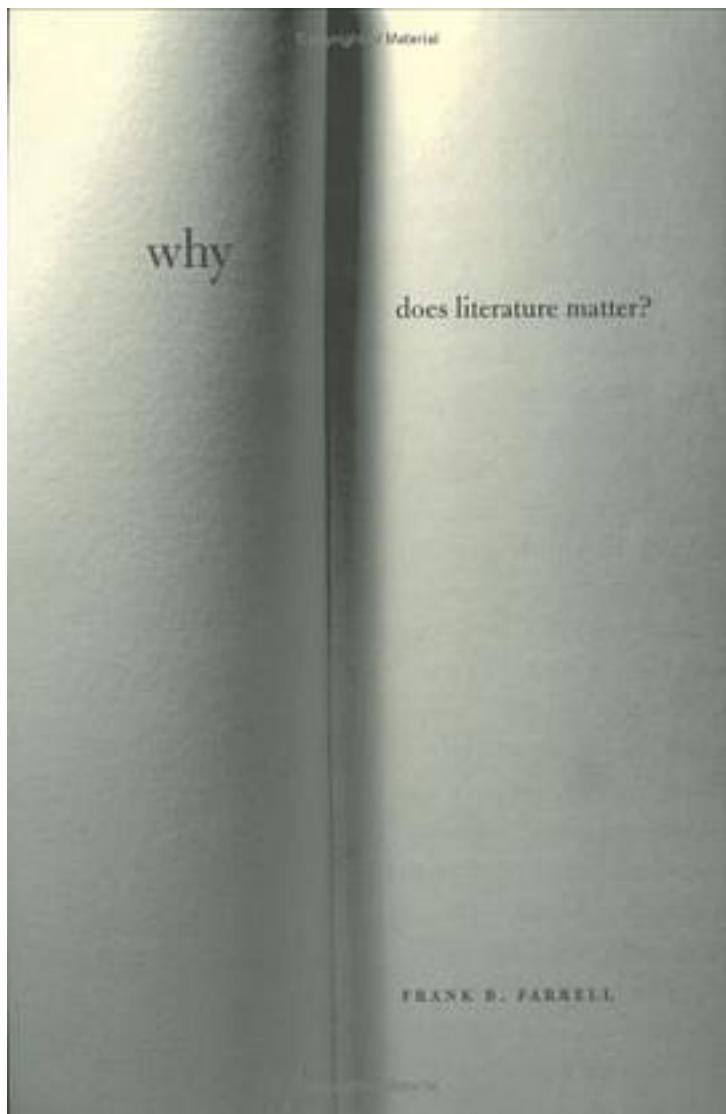


Why Does Literature Matter?



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Frank Farrell defends a rich conception of the space of literature that retains its links to issues of self-formation and metaphysics and does not let that space collapse into just another reflection of social space. He maintains that recent literary theory has badly misread findings in the philosophy of language and the theory of subjectivity. That misreading, Farrell says, has tended to endorse ways of understanding literature that make one question why it matters at all. Farrell here opposes some recent theoretical trends and, through a mix of philosophical and literary studies, tells us why in his view literature does truly matter. Among the writers Farrell discusses are John Ashbery, Samuel Beckett, Amit Chaudhuri, Cormac McCarthy, James Merrill, Marcel Proust, Thomas Pynchon, Salman Rushdie, W. G. Sebald, and John Updike. The philosophers important to his arguments include Donald Davidson, Daniel Dennett, and Bernard Williams; G. W. F. Hegel, Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Ludwig Wittgenstein play roles as well. Among the literary theorists addressed are Stephen Greenblatt, Paul de Man, and Marjorie Perloff. In addition to his close readings of literary, philosophical, and critical texts, Farrell considers cultural studies and postcolonial studies more generally and speculates on the possible contributions of object-relations theory in psychology to the study of literature

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目录:

[Why Does Literature Matter? 下载链接1](#)

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[Why Does Literature Matter? 下载链接1](#)

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