

The Literary in Theory (Cultural Memory in the Present)

Jonathan Culler



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Has theory neglected literature? Often literary and cultural theory, which goes by the nickname "Theory," has seemed to be the theory of everything except literature: theory of language, of sexuality, of history, of the body, of the psyche, of meaning (or meaninglessness), of politics, but not theory of literature.

In this timely and wide-ranging book, Jonathan Culler, whose lucid analyses of structuralism, semiotics, and deconstruction have been prized by generations of readers, explores the place of the literary in theory. If theory has sometimes neglected literature, the literary has, Culler argues, retained a crucial if misunderstood role. Culler's account of the fortunes of the literary in theory, of the resistance to theory, and of key theoretical concepts—text, sign, interpretation, performative, and omniscience—provides valuable insight into today's theoretical debates; and his analysis of various disciplinary practices explores the possibilities of theory for the present and the future.

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