

Review of Images and Representation (First edition)

Category : 16-19, Informal/Adult, Theory

Type : Review

Medium :

Subject : Media Studies,

Filename : imrep.html

Images and representation: Key concepts in Media Studies

Nick Lacey

Macmillan

£13.99/ISBN 0-333-64436-0

This book, the first of three dealing with key concepts in Media Studies, is aimed at post-16 students, whether in their last years at school or in their first year at Media Studies undergraduate courses. As such it would be valuable for any student taking the oncoming Higher Still Media Studies.

Because the range of readership is quite wide, the book is carefully structured. Each of the key concepts is tackled, firstly, at a basic level, for students just starting the course. Then later chapters introduce more advanced theories, which would probably only be understood by students at undergraduate level.

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As Lacey himself says in his introduction "IMAGE AND REPRESENTATION begins with a basic introduction to image analysis. The second chapter deals with semiotics which, in the third chapter, is applied with other advanced concepts, such as discourse, to image analysis".

Certainly 5th and 6th year school students would have difficulty tackling the sections on "Synchrony and diachrony" and "Paradigm and syntagm" in Chapter Two on Semiotics. Lacey himself acknowledges this in his introduction to "Representations" when he says, "You will no doubt be pleased to learn, there is less theory as the emphasis is on examples and case studies".

Apart from the "not too difficult/getting more difficult/pretty difficult" structure of the book, I also liked Lacey's tone to his reader: getting them involved, chatting to them almost, in the manner of Open University course books.

This involvement with the reader is further reinforced by the number of exercises (again varying in difficulty) which the reader is expected to do. In "Image Analysis" this ranges from photographs and adverts, stills from films (a good one on Gilda, starring Rita Hayworth). I particularly like the varied

way Lacey uses an advert for Nokia, from a simple image analysis to a deeper one in the section on semiotics.

In the second half, "Representations", Lacey uses a varied number of examples and case studies, particularly drawing on the influential work of Richard Dyer. There is an excellent study of British TV news, which would be of invaluable help to anyone doing the news and current affairs topic in Media Studies in CSYS English. Films studies include *The Searchers*, *Blue Steel* and *Triumph of the Will*. There is a very good analysis of the opening sequence and an illuminating comparison between the techniques used in this film and those employed by Busby Berkeley in his 30's Warner Brothers musicals, showing how Reizenstein is serving the ideals of Fascism while Berkeley is serving those of the New Deal.

Coming more up to date, there is some interesting comment on representation of gender in action movies of the 80s and 90s, particularly the "Terminator" movies. Finally in the appendices, there is an excellent analysis of the opening sequence of *Blade Runner*, with story boarding for those without access to the film, and a very helpful study of a front-page story in a local newspaper, to show students how to tackle an exam question in Image Analysis.

As I have tried to make out, I found this a stimulating and helpful book, with loads of material and texts from a wide range of media.

Despite having to bring in some difficult concepts, Nick Lacey's obvious love and enthusiasm for his subject should encourage and spur his target audience - the post-16 media student - to a more careful and critical approach to all aspects of media texts.

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