

# The Moral Obligation to Be Intelligent: Selected Essays of Lionel Trilling

Lionel Trilling



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#### A landmark reissue of a great teacher's finest work

Lionel Trilling was, during his lifetime, generally acknowledged to be one of the finest essayists in the English language, the heir of Hazlitt and the peer of Orwell. Since his death in 1974, his work has been discussed and hotly debated, yet today, when writers and critics claim to be "for" or "against" his interpretations, they can hardly be well acquainted with them, for his work has been largely out of print for years.

With this re-publication of Trilling's finest essays, Leon Wieseltier offers readers of many new generations a rich overview of Trilling's achievement. The essays collected here include justly celebrated masterpieces--on *Mansfield Park* and on "Why We Read Jane Austen"; on Twain, Dos Passos, Hemingway, Isaac Babel; on Keats, Wordsworth, Eliot, Frost; on "Art and Neurosis"; and the famous Preface to Trilling's book *The Liberal Imagination*.

This exhilarating work has much to teach readers who may have been encouraged to adopt simpler systems of meaning, or were taught to exchange the ideals of reason and individuality for those of enthusiasm and the false romance of group identity. Trilling's remarkable essays show a critic who was philosophically motivated and textually responsible, alive to history but not in thrall to it, exercised by art but not worshipful of it, consecrated to ideas but suspicious of theory.



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