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КИНО И КИНЕМАТОГРАФИЧНОСТЬ В РОМАНЕ РАЛЬФА ЭЛЛИСОНА «ЗА ТРИ ДНЯ ДО РАССТРЕЛА...»

Аннотация: Неоконченный, посмертно опубликованный роман Ральфа Эллисона «За три дня до расстрела...» (*Three Days Before the Shooting...*, 2010) изобилует отсылками к кинематографу и кинематографическими сюжетными ходами. Кроме того, в романе много кинематографических метафор и сравнений – они связывают эти сюжетные приемы в общую структуру и помогают проследить развиваемые автором мысли, которые иначе показались бы разрозненными. В статье предпринимается попытка показать, что эти особенности «Трех дней» станут понятнее, если рассматривать Эллисона как исследователя того, что современные искусствоведы и специалисты по теории медиа называют «кинематографичностью». Этот термин позволяет разделить технические средства кинематографа: проекцию изображения, съемку и так далее – и более абстрактные идеи, которые эти средства помогают реализовать (например, движение «статичных» кадров). Разграничив эти категории, можно увидеть, как сам кинематограф – наряду с до-, пост- и паракинематографическими явлениями – образует систему, которую можно назвать одной из главных тем «Трех дней». К тому же, как будет видно из этой статьи, Эллисон обращается к кинематографу и кинематографичности, размышляя о волнующих его более «очевидных» и широко обсуждаемых проблемах, таких, как глубинная связь между памятью и забвением, роль памяти и забвения в историческом сознании американцев, механизм, в силу которого «отвергнутые» воспоминания вызывают «боль», и Гражданская война в США. В статье прослеживаются связи между Эллисоном и фигурами, находящимися за пределами литературного мира, например, режиссером Д.У. Гриффитом, отмечается явное влияние Сергея Эйзенштейна, Всеволода Пудовкина, Андре Мальро, а также психоанализа, и ставится вопрос, можно ли считать роман Эллисона примером того, что в современной теории медиа называют «интермедийностью».

Ключевые слова: кинематограф, медиа, теория медиа, монтаж, память, забвение, Ральф Эллисон, «За три дня до расстрела...»

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CINEMA AND CINEMATICITY IN RALPH ELLISON'S
THREE DAYS BEFORE THE SHOOTING . . .

Abstract: Ralph Ellison's unfinished, posthumously published second novel, *Three Days Before the Shooting . . .* (2010) seethes with cinematic references and plot points. It also seethes with cinematic metaphors and similes, binding those plot points to each other and helping to articulate the novel's otherwise myriad intellectual concerns. This article contends that these features of *Three Days* can best be understood by treating Ellison as a *de facto* theorist of what art historians and media theorists have recently called "cinematicity." This term helps to tease apart technologies of cinema – projection, cinematography and so on – from more abstract principles these technologies help to enact (for instance, the mobilisation of "still" images into movement). Having teased these things apart, it is possible to see how cinema *per se* forms part of a constellation alongside the pre-, post-, and paracinematic – a constellation that is itself one of *Three Days*'s major concerns. In his treatment of this constellation, furthermore, this article also shows, Ellison uses cinema and cinematicity to think about his more "overt" and widely recognized concerns, such as the intimate relation between memory and forgetting, the role of memory and forgetting within American historic consciousness, the way that "neglected" memories occasion "pain", and the American Civil War. The article relates Ellison to non-literary figures such as filmmaker D.W. Griffith, declared influences Sergei Eisenstein, V.I. Pudovkin, and André Malraux, and psychoanalysis, and considers whether Ellison's novel can be understood an instance of what contemporary media theory call "intermediality."

Keywords: cinema, media, media theory, cutting/editing/montage, memory, forgetting, Ralph Ellison, *Three Days Before the Shooting . . .*

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Introduction

One of the key locations in Ralph Ellison's huge, unfinished novel *Three Days Before the Shooting* . . . (pub. 2010) is an apartment occupied by a historically-minded collector-cum-curator, Jessie Rockmore. This place is overflowing with Americana, including furniture ("Tables and chairs, divans and chaise longues, cabinets and chests"), machinery (a telegraph key, phonograph, camera, and a stereopticon, amongst other things), images (besides slides for that stereopticon, these consist of photographs and lithographs) and much besides [TD: 140, 143]. To McIntyre, who narrates the section of the novel in which they feature, these artefacts appear "wrenched from their place, time, and function and thrown together in such volatile and insane juxtaposition" that he fears their collective physical collapse [TD: 140]. But despite this manifest disorder, a latent order proves operative within the very "juxtaposition" with which these objects are arranged. One sign of this is a perceptual effect involving lithographs displayed on Rockmore's walls. This effect suggests a medium other than lithography, but which the lithographs concerned either simulate or, in a more radical sense, produce (in the first of the two paragraphs below, McIntyre uses the present tense, before reverting to the past tense he has used hitherto):

My eyes become partially adjusted to the blaze of light, and the wall before me seems to flicker like an early silent movie, its brightly colored lithographs creating a feeling of vertigo in which I fall back into a swirl of images of earlier times athrob somehow with the pain of neglected memory.

[...]

[...] I was looking straight ahead with squinted eyes when suddenly President Lincoln's funeral cortege sprang from the glaring wall before me. Flag-draped and crepe-shrouded, it floated past with a creaking of camion and leather, the clink of chains. The lithographs had come sharply alive.

[TD: 142]

The medium lithography suggests, then, is cinema – first of the "silent" kind, and then of that partially constituted by sound (as we learn from the "creaking of camion" and so on). Once brought "alive," the vividness and verisimilitude of the lithographs seem owed to cinema as well. However, cinema is clearly not present in this scene in its own right, in the form of,

say, an actual, projected film.¹ Rather, cinema is an emergent property of other things – not only lithographs, but also, implicitly, all the other objects that make up Rockmore’s collection – or an effect that these other things precipitate.

A way to begin understanding what occurs here is afforded by recent art history and media theory, including Pavle Levi’s account of “cinema by other means.” As Levi writes, this category allows one to “differentiate the concept of cinema” from the technologies with which this concept is typically aligned, and identify occasions in which the former is articulated in the absence of the latter [Levi 2010: 54]. For Jonathan Walley [Walley 2003], a similar service is performed by an alternate category, “paracinema,” which he uses to designate a specific trend in avant-garde artistic practice of the 1960s and 1970s, whereby phenomenal and conceptual dimensions of cinema are investigated while cinema’s materials are supplemented or eschewed (examples include site-specific works by Anthony McCall and installations by Paul Sharits). Meanwhile, in literary studies, another group of scholars has explored cognate phenomena under the sign of “cinematicity,” a term which Jeffrey Geiger and Karin Littau [Geiger Littau 2013] use to identify cinema-like ideas and attributes appearing both “before and after the ‘birth’ of cinema” *per se*.² All these approaches resonate with Ellison’s novel, whose own interest in cinematicity (the term I will use hereon) is exemplified by but certainly not exclusive to the episode in Rockmore’s apartment. Elsewhere in the text, cinematic properties are identified with mirrors, dreams, and the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D. C. – and this is to list only some relatively minor instances [TD: 388, 265, 578]. So little is cinematicity confined to any one medium (much less its “own”), indeed, that it appears instead as more like a basic potentiality of experience, imposed upon or encountered in the world.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, this concern with cinematicity coincides in Ellison’s novel with an interest in cinema in a more familiar and basic sense. *Three Days* positively seethes with cinematic metaphors, similes, references, and plot points, which interact with each other and with instances of cinematicity in manifold and complex ways. Take the episode

¹ Cinematic technology does feature in another version of the apartment episode, where it is listed amongst other items in Rockmore’s collection [TD: 927]. However, the technology is out of use, and in neither version of the episode is specific imagery identified with film.

² In addition to Geiger and Littau, and the contributors in their collection, see also [Nardelli 2012].

in which one of the novel's central characters, Sunraider, a US Senator, is shot by an assassin while orating. Shortly before this shooting, Sunraider's audience looks on with the "attitude of viewers bemused by some puzzling action unfolding on a distant screen" [TD: 236]. Once he realises that he has been shot, Sunraider surveys "the wildly tossing scene with the impassive and precise inclusiveness of a motion-picture camera" [TD: 245]. While lying wounded, Sunraider recalls his direction of an actual motion-picture camera during a previous career as a filmmaker [TD: 247]. And in the protracted set of recollections that follow, memories are quasi-cinematic "takes," performed to an assumed or would-be camera [TD: 264]. Throughout these passages, cinema is the referential pole around which other elements of Ellison's text cohere. And as their common denominator, cinema establishes resonances *between* these passages; in doing so, the passages intimate cinema's centrality to *Three Days* as a whole.

In what follows, then, I examine *Three Days*'s interest in cinematicity, and its interest in cinema *per se*, in tandem. I show how these relate to themes long recognised as central to Ellison's oeuvre, including nationhood, national history, the mutability of identity, and race.³ Critical commentary on *Three Days* to date has tended to focus on those themes, whilst almost totally ignoring the way in which the text's cinematic interests condition and inflect them.⁴ This is unfortunate, not only because it inhibits full appreciation of the novel's achievement, but also because it obscures the extent to which Ellison can be seen as an important commentator on and even theorist of cinema in its own right. For cinema is not just a "means" through which the novel pursues an otherwise discrete agenda; it is part *of* that agenda, and thus a sort of "end," itself. In 1950, a few years before embarking on *Three Days*, Ellison told friend and fellow-writer Albert Murray that "[s]ome day I'd like to have the time and space to do a real job on the movies" – as if the critical project adumbrated by this prospectus was something his fictional commitments obliged him to put off [Trading Twelves 2001: 7–8]. But the wager of the present essay is that this "job," effectively, is precisely what his unfinished novel *does*. Accordingly, *Three Days* thinks about such cinematic issues as editing or "cutting," apparent motion, and the relation between "historical" (or historically inspired) film

³ For an indispensable commentary on *Three Days*'s place in Ellison oeuvre, see [Bradley 2010].

⁴ The two honourable exceptions to this rule I know of are Natalia Vysotska's essay on 'Movie Code' in Ralph Ellison's *Juneteenth* – a stand-alone section of Ellison's unfinished novel, published in 1999 [Vysotska 2018] – and [Lindenberg 2018].

and historical reality. And it thinks about these on many levels, conceiving cutting, for example, as both a material practice grounded in specific hardware and a more fugitive analogue of ways characters feel and think.

To demonstrate all this, the first thing I pay detailed attention to below is a relationship Sunraider draws attention to during the speech he delivers in the episode where he is shot: the close, if not mutually constitutive one between memory and forgetting.⁵ I then explore tributary issues, already adumbrated by the scene in Rockmore's apartment: the relation of cinema (and cinematicity) to historic consciousness; the way that "neglected" memories occasion "pain"; and the privileged if vexed relation between cinema and the specific epoch or event in American history touched upon by Rockmore's lithograph of Lincoln, the Civil War. The article relates Ellison to filmmaker D.W. Griffith, declared influences Sergei Eisenstein, V.I. Pudovkin, and André Malraux, and psychoanalysis. The article concludes by asking whether Ellison's novel can be considered an instance *of* cinematicity as well as commentary on it, via his conception of the novel as a form, and of a more recently elaborated term it chimes with, "intermediality."

Forgetting, Remembering, and "Reeling"

Throughout *Three Days*, cinema and cinematicity are identified with memory. Take an episode wherein Hickman – a preacher and one-time jazz trombonist who is, besides Sunraider, the novel's central character – remembers a story from his past when confronted by a woman who has just told one of hers. The manner in which memory emerges here suggests two distinctly cinematic techniques, both grounded in distinctly cinematic technologies – slow motion, and the projection of footage backwards:

in the turmoil of his mind he could feel [the story's] dispersed elements flying languidly together, as when a motion picture recording the bursting of a beautiful rose is reversed in slow motion, causing its scattered petals to float back with dream-like precision to resume the glorious form of its shattered design. Oblivious both to his will and to the goading of the woman's shrill insistence, this older story was reassembling itself, roiling with silent swiftness out of the shadow of time and the decay of memory as it reassumed in his mind

⁵ As Sunraider puts it in this speech: "to remember is to forget and to forget is to remember selectively, creatively!" [TD: 241]

a transcendent and luminous wholeness. It was as though it contained a life of its own, and now having been summoned up, it was insisting on making its presence known against all that opposed it [TD: 452].

Memory is thus a film of “reassembling” – a film both documentary and defiant of the process whereby a temporally conditioned object (the rose) exchanges one state of being for another. By “revers[ing]” this object’s transformation, memory rescues Hickman’s story from the equally and indeed relatedly transformative process whereby it has hitherto been forgotten. And yet, precisely because it *has* hitherto been forgotten, it is necessary for the story to take on “a life of its own,” to free itself from memory’s “decay.” In this precise sense, remembrance of that story, under the sign of film, is opposed to memory itself.

This paradoxical conclusion makes it easier than it would otherwise be to see how cinema, besides being identified with memory, can also be identified with memory’s ostensible antithesis, forgetting. The latter identification is illustrated by a passage describing how an “image” in Hickman’s mind belies the way in which, at a point within the past, he has been rejected by his beloved, Janey. Again, a distinct cinematic technique is involved here; this time, the “clipp[ing]” of a single frame out of a continuous sequence:

It was as though he and the image had been part of a motion-picture sequence in which at the moment he’d attempted to embrace a smiling Janey she had snatched out a pistol and fired at his heart. Her impulsive, unanticipated gesture had not been in the script he thought he was enacting, so with the action completed, he had carefully clipped the frame in which her smile glowed its brightest and set fire to the frames that recorded the disillusioning sequence in which she’d fired at his heart. Then, having encased that frame in thick crystal, he had hidden it away in his trombone case. Shortly afterwards he had left town, but while over the years his image of himself had changed [...] in his private relationship with the cherished image of the girl in the frame it was as though the two of them had been transported into a realm beyond duration and fixed in a deathless posture of appeal and rejection, with himself ever reaching out and Janey ever turning away. [TD: 678]

To forget, then, is to falsify, by “set[ting] fire” to memories too uncomfortable to bear. Eliminating movement and “duration,” forgetting deprives

memory of precisely those aspects of the past that are most cinematic. But this should not tempt an identification of forgetting as *non*-cinematic, and a corresponding identification of the former with an opposed technical and mediaological regime – an identification that would pit memory as cinema against, say, forgetting as still photography. For the “image” Hickman retains “in his trombone case” is no less cinematic than all those he destroys. As a selective act, taking its cues from differences between its object and those surrounding it, the excision of a single frame from a “motion-picture sequence” is impossible outside the paradigm of cinema. Forgetting can only “edit,” after all, if there is firstly something filmic to forget.

What this “forgetting” passage and its “remembering” counterpart thus reveal when coaligned is the extent to which *Three Days* posits memory and forgetting as dialectically related. Memory and forgetting vie over the same “content”; correlatively, some things are remembered by virtue of the fact that others are not. With this in mind, we may consider how the two passages consider memory and forgetting in relation to the subject “hosting” them. And in conceiving this relation, Ellison is surely guided by a more elaborately and explicitly formulated theory of that subject as internally divided. When Hickman’s story “reassemb[les]” itself, we recall, it does so in his “mind,” but in opposition to his “will.” In his “private relationship” with Janey’s “image,” similarly, Hickman seems oblivious to what this image obfuscates *and* the meticulous process whereby “he,” himself, has engineered its obfuscation. In both passages reviewed above, forgetting seems *wished*; the passage wherein Hickman’s story is remembered, however, asserts that memories may have countervailing “wishes” of their own. In sum, both passages see memory and forgetting as opposed in ways that correspond to opposing agencies within the person. Given its own interest in opposed intra-psychoic agencies (not to mention memory’s adversarial but also integral relation to forgetting), it seems clear that the more explicit and elaborate theory of the subject that Ellison evokes in each of these respects is that of psychoanalysis.⁶

There has been a modest swell of critical interest in Ellison and psychoanalysis recently. Arlene R. Keizer [Keizer 2010] has called attention to Freudian elements in Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952). Badia Sahar Ahad has documented Ellison’s championship of the Larfargue Clinic, which offered psychoanalytically-informed psychotherapy in Ellison’s

⁶ For a reading of Freud’s conception of psychoanalysis as driven by a sense of memory’s radical relation to forgetting, see [Terdiman 1993: ch. 7].

adopted Harlem between 1946 and 1958 [Ahad 2010: ch. 4]. But in Ellison's published work, the texts most deeply informed by psychoanalysis are neither his first novel nor an essay explicitly devoted to the Lafargue Clinic ("Harlem is Nowhere"; 1948, pub. 1964), but his essays on American history and nationhood. In "If the Twain Shall Meet" (1964), Ellison tells his fellow countrymen that their historic consciousness is conditioned by "repression":

It would seem that the basic themes of our history may be repressed in the public mind [...] For while our history is characterized by a swift and tightly telescoped continuity, our *consciousness* of history is typically discontinuous [Ellison 2003: 567; emphasis in original].

In "Going to the Territory" (1980), "repress[ion]" is invoked again; here, in order to distinguish "recorded" history from the kind that is "unwritten":

in spite of what is left out of our recorded history, our unwritten history looms as its obscure alter ego, and although repressed from our general knowledge of ourselves, it is always active in the shaping of events [Ellison 2003: 598].

Finally, in the same essay, the distinction between "recorded" and "unwritten" is further elaborated via the category of the "unconscious":

Thus in the underground of our unwritten history, much of that which is ignored defies our inattention by continuing to grow and have consequences. Such is the unconscious logic of the democratic process [Ellison 2003: 600].

What psychoanalysis brings each of these passages, via its key terms "repression" and "the unconscious," is the sense that forgetting is not stochastic and unbidden but directional and *programmatically*. The argument thus advanced is congruent with *Three Days*'s account of how, in Hickman's case, memory effaces or distorts aspects of the personal, if not national past. But where these essays differ from the novel – or rather, where they illuminate a turn that we have yet to see the novel take – is in their assertion that, however little those involved are aware of it, whatever is "repressed" within the past continues to inform the present (Freud, of course, calls this the "return" of the repressed itself). To translate this point into the idiom

of *Three Days*: that which the “will” most ardently labours to forget is, perhaps by virtue of that fact, the very thing one is destined to remember.

This is not to say, of course, that for psychoanalysis itself, repression “ends” in recollection: successful “cures” in its clinical arena notwithstanding, indeed, it is rather the contrary that is the case.⁷ But it is to stress the psychoanalytic precedent for Ellison’s conviction that where the national memory of the United States is concerned, all that “written” history disavows is destined to become “conscious” somehow. And notwithstanding Hickman’s love life, the ground upon which this conviction is most incessantly borne out throughout *Three Days* is represented by the category of “race.” A case in point sees McIntyre suddenly recall a love affair with a black woman that he has hitherto put out of mind completely following the affair’s abrupt termination by the woman’s mother, on the grounds that he is white [TD: 101–13]. Elsewhere, Sunraider’s shooting initiates a narrative chain through which it ultimately emerges that, confoundingly, given a political career built upon white suprematicism, he has been brought up as a child, under the name of Bliss, as black. Given what we now know about the cinematic way in which that assassination attempt is narrated and experienced, it seems far from coincidental that Bliss’s metamorphosis into Sunraider begins inside an actual cinema, wherein he sees a film set during the Civil War [TD: 294–99]. And lest the import of that setting not speak eloquently enough in its own right, Ellison hints at its significance more broadly by having the same character appear later, having shed his identity as Bliss, playing a Confederate soldier in a film with the same setting [TD: 707]. Taken together, these episodes show race reasserting itself against “repression,” and cinema aligned with disavowals and metamorphoses of race itself. And this does not exhaust *Three Days*’s interest in that alignment: in those sections of the novel where Bliss/Sunraider features *making* films, cinema is still more clearly linked to racial masquerade and transformation. Three instances of this demand attention. Firstly, Love New (another of *Three Days*’s narrators) tells an anecdote about a black actor who, to the delight of blacks, but unbeknownst to whites, passes on screen as white [TD: 792]. Secondly, Bliss/Sunraider echoes real-life early-twentieth-century filmmakers by having actors put on race-dissimulating makeup – *not*, in this instance, so that they appear as “black” (as in the work of those filmmakers), but so that they, who *are*

⁷ See [Terdiman 1993: 282–88].

black, can perform the roles of whites [TD: 260–1].⁸ Finally, in relating Bliss/Sunraider's exploits, Love New, who is half-black himself, recalls other blacks (*not* on this occasion wearing "white-face") enjoying footage of themselves, despite a putatively inherent tendency of this footage to dissimulate the race of non-white people:

it seemed that they liked what they saw. And liked it even though those of our color came out looking like ghosts. I understood it had something to do with the film, which was made with white-skin folks in mind and white folks only [TD: 794].

"Ghost[ing]" is an effect of film's materiality, borne of witting or unwitting racial chauvinism on the part of film's manufacturers.⁹ Black people cede their blackness *just by being filmed*. Cinema is an agency of race-change, passing.

By now, it will be clear that Ellison is not just interested in cinema *in toto*, but also in cinema as concretely realised in a specific time and place. And to anyone acquainted with it, it will be no less clear that this cinema is D.W. Griffith's. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) is, of course, perhaps the most well-known portrayal of the American Civil War in all cinema, famous both for the potency of its account of history and, countervailingly, the extreme tendentiousness of that very thing. In his essay "The Shadow and the Act" (1949), Ellison joins many others in protesting this tendentiousness and, relatedly, the film's defamatory representations of African Americans.¹⁰ It is unsurprising, then, that, in *Three Days*, Griffith's film is a touchstone. At two points in the text, the film's title is invoked, once as an example of the sort of thing conscientious filmmakers should avoid [TD: 781, 797]. Though they are hard to square with other features of the text, certain passages in *Three Days* suggest that, in one of his incarnations, Bliss/Sunraider aspires to be a sort of "anti-" Griffith, using cinema to create an account of history opposed to that of *The Birth* (the most apposite passages in this respect are those aforementioned ones when the character directs blacks to play the role of whites, given Griffith's especially notorious use of "blackface" in *The Birth* itself). Ultimately, however, the book

⁸ On the history of blackface in cinema, see [Rogin 1996].

⁹ According to Dyer [Dyer 1997: ch. 3], such chauvinism shaped historic twentieth-century cinematic practice, to judge by documentation relating to film stock, and norms attending on-set lighting.

¹⁰ On the tradition of which Ellison's essay is part, see [Everett 2001: 70–106].

adjudges cinema incapable of representing history accurately, for reasons that include the simple fact that actors *cannot* “really” be the people they are cast as. “Real-ness” itself is central to elaborations of this view, as in the following recollection, by someone not otherwise an actor, of time spent playing a slave in a Civil War film shot on turf contested in the actual Civil War:

I was there, sweating and straining on a once bloody ground of political contention while taking part in the shooting of a movie that proposed to conjure up the past with optics, cogs, and film. But in fact neither the scene, the action, nor the “me” – the non-actor who was performing the part of a slave – was real. I “was,” but was not; the war “was,” but not truly; only “reely”! [TD: 704]

To be (or have been), then, is to “sweat” and “strain,” just as real-life soldiers have fought in bygone wars, slaves have toiled, and so on. But to be filmed while doing any of this is to be translated into another world: not the real one but the “reel” one, of cinema. By thus punning on cinematic “reels,” Ellison suggests that film is *un-real* in ways that may be hard if not impossible to circumvent, no matter how conscientious the filmmaker, or how *real-istic* any given film. This may not be problematic for fictive film, but becomes so whenever film makes claims for historiographic accuracy, because cinema’s prodigious capacity for verisimilitude makes it all too easy for audiences to mistake the spectacles they witness for the things these spectacles depict.¹¹ Thus the perniciousness of Griffith’s racism: under cover of cinema’s aura of veracity, it passes off caricature as “history.” Audiences can barely help absorbing “reelity” as “real.”

This critique of cinema and the critique of America’s historic consciousness are not unconnected. Elsewhere, Ellison links the “limited attention” Americans (supposedly) devote to history to cinema directly.¹² But this does not in itself explain the further link *Three Days* adduces between both these things and racial and other forms of transformation – though it is just this link that Bliss/Sunraider’s varied career is meant to illustrate: as the character declares, “*Here in this country it’s change the reel and change the man.*” [TD: 388; emphasis in original.] Much as “reel-ness”

¹¹ On the lengths to which filmmakers including Griffith, and their studios, went to research (if not always accurately depict) the events and milieux depicted in their historic films, see [Rosen 2001: Part I].

¹² Ellison, “The Golden Age, Time Past” (1959), in [Ellison 2003: 237–49].

may be identified with fakery, then, it may at other times be thought of as a means of, if not incitement *to*, self-reinvention. As such, “reel-ness” becomes synonymous not only with unreality but also making-new and metamorphosis – perhaps more virtuous principles whereby one thing can be exchanged for another. “Reeling” thus becomes explicable as an attempt to escape the past’s determinations. Correlatively, historical films may travesty the nation’s past, but even this is somehow salutary, given the nation’s citizens’ eschewal of actual history in favour of, precisely, film.

Montage, Palimpsest and Flashback

At this point, I want to draw everything said so far into relation with dedicated film theory. On one hand, the fact that cinema *can* be identified with the past’s recollection (as in *Three Days*’s evocation of a reverse-projected, reassembled rose) suggests that cinema may involve the past’s capture, storage and reproducibility. For André Gaudreault [Gaudreault 1993], this involvement entails a further link, between cinema and *historicity* – that quality invested in objects by and at their time of origin, making these objects legible ever-after as testimony to that origin itself.¹³ Even where a given film makes no claims to documentary status, this principle holds true; in fact, such films are privileged in establishing the principle in Gaudreault’s analysis. For however fictive or even fraudulent a given film may be – despite, we might say, or notwithstanding the sort of critique of historic film we have seen mounted by *Three Days* – a minimal level of evidential quality is ensured, simply by virtue of the fact that a certain quantity of film has been exposed in front of certain objects and/or actors, assembled in a certain space, and so on. To capture anything on film is to capture something that *has* happened. Thus, “the always-already-given historiographical character of cinematographic time.” (95)

On the other hand, the fact that cinema can also be identified with the past’s distortion or elision (as in Hickman’s “clip[ping]” of his memory of his relationship with Janie) suggests a link between cinema and distortion or elision generally. Griffith’s *The Birth* dissimulates this link as “history,” while *Three Day*’s association of cinema with racial “passing” extends it to trans-temporal forms of deception: in the words of the narrator who, in *Three Days*, recalls acting as a slave, cinema is “reel,” not “real.” An early commentary on cinema foreshadowing

¹³ For further analysis along this line, see [Rosen 2001: ch. 4].

Ellison's thinking in this respect is Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (1907), which famously argues that since "moving" pictures offer only a facsimile or ersatz form of movement, those pictures must be adjudged illusory [Bergson 2001: 321–22]. *Three Days's* turn upon this screw, we can now recognise, is precisely to reconcile this line of thought with the one we have just derived from Gaudreault: historic film's defining gesture, the novel thus concludes, is implementation of the "Bergson" principle under the sign (and cover) of the "historicity" one. The reality effect, paradoxically, once recognised for what it truly is, is the privileged sign, and concomitant of illusion.

Given all of this, it is significant that at points throughout *Three Days*, what we have just called the Bergson principle is linked with a specific cinematic operation: the cut. Take an instance in which McIntyre recalls gazing at the strangely expressive face of a corpse:

It was like those faces once seen in the experimental silent-movie close-ups which owe their expressiveness not so much to the actor's skill as to hard work performed in the editing room; images wherein each lift of eyelids, each movement of mouth, are calculated in advance and in which each of the complex movements necessary to achieve even the most casual expression of humanity are the results of the splicing together in skillful montage a series of carefully selected isolated exposures that are then projected and accelerated, controlled shadows against conspiratorial screen, in a flickering semblance of life. [TD: 200]

"[M]ontage" thus fashions "life" from death, not because there is no "life" in the material it works upon (at least, not in the case of the "experimental silent-movie" process acting here as a comparator) but in order to coax *another* life out of this material, besides the one uncut footage presents as given. This second life is doubly estranged from the first: once by cutting proper ("isolat[ion]" of "exposures"); secondly, by the act of "splicing" whereby the cut is simultaneously negated and effectuated. Montage may not be solely responsible for the illusion thus created – for this, there must also be high-speed projection and "conspiratorial screen" – but is what one might call the "soul" of this illusion, the thing making it an illusion *of* life and not of something else. This is by virtue of a further, exquisite paradox, whereby the illusion consists precisely in *the appearance that no cutting or "montage" has occurred at all.*

How might this conclusion inflect our understanding of film's relation to distortion and elision? One possibility is that what Ellison calls "montage" (a term whose provenance we will consider shortly) may be distinguished from other kinds of editing, performed without deceptive intent. On that proviso, one might say that film need not be thought of as *ontologically* deceptive, though it may be so contingently: whether it is in any given instance just depends on whether the cut involved is "conspiratorial" or not. But though this wager may accord with film-makers' intent in many instances, to accept it for cinema as such would be mistaken. For as Mary Ann Doane has argued, the cut cannot simply be executed or eschewed as any given film-maker chooses: it is implicit in the cellular, discrete character of the individual film frames out of which all cinema (if shot on film) is ultimately made. Thus, the frame-line's grounding of the cut; the latter's "haunting echo" of the former or "reiteration at a different level." [Doane 2002: 217] Insofar as all film rests on what *Three Days* calls individual "exposures," the gap *between* these exposures must thus be acknowledged as a radical constituent of cinema, not an adjunct to it. If all cinema, strictly speaking, features "cuts", moreover, this has special import for film's embodiment of *time*. For as Doane, again, notes, the cut is "*the* incarnation of temporality in film", the pre-eminent means whereby cinema discloses, condenses or dilates time and time's passing [Doane 2002: 184; emphasis in original]. Crucially, this point applies no less to film in its "historiographical" dimension than in its Bergsonian, "reel" one: to avert again to *Three Days*'s evocation of a reversed-projected, "reassembling" rose, whether the film here posited is projected backwards or not, it cannot represent change at all without being exposed in such a way that portions of the filmed event, however small, go *unexposed* to film as each frame follows another past a camera's shutter. To recall our earlier conclusion about memory and forgetting, the preservation and the abridgment of that event, though superficially opposed, are actually mutually constitutive. Our understanding of cinema's relation to distortion and elision, then, should be revised to acknowledge that at least a measure of the latter lies at the heart of cinematic temporality. Film may document "real" objects, but can only present them in "reel" time.

Though this fact qualifies – to say the least – cinema's claims to document reality, it has provided powerful stimulus to claims about how and why cinema should be considered as an *art*. This can be seen from three texts of which Ellison owned copies, by Eisenstein, Malraux, and

Pudovkin, respectively.¹⁴ In *The Film Sense* (English trans. 1942), Eisenstein considers cutting under the rubric of “montage,” a term we have seen Ellison deploy himself. Defining this as the combination of either individual film-frames or longer sequences thereof in any order other than that in which they were originally shot, Eisenstein recommends montage as a means of equipping narratives with a “*maximum of emotion and stimulating power.*” [Eisenstein 1942: 4; emphasis in original] A related case is made in Malraux’s “Sketch for a Psychology of the Moving Pictures” (1940; English trans. 1958), Ellison’s copy of which is underlined as follows:

The birth of the cinema as a means of expression [...] dates [...] from the time when the cutter thought of dividing his continuity into “planes” (close-up, intermediate, remote, etc.) and of shooting not a play but a succession of dramatic moments [...] [Malraux 1958: 320; Ellison’s emphasis, in his copy of the text]

“[C]utt[ing]” conditions “continuity” – not necessarily at the latter’s expense, but in the interest of enlivening it, if discrete events are presented sequentially, or otherwise undivided ones broken into “moments,” shot from a variety of distances and angles. Though he does not emphasise it, Malraux thus sees cutting as unlocking “dramatic” possibilities implicit in the independently assured principle of the camera’s mobility in space. And for Pudovkin, this mobility – the thing that makes it possible for film to feature not only “close up[s],” as Malraux calls them, but also “remote” views and other kinds of shot – has correlative effects on film’s relationship with time. For just as “filmic space is created” *by* an aggregate of close ups, wider-angle shots, and so on, so “must also be created, [the underlining here is Ellison’s again] moulded from the elements of real time, a new filmic time.” [Pudovkin 1933: 71; Ellison’s emphasis, in his copy of the text] Earlier, with respect to Doane, we considered the difference between “real” and “reel” time under the sign of absence or privation. But Pudovkin presents another option. For if film inevitably interrupts time’s flow, it for that very reason also enables that flow’s manipulation. Cutting represents the ability to exit and re-enter time’s flow at the moment and in the manner of one’s choosing.

¹⁴ Ellison’s personal library is held by the Library of Congress; a full listing of its contents is online at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/eadrbc.rb016001>. I accessed the library in November 2017.

These reflections lead us to a crucial turn in Ellison's thinking. As readers of *Invisible Man* will recall, that novel privileges an experience wherein "[i]nstead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, [one is] aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead." [Ellison 1953: 7] Marc Singer [Singer 2003] has shown how, in that novel, this privilege coincides with a conception of historic time as continuously accessible from the present, and phases of the historic past as superimposed upon every other, as in a palimpsest. *Three Days* extends this line of thought precisely by means of a Doane-like focus on the link between cutting and the frame-line. And it does so in two scenes where Bliss/Sunraider *performs* cutting, as well as witnessing it. In the first of these, the character recalls: "I edited a series of shots, killing time. The darkness between the frames longer than what was projected." [TD: 279] Footage is thus arranged in such a way that the "nodes" between shots are equally prominent as the shots themselves. If one effect of this is to emphasise the contingency of filmic sequence in this instance, another is to beg more fundamental questions about sequentiality itself. For in the second scene featuring his cutting, Bliss/Sunraider posits a kind of second-order frame-line, not so much within film as within *time*. "Time" itself is repeatedly invoked throughout the cryptic passage wherein this possibility is broached:

I told myself that I shall think sometime about time. [...] I shall think too of the camera and the swath it cut through the country of my travels, and how after the agony [a traumatic event in Bliss's past] I had merely stepped into a different dimension of time. Between the frames in blackness I left and in time discovered that it was no mere matter of place which made the difference, but time. And not chronology either, only time. [TD: 392–93; emphasis in original]

To "step" between the 'agony,' on one hand, and Bliss's 'travels,' on the other, is thus to do so quasi-spatially, from one of time's 'dimension[s]' to another. Such stepping is enabled by the frame-line – that "blackness" or gap "[b]etween the frames" that appears here as particular to neither order of events and, for that very reason, to be the condition of accessing either of them. To conceive "time" as navigable in this manner is to do so in film's own image. For if "chronology" can be opposed to time, this can only be because the former entails unvariable sequence whereas the latter – understood as "cut-able" – does not. The lessons Ellison learned from Eisenstein, Malraux and Pudovkin are thus recast as commentaries

on time. Far from merely “reel,” cinematic time now appears to hold out promise for an experience of time in some respects superior to that available in chronological time – the very “real time” (Pudovkin) out of which the cinematic kind is made.

Ultimately, then, film’s divisibility by frame-lines, and its concomitants, cutting, or montage, represent the ground upon which *Three Days* affirms cinema not just as “reel” but as “real.” Or rather, we may say, these things qualify cinema as supra- or hyper-real – possessed of a kind of mobility in time that non-cinematic art or experience does not have. This is especially valuable to Ellison because, as we saw earlier, he characterises Americans both individually and collectively as possessed by a compulsion to escape time, especially those portions of it in the past they would most like to forget. As we have also seen, he takes the psychoanalytically-informed view that efforts in this direction are destined to fail wherever memories possess endurance beyond that of efforts to “repress” them. Besides reverse-projection (as, again, we have seen used to represent the “return” of repressed memory in Hickman’s case) there is of course an especially well-established convention or principle in narrative cinema that signifies this: the flashback. Codified early on in cinematic history, this has served filmmakers ever since as a privileged means of depicting memory, understood as an eruption of the past into or alongside the present.¹⁵ *Three Days* reflects this history, similarly using flashbacks to alternate events within the present with events remembered from the past. But it also ups the ante on this history, by privileging a link between flashbacks and filmmaking, which it presents not only as an experience remembered but also as a paradigm of memory itself.

Two examples show this, each demonstrating one of the two alternatives just adduced. The first demarcates flashback formally via a twofold shift, from non-italicised to italicised text, and from third-person to first-person narration. Here, Sunraider remembers his previous career as a filmmaker from inside the hospital he is taken to after being shot:

Now he could hear someone shouting far off. Then a voice was shouting quite close to his ear, but he was unable to bring his mind to it.

[...]

I said, Donelson, crank it, man! [...] [TD: 246–47; emphasis in original]

¹⁵ See the classic study by [Turim 1989].

Donelson (we learn later) is a cameraman with whom Bliss/Sunraider has collaborated. The “crank[ing]” of his camera thus lies in the past, but is remembered in and as the present.

The second example returns us to that earlier-cited phenomenon whereby memories are quasi-cinematic “takes,” performed to an assumed or would-be camera. Again, the relevant passage starts with Sunraider in hospital. But as soon as a cinematic camera and other hardware are evoked, it doubles back into the past, the words “*Camera! Lights!*” and “*action*” ushering in an episode from Bliss/Sunraider’s boyhood [TD: 264; emphasis in original]. As hardware, cameras and related objects feature nowhere in this episode: they are purely mental constructs, retrospectively or simultaneously infused into Bliss/Sunraider’s consciousness. Film *contains* this memory; it is not part of its “content.” The two episodes respectively thus situate their protagonist on opposite “sides,” as it were, of the cinematic camera – the first by placing Bliss/Sunraider on the side of the viewfinder, the second by placing him on the side of and as a subject for the lens.

It may thus seem that flashbacks in *Three Days* represent as clear an instance as any yet adduced of Ellison making use of aesthetic principles originating with cinema. Film, we might then say, is his essential prototype for memory, in part because it is also so for an experience of time as trans- or supra-chronological. But for reasons Maureen Turim’s study of the flashback suggests, this conclusion may be, if not wholly incorrect, then at least incomplete. In fact, she shows, the flashback’s origins lie in drama and literature, as well as film, and is thus “best seen as a shared phenomenon, one that exemplifies the interdependence” of these arts rather than their mutual independence [Turim 1989: 16]. If flashbacks in Ellison’s novel *are* cinematic, they are not for that reason non- or extra- “literary” – just as the lithographs in Rockmore’s apartment, say, do not become wholly non- or extra-lithographic when they are experienced as cinema. This reflection returns us to the category of “cinematicity,” as defined at the beginning of this article. It is to further representations of this in *Three Days* that we now turn.

From Strobe to Shaft

Another of these involves a dance troupe called the Zephyrs. This troupe’s routine suggests apparent motion, that object of Bergson’s critique, whereby film conjures the illusion of movement by rapidly projecting static images. We have considered *Three Days*’s appraisal of this, and of

related issues such as montage and cinema's "conspiratorial" screen. The Zephyrs, though, use none of these in their production of apparent motion. Instead, they use *actual*, bodily movement disguised by a certain form of illumination:

bathed in stroboscopic lights, their violent, ultra-slow motion, larger-than-life gestures took on the illusion of a fluid and dream-like struggle [...] the split-second flashing of the strobes endowing their exaggerated gestures with the appearance of a magical domination of time and space [...]

[...] Each movement was followed by the next and appeared to flow from it, but actually depended upon the flashes of light which filled in the black spaces between and connected and gave them the appearance of continuous flow. [TD: 678–79]

"[F]low" is thus an artifice, simultaneously constructed and concealed by "strobes," which make the dancers' moves appear to have something like the opposite of their true character: not "violent" and punctual but "fluid" and "continuous." Just like projected film frames, these moves succeed each other and "appear to flow from it." The line *between* these frames – the "blackness" we have seen Ellison invoke elsewhere with respect to film itself, echoed here by "black spaces" – is thus recapitulated not just once but twice: firstly by the dancers' movements; secondly by the rapid alternation of darkness and illumination definitive of stroboscopy. Together, these two "frame" effects create a spectacle embodying the principle of cinema, without utilizing any of cinema's signature technologies. For as Bernhard Stiegler writes, that principle consists in "connect[ing] disparate elements together into a single temporal flux" – an objective irreducible to any particular ensemble of equipment, and achieved here not by camera, projection, screen and film, but by an alliance between stroboscopy and dancers' bodies [Stiegler 2011: 14].

This brings us to the crucial juncture, in *Three Days*'s plot, where, as a schoolboy, Bliss first learns of, and then witnesses, cinema for the first time. Initially, this witnessing is interdicted on religious grounds, his adoptive father Hickman telling him that cinema-going is inconsistent with ministry [TD: 283]. But once Hickman relents, the pair sees a film set during the Civil War – an experience that, as observed earlier, precipitates Bliss's metamorphosis into Sunraider. This experience is not discrete, but rather an extension of another, concurrent with Hickman's interdiction. For as Bliss explains, at school, he has *already* witnessed his peers' renditions

of cinematic scenes that they (*not* having been prohibited from attending the cinema) have seen and subsequently re-enact. These re-enactments, more than or as much as his subsequent film-going, initiate Bliss into cinema. In his following account of them, note especially how the term “reel” – privileged, as we now know, as Ellison’s master-term for cinema’s distinct manner of divergence from but also exaltation of reality – features in Bliss’s characterisation of the thing viewed *and* of the effect of viewing:

Any noontime I could watch [other school-children] reliving the stories and making the magic gestures and seeing the flickery scenes unreeling inside my eye just as Daddy Hickman could make people relive the action of the Word. And seeing them, I could feel myself drawn into the world they shared so intensely that I felt that I had actually taken part not only in the seeing, but in the very actions unfolding in the depths of the wall I’d never seen [...].

So Daddy Hickman was too late, already the wild landscape of my mind had been trampled by great droves of galloping horses and charging redskins and the yelling counterattacks of cowboys and cavalrymen, and I had reeled before exploding actions that imprinted themselves upon one’s inner eyes with the impact of a water-soaked snowball bursting against the tender membrane of the outer eye to leave a felt-image of blue-white pain throbbing with every pulse of blood propelled by the eager, excited heartbeat toward heightened vision. [TD: 291]

Hickman is “too late” because his interdiction has failed to anticipate cinema’s transposition, by its audience, beyond its own four walls. Ironically, the prototype for this transposition is Hickman’s own sermonizing: the vigour and eloquence that makes his “people” not just *understand* the Bible stories he recounts to them but “relive” them. This reliving is in turn the analogue of Bliss’s proxy witnessing – his “shar[ing]” with school-friends to such an extent that he feels party not just to their seeing but to the very “actions” they have seen. And what they have seen is cinema of a specific kind: “cowboy” and Indian spectaculars, filled with “exploding actions.” This cinema’s intense physicality triggers quasi- or actual bodily perturbation amongst spectators. Thus the “unreeling” of *de facto* film in Bliss’s mind is both mirrored and semantically displaced by his “reel[ing]” in reaction.

This last point requires further elaboration. By his own account, Bliss’s “mind” is the very arena in which the incidents whose re-enactments

he witnesses take place: where horses “tramp[le]” in one, they trample in the other also. His witnessing thus *hurts*: insofar as the “actions” and images involved “heighten” vision, they do so in the manner of a “snowball,” physically “imprint[ing] themselves” upon the eye. The theory underpinning this account is a venerable one, seeing all perception as fundamentally traumatic, and all stimuli as ultimately injurious, barraging the body and leaving traces of themselves therein.¹⁶ In Bliss’s variation on this theory, the causes of trauma are closely aligned with cinematic apparatuses, from “reels” to “flicker[ing]” frames or frame-lines. But these, of course, are precisely what he does *not* see. The “scenes” he witnesses are “flickery” in the absence of all the things that flickering in actual early cinema, historically, results from.¹⁷

In sum, *Three Days* presents cinematicity as both parallel to cinema and as an alternative to it, not least in situations where the real, or “reel,” thing is proscribed. In doing so, it suggests that the two things are not opposed but in intimate alliance – hence the migration of the term “reel” itself from situations in which cinema is clearly identified with its signature technologies to those in which it is just as clearly not. At times the text even dissociates cinematicity from technology altogether, aligning it instead with intra-psychic, involuntary functions of the mind. And in doing so, it suggests a kind of “traumatogenic,” wound-based cognate of the flashback. Shortly before he “clip[s]” his painful memory of Janey, Hickman differentiates “wounds to the flesh” from those of the “spirit” [TD: 677; emphasis removed]. The former, he contends, change over time, whereas the latter form “embalmed shafts of experience”, encysted in the consciousness surrounding them [TD: 677; emphasis removed]. Counter-vailingly, however, these “shafts” are prone to “acting up” – discharging this experience back into consciousness, however little the subject involved may desire or “expect” it [TD: 677; emphasis removed]. Forgetting (or *desiring* to), not remembrance, is the dispositional horizon within which “spirit[ual]” injuries are recalled. This recalls the “logic” of the flashback. But it does so in the absence of technique, apparatus, or any reference to cinema, the art-form with which flashbacks are most closely identified.

¹⁶ On the genealogy of this theory, see e.g. [Singer 1995, Armstrong 2000].

¹⁷ On flickering in early cinema, see [Nichols Lederman 1980]. On blackface and cinema, see n. 8 above. On pre-cinematic ‘Wild West’ elements in cinema, see [Whissel 2002, Creekmur 2010].

Conclusion: Intermediality

We should remember, though, in saying this (recalling Turim as we do so) that, historically speaking, flashbacks are not exclusively or even originally cinematic. Rather, they are inter-art or trans-medial: capable of being instanced cinematically, to be sure, but also (recalling Levi, this time) of being so by “other” means. This reflection opens up the wider question of how different art forms, including cinema and literature, relate to one another. Are these commensurable, and, if so, what form does their commensuration take? This question in turn recalls another, posed in my “Introduction,” about whether *Three Days* instances cinematicity as well as commenting on it. It will be seen that these questions are two sides of a single coin. For if *Three Days* instances cinematicity, this can only be because the verbal, typographical and other textual elements of which it is made form part of that wider class – like motile bodies in the case of dance, artificial light in the case of stroboscopy, and so on – capable of being used to construct cinema by “other” means. To claim this would be to identify *Three Days* as film-like in its *form*, just as it is film-attentive in its content. It would be to claim Ellison as a “para-“ if not “anti-Griffith,” like his creation Bliss/Sunraider. I am aware that the progress of my discussion so far may have signalled an intention to claim precisely this. But in fact, I see no grounds for considering *Three Days* as “cinematic” in any formal sense. For all that it is profoundly concerned with cinema (as I hope by now to have demonstrated with at least a measure of success) it is not *a* film, or even *like* one. The lessons ultimately proffered by *Three Days* about cinematicity are rather different. Rather than install this as the privileged condition to which other art-forms should aspire, the text instead asserts a more reciprocal conception of inter-art relations. This leads us to Ellison’s conception of the novel as a form, and a term in recent aesthetic theory with which that conception resonates: intermediality.

For in his commentaries on the novel, Ellison consistently emphasises the form’s constitutive capacity to draw on extra-literary media. Interviewed in 1968, he characterises the novel as “written out of other art forms”, citing Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* as exemplary, by virtue of latter’s debt to blackface minstrelsy [Southern Historical Association 1968: 171]. In another interview, in 1977, he goes further – specifically, and tellingly, in relation to his own work’s indebtedness to cinema. Indebted though it *is*, he argues, this is not evidence of historic innovation, but should be rather seen as evidence of continuity with Twain and other

nineteenth-century predecessors. For just as the latter “drew on the minstrel show”, so

Fitzgerald and Faulkner did time in Hollywood. Henry James was a fan of P. T. Barnum’s museum and Dos Passos adapted devices from the newsreel. [Reed Troupe Cannon 1977: 362]

“[D]r[awing] on” on cinema thus locates one in a tradition, alongside writers like Dos Passos, who had no professional experience of “Hollywood,” and others, like Faulkner and Fitzgerald, who did. This tradition is an extension of another, extending further backwards in time than – and indeed encompassing the history *of* – cinema itself. For fundamentally, to draw on cinema is of a piece with doing so from *other* media, including those such as the circus or Lyceum-style exhibition (“Barnum’s museum”) and certain forms of popular stage performance (the “minstrel show”) predating cinema. Non-literary elements, including but not exclusive to cinema, are an abiding rather than occasional constituent of literature. The entire history of the American novel, as Ellison adumbrates it, is thus one of *intermediality*. This term, as one recent theorist puts it, comprehends “a general condition” rather than “a peripheral exception” to the rules that media obey [Elleström 2010: 12]. Thus, “inter”-ness as *quintessential*, not accessory. The term “media,” in turn, should be understood as encompassing both technologies and art forms, whether conjoined or (as when cinematicity diverges from cinema) uncoupled. The reason literature “dr[aws] on” cinema is that this illustrates a way *all* art forms, potentially, can be expected to behave.

Ultimately, then, Ellison’s conception of the novel returns us Turim’s claim that flashbacks demonstrate the “interdependence,” rather than mutual independence of the arts. And in so doing, it returns to *Three Days*’s own interest in inter-art ensembles and alliances. As we have seen (although without, as yet, remark) the Zephyrs’ dancing requires, in Hickman’s mind, the rigour necessary to perform ‘classical music or an arrangement by Ellington.’ This is not despite the dancers’ reproduction of film’s apparent movement, but a condition of it. Dance is thus evocative of music – *even as it parallels, or reconstitutes cinema*. This reflection leads to more summative observations about the way *Three Days* treats inter-art and inter-medial relations. At otherwise disparate moments, a “jazz saxophone” evokes a certain genre of film, filmmaking triggers memories of theatre, reproduced paintings are perused in books, and films are referred to as abridged when screened on television [TD: 121, 277, 687, 123]. The

text as a whole thus intimates what Jesse Schotter has recently called “the hybrid nature of all media forms” [Schotter 2018: 15]. It locates cinematic features in non-cinematic media such as dance, as we have seen. And as we may now add, it locates non- or pre-cinematic elements – the use of “blackface,” we can now specify, as inherited from minstrelsy, and the “Wild West” stage routines and dime novels that inform the genres of film whose re-enactments Bliss witnesses – in cinema itself.¹⁹ Cinema itself must thus be acknowledged a site *of* – as well full-fledged or self-enclosed object capable of entering “into” – intermediality.

All that remains to be said, then, of course, is that according to this logic, cinema is not only capable of being made by “other means,” but is also amongst means capable of making other things. *Three Days* shows this, not as an instance of cinema, but as a reflection on it. And as I have striven to show throughout this article, it does so, in large part, by teasing apart, but also closely correlating, cinema and cinematicity.

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