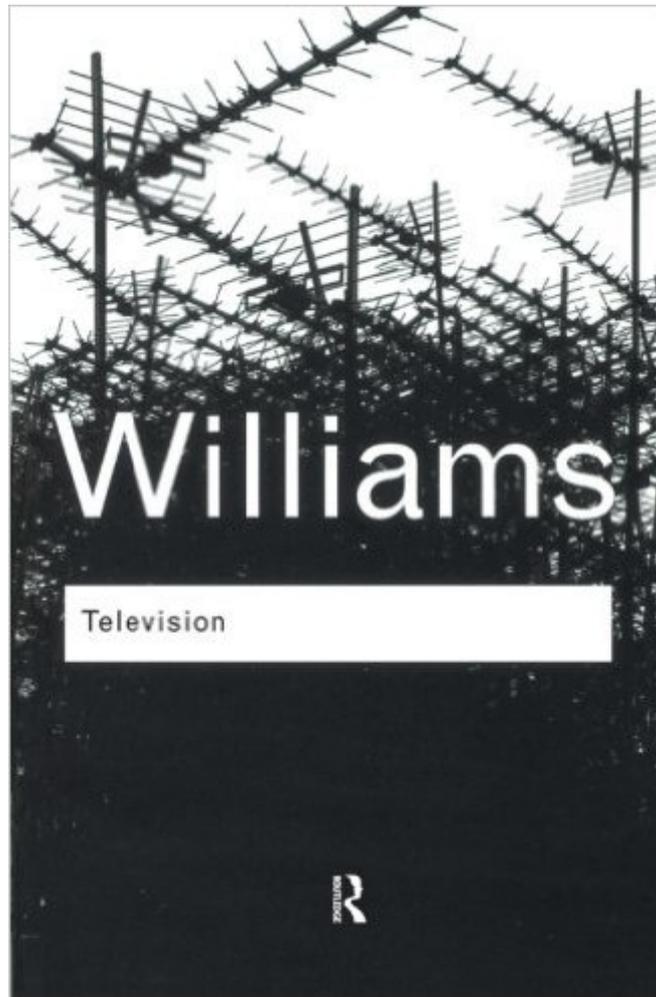


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# Television: Technology And Cultural Form (Routledge Classics)



## Synopsis

Television: Technology and Cultural Form was first published in 1974, long before the dawn of multi-channel TV, or the reality and celebrity shows that now pack the schedules. Yet Williams' analysis of television's history, its institutions, programmes and practices, and its future prospects, remains remarkably prescient. Williams stresses the importance of technology in shaping the cultural form of television, while always resisting the determinism of McLuhan's dictum that 'the medium is the message'. If the medium really is the message, Williams asks, what is left for us to do or say? Williams argues that, on the contrary, we as viewers have the power to disturb, disrupt and to distract the otherwise cold logic of history and technology - not just because television is part of the fabric of our daily lives, but because new technologies continue to offer opportunities, momentarily outside the sway of transnational corporations or the grasp of media moguls, for new forms of self and political expression.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Raymond Williams's TELEVISION: TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURAL FORM is regarded as the first important book written about television. Certainly it is the oldest book that any student of television studies is expected to read. It is not a perfect book, mainly because of technological changes that have rendered many of Williams's points invalid or irrelevant. But what is amazing reading this book in 2008 is how much of television's potential Williams anticipated, as well as some of its

weaknesses. Television as a form of popular art was very slow to mature. Though one can cite a few -- a very, very few -- important television series before 1981, it wasn't until the eighties and nineties that television really grew up and became a fully formed means of artistic expression. Some of the books that many people love to cite as to the awfulness of TV -- such as Jerry Mander's abysmally awful *FOUR ARGUMENTS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF TELEVISION*, which could easily compete for the title of the Worst Book Ever Written award -- depended not on the potential of TV, but on the way it appeared at the time. Williams correctly understood that TV had enormous potential for artistic excellence and was able to identify some of the better shows of his time, which is astonishing given that he wrote the book in 1973, when virtually all TV shows were awful. Much of the book consists of a very accurate, very concise history of TV as a medium. Williams also sums up the various formats of TV series, even distinguishing between serials and episodic shows. I think he would have been surprised at the degree to which serials have dominated quality TV (indeed, I would argue that virtually all the very good TV series have been serials).

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