body-part that we view and is echoed in the detached emotions, undesired mechanical sex and the dead flesh of the hidden corpse which haunt *Runaway*. Here the cinematic whole is constituted in disappearance and the invisible or, rather, the filmic is recognised only in non-meaning and disappearance.

Epilogue

The notion of fetishism is coined at the intersection of discourses (anthropological, economic, psychoanalytical, religious, aesthetic) or, to put it another way, fetishism exhibits the inability of any one discourse to place it or fix it, to turn *it* into an object. Precisely what fetishism calls into question is the status of objects and of the discourse around them. At stake in the fetish we could argue is the status of theory. The fetish, of course, is only a fetish in theory never for the fetishist for whom it remains just another detail and, as Baudrillard has argued in his early essay "Fetishism and Ideology," curiously fetishism tends to resist the very theory that employs it.[24] Mark Wigley following this idea through in his paper "The Architecture of the Fetish"[25] has demonstrated that Freud's original paper on "Fetishism" was itself a fetish or a detour from his real subject, repression. Wigley uncovers a process of the fetishization of fetishism structuring Freud's thought when he notes:

> The concept of the splitting of the ego, which becomes central to the final accounts of psychoanalysis and dominates the late essays, is first articulated in detail in the essay on fetishism and is always explained with examples of fetishism... Just as the fetish is, by definition, an ornament made structural, the ornamental question of the fetish actually organises the theory to which it is added... Freud's capacity like the child's, to produce theory is therefore at least doubly bound to the question of fetishism such that... the theory becomes itself fetishistic (Wigley, pp. 109-110).

Precisely because the fetish is both a negation and a sign of an absence it is not an unrepeatable, unique object, on the contrary, it in turn is capable of substitution and each time this never succeeds in exhausting the nullity of which it is the symbol. In its piling up of detail, like the excess but also incomplete nature of the notetaker's page or the particulars of the lecturer's ramble, the fetish of detail exhibits a laconism, giving a part for a whole in an erotics of suggestion, and in so doing enjoys a topos also current throughout the discourses of particularity: inexpressibility or incompletion. Where does this leave us? Simply with the fact that from the particulars of every story, both that of my object and mine as its theory, one can only pull away and back in a cinematic track... and just as I used the beginning of this film to make my beginning, let me sign my end with its 'THE END.'

[1] As Naomi Schor points out this term, originally synonymous with realism, was first coined by G. H. Lewes in his *Principles of Success in Literature* (Boston, 1981). Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail. Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), p. 149, fn 1.

[2] Alan Liu, "Local Transcendence: Cultural Criticism, Postmodernism, and the Romanticism of Detail," *Representations* 32 (1990): 75-113. Liu also suggeststhat these three moments may also be read in terms of "a succession of intellectual-historical moments from the premodern through the modern to the postmodern."

[3] A famous film image of light playing across the mesh of a screen or grid is to be found in one of the early sequences of Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*.

[4] See Tom Conley, *Film Hieroglyphs. Ruptures in Classical Cinema* (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. x-xiii.

[5] For an examination of the New Zealand tradition of this topos see Wystan Curnow, "Landscape and the Body," *Antic III*, November (1978): 143-163.

[6] Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," in his *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 141-148.

[7] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

[8] Roland Barthes, "The Third Meaning," *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath

(New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 52-68.

[9] Roland Barthes , *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982), p. 26.

[10] See also the commentary on Barthes by Jacques Derrida, "Les morts de Roland Barthes," in his *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), pp. 273-304.

[11] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

[12] Murray Groves, "Foreword" to P.W. Hohepa, *A Maori Community in Northland* (Auckland: Auckland University Anthropology Department Bulletin, No. 1, 1964), p. 9.

[13] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendall (London and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 68.

[14] Emile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

[15] Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies. Discourse on the Other*, translated by Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 203.

[16] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendall (London and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. xxii.

[17] See Claude Gandleman, *Reading Pictures, Viewing Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 1-13.

[18] See P,. J. Downey, "*Runaway*," *Comment*, October-November (1964): 5-7; and "Young Man on the Run," *NZ Listener*, November 6, 1964.

[19] Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier. Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982) p. 77.

[20] Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism (1927)," in *On Sexuality. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, The Pelican Freud Library Volume 7, trans. James Strachey and edited Angela Richards (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), pp. 347-357.

[21] Giorgio Agamben, "Freud; or, The Absent Object," in his *Stanzas. Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. Ronald L. Martinez (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 31-35.

[22] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in her *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 14-26.

[23] Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," in his *Ecrits. A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), p. 315.

[24] Jean Baudrillard, "Fetishism and Ideology: The Semiological Reduction," in his *Towards a Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St Louis: Telos, 1981), p. 89.

[25] Mark Wigley, "Theoretical Slippage: The Architecture of the Fetish," in *Fetish*, Sarah Whiting, Edward Mitchell, Greg Lynn (eds.) (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), pp. 103-114.