



Why Fiction? (Stages)

Jean-Marie Schaeffer

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In *Why Fiction?*—one of the most important works of narrative theory to come out of France in recent years—Jean-Marie Schaeffer understands fiction not as a literary genre but, in contrast to all other literary theorists, as a genre of life. The result is arguably the first systematic refutation of Plato's polemic against fiction and a persuasive argument for regarding fiction as having a cognitive function.

For Schaeffer fiction includes not only narrative fiction but also children's games, videos, film, drama, certain kinds of painting, opera—in short, all the intentional structures arising from shared imaginative reality. Because video games and cyber-technologies are the new sites of entry for many children into such an imagined universe, studying these cyber-fictions has become integral to our understanding of fiction. Through these avenues, Schaeffer also explores the foundations of mimeticism in order to explain the important effect fiction has on human beings. His work thus establishes fiction as a universal aspect of human culture and offers a profound and resounding answer to the question: Why fiction?

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