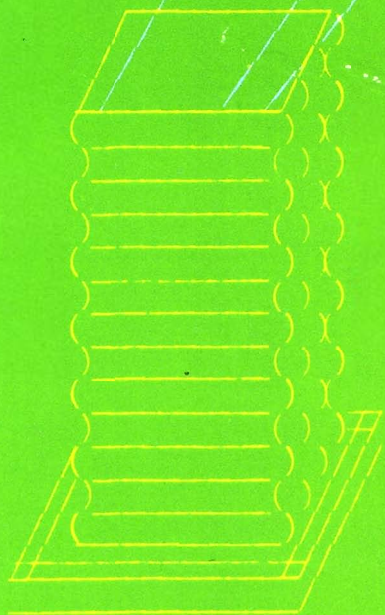
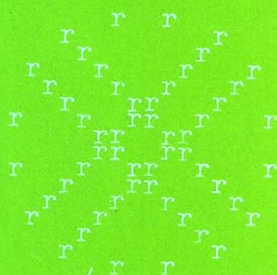


SOCIAL TEXTS AND CONTEXT

Literature and Social Psychology

Jonathan Potter
Peter Stringer
Margaret Wetherell



SOCIAL TEXTS AND CONTEXT

Literature and social psychology, though often kept in separate compartments, both provide us with commentaries on social life. Social psychology studies the individual and collective creation and interpretation of the social world; the literary critic does the same, but studies formal 'texts' rather than discourse in general. Focusing on interrelationships rather than differences between the two disciplines, this book illustrates the ways in which familiar psychological concepts - femininity, the environment, groups, the self - are constructed in discourse. Novels by Thomas Hardy, Barbara Cartland, Doris Lessing, C.P. Snow, Charles Dickens and Robert Musil are examined, and the theoretical approaches of Roland Barthes, Rom Harre, Jonathan Culler, Henri Tajfel, Irving Janis and Paul Willis are discussed.

Recent developments in literary theory - such as semiology and deconstruction - and in theories of social action - such as ethogenics and discourse analysis - make it difficult to treat literary and psychological texts as a neutral medium of communication. Instead texts should be seen in terms of their fundamental constructive role in the organisation of social life. As the authors demonstrate, contemporary life in both its personal and professional spheres is hedged around by discourse, conversations, newspaper articles, novels, scientific reports.

Throughout the book a distinctive and critical approach is developed for the analysis of social texts. Literature and social psychology share a number of concerns, methods and theoretical perspectives, and the challenges and suggestions in the book will help to create a new way forward for research in both fields.

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