



Ralph Ellison and Cinema

By Sam Halliday

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First dedicated study of the relation between cinema and the work of African American author Ralph Ellison (1913--1994).

Ralph Ellison and Cinema reveals the crucial role of cinema throughout Ellison's career. In his most famous work, *Invisible Man* (1952), cinema is part of a cultural and institutional landscape; as such, it is integral to the way the novel's protagonist feels and thinks. In Ellison's critical essays, cinema is simultaneously a crystallization of racial prejudice, a vehicle of ideas about history, and an index of the variously illusory and the revelatory character of dreams. But it is in his monumental, unfinished second novel, posthumously published as *Three Days Before the Shooting . . .* (2010), that Ellison's thinking about cinema is brought to its imaginative and theoretical peak. Here, Ellison gives full rein to a sensibility that is both cinephile and cine-sceptical; in the book, Ellison is as much concerned with cinematic form as he is with cinematic content. To chart the breadth and depth of Ellison's cinematic interests, *Ralph Ellison and Cinema* discusses the author's major works alongside private correspondence, Hollywood films in which Ellison took particular interest, and marginalia in the author's personal library. *Ralph Ellison and Cinema* also provides a detailed account of the intellectual and social contexts in which Ellison's works took shape.

Contents

Introduction; Chapter 1. Peanut Gallery and 'Mental Screen': Cinema as Institution, Paradigm and Metaphor; Chapter 2. The Shadow and the Act: the Critique of Hollywood and the Performativity of Race; Chapter 3. The Reel and the Frame-Line: Cinematic Form and Filmic Time.

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