

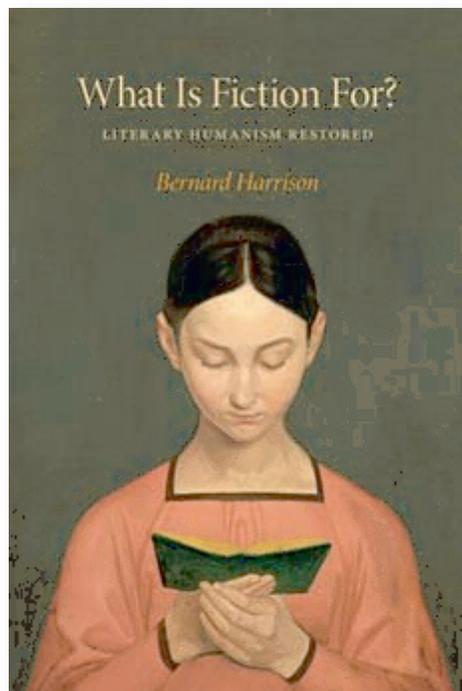
WHAT IS FICTION FOR?

Literary Humanism Restored

BERNARD HARRISON

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PRESS

How can literature, which consists of nothing more than the description of imaginary events and situations, offer any insight into the workings of "human reality" or "the human condition"? Can mere words illuminate something that we call "reality"? Bernard Harrison answers these questions in this profoundly original work that seeks to re-enfranchise reality in the realms of art and discourse.



“

What is Fiction For? offers a grand, and successful, rethinking of an entire discipline and the conceits, questions, and cares that animate it. It will be the first book that shows literary theorists and philosophers how to divorce, once and for all, a defense of humanism from a retreat to Enlightenment and Romantic exaggerations about the human and its place in the world.

John Gibson, University of Louisville

This book is interdisciplinary in the best sense of this term: firmly rooted in both philosophy and literary studies, it brings philosophy to bear, illuminatingly, on literary texts while also enlisting the latter for support of an innovative theory of meaning in language.

Leona Toker, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

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In an ambitious account of the relationship between literature and cognition, he seeks to show how literary fiction, by deploying words against a background of imagined circumstances, allows us to focus on the roots, in social practice, of the meanings by which we represent our world and ourselves. Engaging with philosophers and theorists as diverse as Wittgenstein, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Derrida, F. R. Leavis, Cleanth Brooks, and Stanley Fish, and illustrating his ideas through readings of works by Swift, Woolf, Appelfeld, and Dickens, among others, this book presents a systematic defense of humanism in literary studies, and of the study of the Humanities more generally, by a distinguished scholar.

Bernard Harrison is Emeritus E. E. Erickson Professor Philosophy at the University of Utah and Emeritus Professor in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Sussex, UK. He is author of *Inconvenient Fictions: Literature and the Limits of Theory*; *The Resurgence of Anti-Semitism: Jews, Israel, and Liberal Opinion*; and (with Patricia Hanna) *Word and World: Practice and the Foundations of Language*.

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