I.1 Theses on a long revolution

This book argues that doubling, distance and identification in the cinema are interrelated dialectically, their linkage being encapsulated in the title of this introduction, ‘neither here nor there’. For instance, although the camera’s approach to a character seems often to involve a deepening of identification, doubling, by collapsing interiority/exteriority distinctions, reveals the reversibility and ambiguity of both scale and identification, as what is ‘here’ is also situated ‘there’.

If the argument also aligns sights ‘close enough to touch’, haptic vision and 3-D, with post-Romantic discourses on doubling and projection, it is because of the subsidence of near-far distinctions effected by the double, whose use characterizes the aesthetics of Romantics, Symbolists and modernists alike. This conjunction then prompts consideration of lens-based alterations of real and imaginary/virtual distance, of which the frame-within-the-frame, the lens visible within the frame, and (primarily) the zoom lens provide examples. Thus, theorization of the haptic moves beyond the phenomenological framework within which Film Studies has anchored it most firmly, interlocking with the key cinematic category of identification and arguably being checked by the idea of the taboo, the untouchable. Among other things, I contend that the fantastic lining of the notion of the haptic renders its reading through psychoanalytic and even (see below) neuroscientific findings a productive addition to, or even supplantation of, customary phenomenological ones.
As the notion of the haptic becomes cognate with the experience of cinematic 3-D, a film such as Baz Luhrman’s *The Great Gatsby* (2013) assumes relevance. For however one views its aesthetic of excess, its protagonist’s Romantic preoccupation with distance justifies the use of 3-D – notably when Gatsby’s outstretched arm aligns with the green light on the dock of Daisy’s house, as if to touch it. (Fitzgerald describes him later, near Daisy, but distanced from her by the accidental death that has come between them, as ‘trying to touch what was no longer tangible’: as if his ‘dead dream’ (1978, p. 141) had been filmed and projected onto a screen.) The possibility of such a film’s double viewing, either in 3-D or 2-D (with some viewers, including this one, even alternating between these modalities during a 3-D screening and one reviewer – Christopher Rosen, of *The Huffington Post* – recommending that the 3-D glasses be discarded) renders a normative viewing experience impossible, with the death associated with the double becoming in this case the apparent death-by-splitting of the film, even cinema, itself. That ‘death’ is, however, the partial revival of an alternative identity for cinema. If, as Thomas Elsaesser argues, cinema’s choice of 2-D over 3-D as its default option ‘was neither as natural nor as inevitable as it might appear in retrospect’ (Elsaesser, 2013, p. 230), it is because of a factor emphasized by Rudolf Arnheim, whose Gestalt theory training honed his sensitivity to the variability of the foreground/background relations within and around images: ‘[t]he effect of film is neither absolutely two-dimensional nor absolutely three-dimensional, but something between’ (Arnheim, 1966, p. 12). In other words, 2-D arguably killed a sibling rival because the other’s accentuation of space in relief could seem to compromise an original ‘cinematic specificity’ (in other words, product differentiation) by assimilating film to another rival, the theatre. Rejoinders pointing out that the new ‘theatre’ was utopian (au-topos as ‘no-place’), as its implicit viewer was free to move invisibly on the stage, seem not to have arisen, perhaps because the idea of spectators entering the spectacle became the parodied sign of rustic screen-ignorance, not avant garde aspiration. In the twenty-first century’s new cinematic order, both haptic and optical, great performances aspire to become stand-outs in and for more than one sense.

Luhrman’s stated rationale for employing 3-D in *The Great Gatsby* strikingly revisits this issue of perceived medium specificity: