

TOP OF THE ISSUE

Lionel Trilling and the Barbarians at the Gate

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Future generations will want to know exactly what happened to the American university during the latter decades of the twentieth century. How did it change from an institution that displayed a decent respect for the life of the mind to the bastion of ignorance, perversity, and left-wing propaganda that it is in many quarters today? Why did professors allow their vocation to be altered from one of modest dignity, devoted to the honest dissemination of knowledge, into something resembling a Molière comedy, in which the once-honored college teacher energetically flatters his young charges in hopes of getting the good “student evaluations” upon which the success of his career now depends? Where were the defenders of the great tradition when it was not too late to save it, when the barbarians were still only at the gates and not yet inside the castle, feet up on the furniture, belching, and picking their teeth?

The career of the renowned literary critic Lionel Trilling may, surprisingly, offer some preliminary answers to these questions, as is shown in two recent books that bring this important figure to our attention: *The Moral Obligation to Be Intelligent* (the phrase comes from John Erskine, one of Trilling’s undergraduate teachers), a compendium of Trilling’s most important essays; and *Lionel Trilling and the Critics: Opposing Selves*, a collection of articles, reviews, and book excerpts on the man and his work.¹

The Job of Criticism

After getting his B.A. in English at Columbia University in 1925 and his M.A. in 1926, Trilling spent nearly his entire adult life at that institution. He began teaching there in 1932 while working on his doctorate, and, famously, became the first Jew to receive tenure in the Columbia English Department, or, for that matter, in the English department of any major American university. His Ph.D. dissertation, a study of the nineteenth-century poet and critic Matthew Arnold, published in 1939, was to be his only full-length critical book, apart from a short work of criticism on E.M. Forster that appeared in 1943. In the early part of his career Trilling also wrote short stories and, in 1948, produced a supremely intelligent if turgid novel, *The Middle of the Journey*, after

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which he published no more fiction. His major claim to importance lay in his intensely thoughtful and intensively wrought essays—wrought, it must be said, sometimes to the point of tedium.

Another unusual aspect of Trilling's scholarly career was that most of his writings appeared not in professional journals but in such general interest publications as *Partisan Review*, *Commentary*, and the *Nation*, and were later collected in four volumes, *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), *The Opposing Self* (1955), *A Gathering of Fugitives* (1956), and *Beyond Culture* (1965). Notwithstanding his preference for general rather than professional publications, he received many academic honors in his long career. He was often invited to give important lectures and to write literary introductions, and his four collections contain many of these efforts in addition to his other articles. In 1969–70, he delivered the Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard, later published under the title *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1973), and he became the first recipient of the Thomas Jefferson Award from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1972. He was made University Professor at Columbia in 1970 and continued to teach there until his death in 1975.

In the decades in which Trilling began writing, literature studies were dominated by the New Critics, who analyzed texts completely apart from their biographical, cultural, or historical background. Departing from this reigning orthodoxy, Trilling considered literature in its broadest context, exploring its many reciprocal relationships with other disciplines, such as psychology and anthropology, as well as with society and culture at large. In his hands, literary criticism became a tool for a searching examination of American intellectual life, an examination that still yields insight into our own circumstances today.

For example, in the preface to *The Liberal Imagination*, his most important collection of essays, Trilling argues that modern liberalism, the paramount intellectual tradition of modern America, can have a paradoxically negative effect on society in general, as well as on literature and criticism in particular, due to its mistrust of the emotions and its tendency to reduce and simplify human needs in the interests of social and political progress. To be sure, Trilling notes, "Contemporary liberalism does not depreciate emotion in the abstract." On the contrary, he continues,

in the abstract it sets great store by variousness and possibility. Yet, as is true of any other human entity, the conscious and the unconscious life of liberalism are not always in accord. So far as liberalism is active and positive, so far, that is, as it moves toward organization, it tends to select the emotions and qualities that are most susceptible of organization. As it carries out its active and positive ends it unconsciously limits its view of the world to what it can deal with, and it unconsciously tends to develop theories and principles, particularly in relation to the nature of the human mind, that justify its limitation. . . . [I]n the very interests of . . . its vision of a general enlargement and freedom and rational direction of human life—it drifts toward a denial of the emotions and the imagination.²

How prophetic is this analysis. In the decades since these words were written, liberalism has produced political correctness. In the name of tolerance, equality, and the expansion of human possibility, this latest aspect of the liberatory project is, paradoxically, managing to constrict freedom of thought, punish the search for truth, and reduce all human relationships to a tiresome dialectic of oppressor and oppressed.

Trilling was keenly aware of the totalitarian potential in modern liberal thought. Even before the outbreak of the counterculture in the late 1960s, he had spotted the tendency on the part of many artists and intellectuals to assume a superior—and frequently hostile—position toward their own society. This “adversary culture,” as he famously called it in the preface to *Beyond Culture*, had led to the formation of a highly influential adversary class, the members of which believe “that a primary function of art and thought is to liberate the individual from the tyranny of his culture . . . and to permit him to stand beyond it in an autonomy of perception and judgment.”³ But as with other analyses that purport to uncover the “hidden power relations” in society, the indictment of culture as tyrannical contained its own tyrannical implications. As Trilling had put it years before in one of his most oft-quoted sentences, “Some paradox of our nature leads us, when once we have made our fellow men the objects of our enlightened interest, to go on to make them the objects of our pity, then of our wisdom, ultimately of our coercion.”⁴

Similarly, Trilling saw through the utopian lie of Communism. He and his wife had briefly been members of a Communist-front organization in the 1930s but soon grew disillusioned with the movement. Trilling became an avowed anti-Communist and wrote admiringly of those thinkers, such as Freud, whose tragic vision permits them to understand the resistance that complex human nature puts in the way of simplistic progressive visions.⁵ Trilling also thought highly of George Orwell, a man who, like Trilling himself, fought against a leftist and fellow-traveling intellectual establishment that denied what Trilling called “the conditioned nature of life.”⁶

Trilling was, moreover, painfully aware of the deadening effects on literature and criticism of rationalist formulae that foreclose “the extent of human variety and the value of this variety.”⁷ He faulted much mid-century American fiction for its focus on social conditions and the need to improve them rather than on human character and its relationship to reality. Trilling’s widow, Diana Trilling, underscores this point in her memoir, where, speaking of the fiction produced during the 1930s and 1940s, she observes that it became

routine for writers to blame their personal failures and shortcomings, or those of their fictional characters, on the society. In the novels which I reviewed for the *Nation* in the forties, capitalism was responsible for all the woes of mankind, from stuttering to sexual impotence.⁸

Instead of bringing us to question *ourselves* and to ask “what might lie behind our good impulses,” Lionel Trilling wrote, such literature tends to “praise us for taking progressive attitudes.”⁹ As he saw it, the “job of criticism would seem to be, then, to recall liberalism to its first essential imagination of variousness and possibility, which implies the awareness of difficulty and complexity.”¹⁰

Trilling thus seemed to anticipate the fallacy behind the self-esteeming schools of criticism of the contemporary academy, in which fashionable attitudes regarding race, gender, and class and the subjectivity of all knowledge have driven out honest intellectual judgment and allowed inferior works by writers belonging to designated “victim” groups to be admitted into the curriculum for nakedly political reasons. All of this would have disturbed Trilling, for whom, as for his intellectual hero Matthew Arnold, real literature is central to civilization, expanding our moral imagination, offering us access to wisdom and self-knowledge, and broadening our understanding of the tradition we inherit. Of the “novel of the last two hundred years,” for example, Trilling argues that “its greatness and its practical usefulness lay in its unremitting work of involving the reader himself in the moral life, inviting him to put his own motives under examination, suggesting that reality is not as his conventional education has led him to see it.”¹¹

For Trilling, conscious as he was of the fallibility of human desire and intention, the refinement of character through contact with tradition, especially literary tradition, was of paramount importance, especially in post-World War II America which, he felt, was soon to “make great changes in our social system,” and would therefore need a measured understanding of human nature.¹² Moreover, Trilling’s own demeanor—sober, serious, and restrained, as witnessed by almost all who knew him—reflected this belief in the importance of moderation and moral cultivation in the living of life. In this sense, his life, his critical works, and his respect for the tradition were all of a piece. As his widow explained it years after his death,

Lionel represented for his gifted students a literary academic whose thought ranged well beyond the academy, linking literature to the wider political and moral life of the nation. The social relevance and moral intensity which in our American mid-century gave criticism its newly important role in society made Lionel himself into a kind of moral exemplar for his students, someone whose life and character might set the pattern for their own public and private choices.¹³

The Counterculture

So profound and effective was Trilling’s challenge to liberalism that Cornel West, in an otherwise incoherent essay, calls him a “godfather” of neoconservatism.¹⁴ The epithet, however, is questionable. When the counterculture exploded both within and without the university in the late 1960s,

Trilling was not to be found in the front lines of the resistance. Neoconservative stalwart Norman Podhoretz, one of Trilling's many prominent former students, has expressed keen disappointment in his old teacher's failure to join forcefully in that battle.

"Trilling *was* opposed to the new radicalism," Podhoretz insists, "and he tried to express this opposition in his writings of the late sixties and early seventies." But he did so, Podhoretz continues, with such restraint and hesitation as to be practically ineffective. His renowned penchant for "complexity" tied his hands behind his back. As Podhoretz describes it in *Breaking Ranks*:

In criticizing the cultural radicalism of the sixties and its historical sources, . . . Trilling increasingly seemed to use both the idea of complication and the prose embodying it not so much to clarify and defend his own point of view as to disguise and hide it. Reading the series of lectures he gave at Harvard in 1970 and then gathered together in *Sincerity and Authenticity*, for example, one got the impression of a writer no longer trying "to see the object as in itself it really is" [as Matthew Arnold had put it] but trying instead to conceal as much as to reveal, to say something and to deny at the same time that he was really saying it, to take part in a battle while at the same time pretending to be above it.

Podhoretz offers several possible explanations for Trilling's reticence. "It was too hard—even harder than the last time," (i.e., the struggle against the Communists and their fellow travelers in the 1930s), because the new enemy "was more diffuse and elusive." The newer struggle was also "more dangerous," Podhoretz asserts, in that the radical cohort of the 1960s was larger than that of its parent, and Trilling may have felt that if he stood openly against these forces, he risked losing the respect for which he had worked so hard, much as had happened to Sidney Hook when he joined battle with the New Left.

Finally, writes Podhoretz, there was Trilling's sense "of his own implication in the spread of the adversary culture as a critic and a teacher of literature—and especially of modern literature," with its running themes of alienation from the normal order and desire for apocalyptic change. Trilling knew that many of the radicals of the 1960s, both at Columbia and beyond, had been his own students, and some may well have learned their countercultural attitudes in his classroom.¹⁵

In his Jefferson lecture in 1972, Trilling did attempt to mount a defense of academic standards and of the intellect itself against the hiring of professors by racial quota and the demonization of American universities as "citadels of social privilege."¹⁶ Yet, as Podhoretz says of Trilling's lecture, "so long did he spend in getting to the point, and so heavily did he load it with academic baggage, that its power to impress—and to offend—was almost entirely dissipated."¹⁷

While other critics agree that Trilling's response to campus radicalism was inordinately muted, they differ over his reasons. Mark Krupnick, for example, tries to explain Trilling's inaction in the face of cultural barbarism as part of

an effort to break out into a new direction. Trilling, writes Krupnick, “retreated from history” into “a kind of Central European mode of cultural criticism, a philosophical history of consciousness in the Hegelian mode.”¹⁸ Morris Dickstein, on the other hand, argues that Trilling’s passive response was consistent with his customary resistance “to the fixities of ideology.”¹⁹

Both of these mutually contradictory explanations are circular in their reasoning, failing to explain *why* Trilling retreated from history at the very moment when history most needed him, or *why* Trilling’s particular awareness of complexity precluded a strong defense of his beliefs in the face of a radicalism that threatened to silence any kind of intellectual complexity whatsoever.

Trilling’s own explanation of his behavior—“fatigue”—leaves us equally in the dark:

Subjects and problems got presented in a way that made one’s spirits fail. It wasn’t that one was afraid to go into it, or afraid of being in opposition—I suppose I am speaking personally—but rather that in looking at the matter one’s reaction was likely to be a despairing shrug.²⁰

Again, this self-analysis only begs the question of *why* Trilling would indulge in a “despairing shrug” when everything he honored as an intellectual and critic was under mortal attack.

In his later book, *Ex-Friends*, Podhoretz offers a more promising explanation for Trilling’s reticence: a “doubleness” of outlook, as seen in the way “he believed in and celebrated society and its restraints, but . . . also wrote with great sympathy about the yearning for an ‘unconditioned’ life.”²¹ Disturbing evidence in support of Podhoretz’s theory comes from Diana Trilling’s brutally frank memoir, in which she reveals her husband’s previously unknown dark side—his depression, bouts of anger, verbal abusiveness—all of which he kept tightly hidden from his public behind an exterior of decency, civility, and composure. A shocking excerpt from Mrs. Trilling’s book appears in *Lionel Trilling and the Critics*. Although she is addressing the habits of temperament that contributed to her husband’s failure as a novelist, something that clearly contributed to his depression about his life, her observations can also be seen as applying to his failure to defend forcefully his revered tradition.

It was to decency that Lionel felt that he had sacrificed his hope of being a writer of fiction—conscience had not made a coward of him, it had made him a critic. Was I the only person in the world who knew this about Lionel? Did his friends and colleagues have no hint of how deeply he scorned the very qualities of character—his quiet, his moderation, his gentle reasonableness—for which he was most admired in his lifetime and which have been most celebrated since his death? . . . I could not have wished Lionel to be a drunkard in order to be a novelist. The power to write fiction does not lie in the bottle. But I could have wished him to have a thousand mistresses were this to have released him from the constraints upon him as a writer of fiction. I would willingly have been his female Leporello and sung his conquests.²²

As much as we might have preferred not to know such things about the personal life of so estimable a man as Trilling (and might even fault his widow for betraying his private torment to the world), her portrait provides an invaluable clue to the mystery we have been investigating. Trilling was unable to defend the tradition because on some level he himself secretly resented or despised it, or at least he resented and despised that muted form of it that he himself famously embodied in his own writing and persona.

This concealed animus, which consists in part of self-hatred, would seem to be the source of the surprising friendliness to the “unconditioned” that keeps cropping up in Trilling’s writings, as Norman Podhoretz observed in passing. For example, in an essay in which Trilling describes his experience teaching modern literature, and in which he deplores his students’ too easy acceptance of some of the darker visions of modernism, he suddenly exclaims, “How, except with the implication of personal judgment, does one say to students that [André] Gide is perfectly accurate in his representation of the awful boredom and slow corruption of respectable life?”²³ Similarly, in his analysis of Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, Trilling finds the sweet, unassuming, perceptive, and ultimately courageous heroine Fanny Price—who of all of Austen’s heroines may most exemplify acceptance of the “conditioned nature of life”—unlikable and excessively “virtuous.”²⁴ And in his essay on Vladimir Nabokov’s controversial novel *Lolita*, Trilling interprets Humbert’s perverted desire for his 12-year old-stepdaughter as “passion-love,” the kind of love, Trilling complains, that had been made impossible by our sanitized modern sexuality. Of Humbert’s wrenching confession of guilt and self-disgust at the end of the novel, Trilling coolly professes himself unconvinced. He prefers to believe in “Humbert the anti-hero,” who defies conventional morality and throws us all “off balance.”²⁵

The unique pathos of Trilling’s life and career lay in this, that even as he criticized modern liberalism and upheld the “conditioned” life that modern liberalism threatens, he resented the psychic costs that the “conditioned” life exacted of him, and harbored a significant degree of barely concealed longing for the *unconditioned* life. This perception is leant support by Mrs. Trilling’s own description of her husband’s inner division regarding the conflicting worlds of action and thought, which she traces to his childhood. Although he held in principle to the “primacy of mind,” she writes,

He nevertheless had an emotional problem about his inviolable commitment to thought. He had had an unusually protected childhood. He had not been allowed a boy’s normal life of action and, in consequence, any kind of action had a special charm for him. War, politics, business, finance: all of these were for Lionel the “real” world, from which he had been excluded by the excessive love and protectiveness of his parents. They offered themselves to his imagination as somehow sturdier and—in a way which he did not stop to examine—even worthier pursuits than his own quiet pursuit of teaching and writing.

She continues, describing how this inner division operated at the time of the Columbia University student riots in the late 1960s:

This was no doubt the reason why, on an immediate level of experience, he so much enjoyed what, on a deeper level of both experience and principle, he did not approve, the Columbia uprisings of the sixties, especially in their first days. At the outbreak of the 1968 disturbances, he was made a member of a three-man faculty committee charged with reassessing the disciplinary arrangements of the University. For three days he was on campus around the clock; when he finally came home for an hour or two of sleep, the police insisted upon escorting him—rumor had it that Harlem was about to march upon the University. He was sixty-two years old at this time but I never saw him less tired or in better spirits, and in the next weeks, as a member of a larger faculty committee whose consultations were as unending as they were fruitless, he was full of appetite for the emergency. He was at last sampling the life of action which had always been denied him. Ruefully he told me how much he liked it.²⁶

Whatever its origins in Trilling's case, this divided attitude is completely in line with that aspect of the liberal temperament that always seems able to find grounds for understanding and even sympathizing with the opposition, even with the very forces of chaos. In that sense, Trilling was indeed an exemplar of the liberal center, even as he was also one of its most stringent critics. This secret sympathy may be at least part of the reason why liberals are typically so hesitant and ineffective in countering threats to the social order—think of Cornell University's abject surrender to gun-toting black revolutionists in 1969, along with similar incidents of academic authorities collapsing in the face of student radicalism. It is why, like Trilling, liberals can lose heart in a fight, experience "fatigue," make "a despairing shrug," and find that "one's spirits fail."

There may be a yet deeper dimension to Trilling's lack of will to stand up to the social and intellectual chaos of his time—his apparent inability to experience a sense of the transcendent. The only thing that can offer relief from the conditioned life and its discontents, other than the unconditioned life, which is of course a dead end, is participation in an experienced reality larger than the individual self. To such promptings, however, whether in their religious or in their literary expressions, Trilling was unresponsive or dismissive. His brilliant but tone-deaf analysis of William Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood,"²⁷ for example, has struck at least one critic as odd. For Susie Linfield, Trilling's essay "is smart, but it has no soul." She marvels at the fact that "the 'poet of rapture' who used pleasure to discover truth is dissected by one of the most emotionally muffled voices in criticism."²⁸ In fact, Trilling labors precisely in that essay to remove any sense of the mystical or transcendent from Wordsworth's great poem, describing it instead in the reductive terms of modern psychology. So, for example, the poet's ecstatic intimations of pre-existence become the "oceanic" feeling that Freud posited as the state of the infant before self-consciousness develops.

Another critic, Joseph Frank, sees a similar kind of reductivism in the second of Trilling's essays on Wordsworth.²⁹ There, Frank argues, Trilling tries "to make us believe that a passive acceptance of social convention is on the same level of spiritual dignity as the quasi-mystic experience of Wordsworth." Frank notes how Trilling elides Wordsworth's "sentiment of being"—his sense of "beatitude" at the ordinary "life of things"—into mere "common routine."³⁰ Frank believes that Trilling often fails to distinguish between a healthful tragic acceptance of the conditioned nature of life on the one hand, and on the other an enervating tendency to mere "inertia," a term Trilling employs in discussing Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*.³¹

Trilling thus seemed to fall into two, equally unsatisfactory approaches to life: a life lived in accordance with sterile social convention, and a life that overthrows all convention. He shows in his writing no abiding and vivifying concept of transcendent truth and of a life (and a larger social order) directed toward it. Fatigued by his fight for a conventional order he didn't fully believe in anyway, he secretly hankered for the unconventional, and thus could not do wholehearted battle against the counterculture with its promise of release.³²

And this may have been the fatal weakness of postwar liberalism itself—that in embracing a purely individualistic and positivistic notion of democracy and progress, liberals lost any sense of the higher truths embodied in the Western tradition and of a felt sense of loyalty to that tradition that might have given them the confidence to resist the culture-destroying radicals of the 1960s and 1970s. Truly, therefore, Trilling said more than he himself understood in his description of contemporary liberalism quoted above, when he noted that "in the interests of . . . its vision of a general enlargement and freedom and rational direction of human life, it drifts toward a denial of the emotions and the imagination," that is, toward a sterile conventionality that can, in turn, feed a secret sympathy for radicalism.

Even before the 1960s came along, therefore, the battle for Western culture had already been at least partially lost, because its defenders no longer wholeheartedly believed in it or even understood it in its fullest dimensions. Just as Trilling came to resent the weight of the cultural tradition he was duty-bound to uphold, so the liberal academy had tired of its burden, and was perhaps only too conscious of the flaws and shortcomings of the tradition that the radical cohorts were eager to attack and ridicule.

One of Trilling's most famous essays concerns *The Princess Casamassima*, Henry James's novel of late nineteenth-century European radicalism.³³ The protagonist, the illegitimate son of a European aristocrat and an American woman, is recruited into a violent radical group. Sent to assassinate a member of the nobility who opposes the revolutionary cause, he finds that he cannot perform the deed, which he recognizes as a blow against all the "beautiful lofty things" (as Yeats would call them) that European civilization had pro-

duced. Neither, however, can he bring himself to betray his fellow radicals. He escapes the dilemma by turning the gun upon himself and taking his own life, an act that Trilling sees as a kind of heroism.

Could this be, in essence, what happened to Trilling? Unable to defend with his whole being the Western tradition to which he had given his life, nor to join forces with the radicals with whom he felt more than a small degree of sympathy, he escaped by silencing himself, that is, he committed a sort of intellectual suicide by writing increasingly opaque essays that escaped the real demands of his time.

The spiritually fatal dilemma in which Lionel Trilling found himself can be seen as emblematic of the postwar liberal tradition itself and the academic institutions that embodied it, as evidenced in their response to countercultural radicalism. Denying any moral, spiritual, or cultural framework larger than the individual self and the works of the rational intellect, so enamored of “complexities” that it lost sight of the fundamental truths on which the existence of the intellectual life is based, too refined and tolerant of ambiguity to defend itself when attacked, and yet still somehow too appreciative of the good to join openly with its destroyers, the liberal academy chose to opt out of the dilemma by letting itself be taken over by barbarians who possessed no such scruples, who were checked by no such awareness, who were afflicted by no such self doubts, and who, worst of all, had no consciousness of the good whatsoever.

Notes

1. *The Moral Obligation to Be Intelligent: Selected Essays*, edited and with an introduction by Leon Wieseltier (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2000); *Lionel Trilling and the Critics: Opposing Selves*, edited and with an introduction by John Rodden, and a foreword by Morris Dickstein (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).
2. Preface to *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), in *The Moral Obligation*, 546–47.
3. Preface to *Beyond Culture* (1965), in *The Moral Obligation*, 549–556.
4. “Manners, Morals, and the Novel” (1947), in *The Moral Obligation*, 118.
5. For example, “Freud and Literature” (1947), in *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1950), 54–5; this essay is not included in *The Moral Obligation to be Intelligent*.
6. “George Orwell and the Politics of Truth” (1952), in *The Moral Obligation*, 268.
7. “Manners, Morals, and the Novel” (1947), in *The Moral Obligation*, 188.
8. *The Beginning of the Journey: The Marriage of Diana and Lionel Trilling* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1993), 184.
9. “Manners, Morals, and the Novel” (1947), in *The Moral Obligation*, 116–17.
10. Preface to *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), in *The Moral Obligation*, 548.
11. “Manners, Morals, and the Novel” (1947), in *The Moral Obligation*, 118.
12. “Manners, Morals, and the Novel” (1947), in *The Moral Obligation*, 118.
13. *The Beginning of the Journey*, 250.
14. Cornel West, “Lionel Trilling: Godfather of Neo-Conservatism” (1986), in *Lionel Trilling and the Critics*, 395.
15. Excerpt from *Breaking Ranks* (1979), in *Lionel Trilling and the Critics*, 367–71.
16. “Mind in the Modern World” (1972), in *The Moral Obligation*, 477–500.
17. Excerpt from *Breaking Ranks* (1979), in *Lionel Trilling and the Critics*, 371.
18. “The Neoconservatives,” from *Lionel Trilling and the Fate of Cultural Criticism* (1986), in *Lionel Trilling and the Critics*, 393.

19. "The Critics Who Made Us: Lionel Trilling and The Liberal Imagination," in *Lionel Trilling and the Critics*, 387.
20. Quoted in Krupnick, "The Neoconservatives," in *Lionel Trilling and the Critics*, 392.
21. *Ex-Friends*, (Free Press, 1999), 101.
22. *Lionel Trilling and the Critics*, 465; and *The Beginning of the Journey*, 372–3.
23. "On the Teaching of Modern Literature" (1961), in *The Moral Obligation*, 385.
24. "Mansfield Park," (1954), in *The Moral Obligation*, 292–310.
25. "The Last Lover," (1958), in *The Moral Obligation*, 354–371.
26. *The Beginning of the Journey*, 203–4. It is possible to find pockets of longing for the "unconditioned life" in Diana Trilling as well. There is of course the excerpt from her memoir quoted above in which she asserts, "I could have wished him to have a thousand mistresses were this to have released him from the constraints upon him as a writer of fiction." And as late as 1985, she was still advertising her Sixties-ish support for Norman Mailer's "excursions into dissidence." See my article, "Our Genius: Norman Mailer and the Intellectuals," *Commentary*, October 1985, 60–65.
27. "The Immortality Ode" (1941), in *The Moral Obligation*, 33–61.
28. Susie Linfield, "In Pursuit of Authenticity," review of *The Moral Obligation To Be Intelligent*, in *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, 27 August 2000.
29. "Wordsworth and the Rabbis" (1950), in *The Moral Obligation*, 178–202.
30. "Lionel Trilling and the Conservative Imagination," from *The Widening Gyre* (1963), *Lionel Trilling and the Critics*, 229–30, 235. Frank allows that Trilling does sometimes evidence an understanding of aesthetic transcendence, as in his essay on Keats, "The Poet as Hero: Keats in His Letters" (1951), in *The Moral Obligation*, 224–258.
31. "The Morality of Inertia" (1955), in *The Moral Obligation*, 331–339.
32. Here, however, Mrs. Trilling's memoir forces us to regard her husband compassionately, perhaps more compassionately than she herself does, as she describes the burdened nature of his life. Her own physical and mental illnesses placed enormous demands upon him (at times she could scarcely allow him to leave her side to go out for a pack of cigarettes, and eventually they had to hire a paid companion to keep her company). Trilling also worked very hard at Columbia, and was constantly looking for opportunities to earn secondary income. Money was always a problem because of doctor and hospital bills, but also because Trilling had quietly assumed the entire support of his parents' household starting in the Depression and continuing for the rest of their lives, and of course he was the principal support of his own family, which eventually included a son, James, born in 1948. Such a life of duty and responsibility to others was typical of many men of Trilling's generation, and is the masculine flip side of "the problem that has no name" trumpeted by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*, the side that gets scarce attention now, since the problems and grievances of women have become the preoccupation of our society.
32. "The Princess Casamassima" (1948), in *The Moral Obligation*, 149–177.