

Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society

Lionel Trilling



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'The Liberal Imagination,' first published in 1950, is a collection of essays on literature and society written in the Forties. By common critical consent it is the central document in the intellectual life of this century.

Referring to this best known of his works many years later, Lionel Trilling wrote: "The essays of [the book] were not concerned exclusively with literature and those that did deal with literature were not only about the novel [although] concentrating upon that genre. I spoke of the novel as an especially useful agent of the moral imagination, as the literary form which most directly reveals to us the complexity, the difficulty, and the interest of life in society, and best instructs us in our human variety and contradiction.

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