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After Theory
Terry Eagleton
Penguin, £7.99.

A number of less influential works, not least those dealing with Ireland, have issued from Eagleton since he secured fame with his ambassadorial *Literary Theory* (1983). *After Theory*, ambitiously aimed at students, general readers and specialists, is an account of Theory's intellectual and practical dividends in the intervening years. Anyone suspicious of pessimistic academic buzz-words like *post* and *after* should not be discouraged since Eagleton simply means by his title that even though Theory's golden age is long past, and there have been gains and losses, there can be no return to our former cultural innocence. The arguments depend too heavily on a caricature of this innocence and, stylistically, on chichi humour and the sly verbal segue. There is plenty here nevertheless to incite us to thought and, while it would now be even more unusual, this will probably become as rare a species as its earlier counterpart: a bestseller about cultural theories that booklovers continue to love and loathe in equal measure.

John Kenny