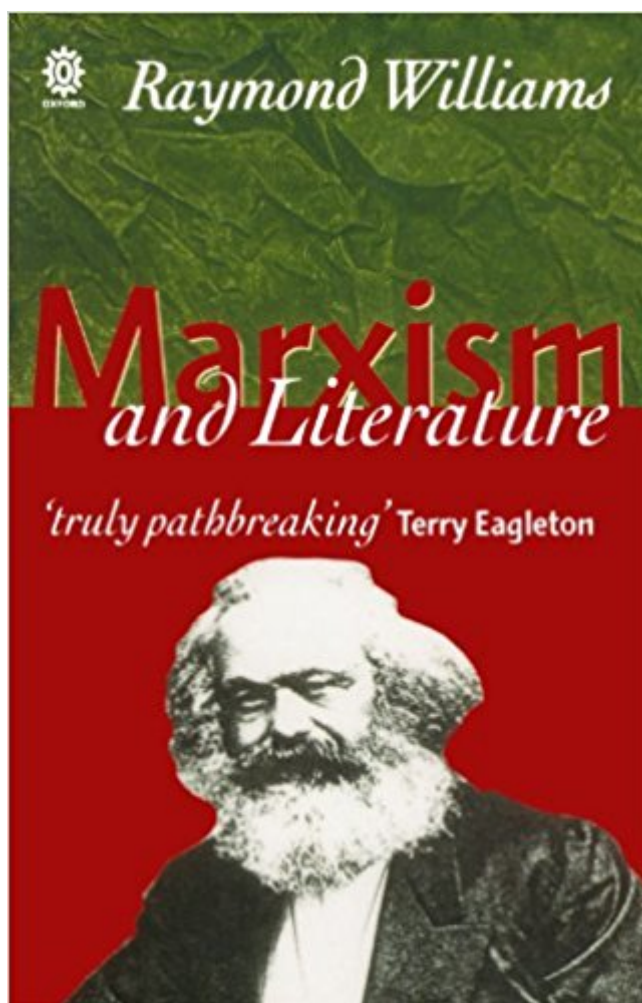




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Marxism And Literature (Marxist Introductions)



Synopsis

This book extends the theme of Raymond Williams's earlier work in literary and cultural analysis. He analyzes previous contributions to a Marxist theory of literature from Marx himself to Lukacs, Althusser, and Goldmann, and develops his own approach by outlining a theory of 'cultural materialism' which integrates Marxist theories of language with Marxist theories of literature. Williams moves from a review of the growth of the concepts of literature and ideology to a redefinition of 'determinism' and 'hegemony'. His incisive discussion of the 'social material process' of cultural activity culminates in a re-examination of the problems of alignment and commitment and of the creative practice in individual authors and wider social groups.

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Customer Reviews

Raymond Williams was a brilliant and learned scholar from a Welsh working class background who devoted most of his professional life to making our shared world, in its myriad manifestations, understandable in an evolving Marxist context. Williams, however, was not doctrinaire in his commitment to Marx, never imposing a nonsensically sanctified status on everything Marx wrote. Nor, to my knowledge, did he side with those who saw a sharp distinction between the early Marx, ostensibly a humanistic philosopher, and the later Marx, a hard-nosed materialist scientist. When reading Marxism and Literature, it is easy to see that Williams based his presentation on material that Marx produced throughout his life, from the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844

and the German Ideology through the Grundrisse, Capital, and Theories of Surplus Value. As best I can determine, Williams regarded the work of the early Marx to be just as committed to materialism and the socially constituted nature of human beings, their language, culture, classes, and class relations as anything he wrote later. The pattern of references in Marxism and Literature is clearly consistent with this judgment. Marxism and literature is a willfully condensed book, nearly devoid of examples to illustrate Williams' theoretical assertions, and it is quite dense. The material itself is inherently difficult, and when offered with deliberate compactness and an aversion to all but the essentials, it becomes even more difficult. For readers unfamiliar with much of anything Marx wrote, Marxism and Literature may prove to be inaccessible.

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