IDEOLOGY AND CINEMATOGRAPHY IN HOLLYWOOD, 1930–39

Also by Mike Cormack

IDEOLOGY

Ideology and Cinematography in Hollywood, 1930–39

Mike Cormack

*Lecturer in Film and Media Studies
University of Stirling*

M
MACMILLAN

© Mike Cormack 1994

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1994 978-0-333-53443-4

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

First published 1994 by
THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS
and London
Companies and representatives
throughout the world

ISBN 978-1-349-11860-1 ISBN 978-1-349-11858-8 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-11858-8

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
1 Introduction	1
Explaining cinematographic style	1
The studio system	6
Defining 'style'	7
Method	7
2 Ideology and Cinematographic Style	9
The articulated definition	9
The minimal concept of the dominant ideology	10
Hegemony	12
Determination	13
Popular film	13
The audience	14
From ideology to visual style	15
The elements of cinematographic style	16
Cinematography as a system of signification	19
Cinematographic structuring	21
Cinematography as a system of subjectivity	23
Conclusion	26
3 From Silent to Sound: <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i>	27
The making of <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i>	27
The script	29
Camera movement	30
Camera distance	32
Camera angle	33
Lighting	35
Signification	37
Subjectivity	41
Conclusion	42
4 A Crisis of Explanation: The Early Thirties	44
The crisis of the early thirties	44
Hollywood in the Depression	46

	Cinematographic style, 1931–32	47
	<i>The Public Enemy</i>	49
	<i>Susan Lenox, Her Fall and Rise</i>	52
	<i>The Most Dangerous Game</i>	55
	Ideological contradictions in films of the early thirties	57
	Conclusion	59
5	Questioning Subjectivity: <i>Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>	61
	The making of <i>Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>	61
	Stevenson's story	63
	Camera movement	64
	Camera distance	66
	Camera angle	68
	Lighting	70
	Signification	71
	Subjectivity	74
	Conclusion	75
6	The New Deal in Hollywood, 1933–35	77
	The economy and society in the mid-thirties	77
	Hollywood and the Production Code	80
	Technological developments in the mid-thirties	82
	<i>42nd Street</i>	84
	<i>Viva Villa!</i>	86
	<i>Bride of Frankenstein</i>	88
	<i>Les Misérables</i>	90
	Conclusion	92
7	Screwball Restraint: <i>The Awful Truth</i>	93
	The making of <i>The Awful Truth</i>	93
	Screwball comedy	94
	The script	97
	Camera movement	98
	Camera distance	100
	Camera angle	102
	Lighting	102
	Signification	104
	Subjectivity	105
	Conclusion	106
8	The Restrained Style, 1936–38	108
	The studios in the mid-thirties	108
	<i>The Adventures of Robin Hood</i>	111

<i>Three Comrades</i>	114
Ideology in <i>Three Comrades</i> and <i>The Adventures of Robin Hood</i>	119
Conclusion	121
9 Towards <i>Film Noir: Dead End</i>	123
The making of <i>Dead End</i>	123
The script	125
Camera movement	127
Camera distance	129
Camera angle	130
Lighting	131
Deep focus	133
Signification	134
Subjectivity	136
Conclusion	137
10 The End of the Decade	138
The USA at the end of the thirties	138
Hollywood reacts	140
Film style at the end of the decade	142
<i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i>	143
<i>Gone With the Wind</i>	146
Conclusion	151
<i>Conclusion</i>	152
<i>Notes</i>	154
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	161
<i>Index</i>	163

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to John Izod who supervised the doctoral thesis on which this book is based, and to John Caughie and Phillip Drummond, the examiners of the thesis, whose suggestions helped its transformation into a book. Particular thanks are due to Chris. Without her encouragement the writing of both thesis and book would have taken much longer and been much more onerous.