John Carlos Rowe, *Afterlives of Modernism: Liberalism, Transnationalism, and Political Critique*.

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Introduction:
The Inevitable Intimate Connection

These are not political essays, they are essays in literary criticism. But they assume the inevitable intimate, if not always obvious, connection between literature and politics.

–Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays in Literature and Society* (1950)

Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* was published sixty years ago, when post-World War II liberalism offered viable resistance to the conservative ideology defining the Cold War era. As recent scholars have re-evaluated the 1950's, they have acknowledged the social protest of a liberal culture often identified with the New York intellectuals, including Trilling, and with some of his most influential students, such as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. Trilling was writing at the end of a venerable liberal tradition rooted in American transcendentalism and its secularization of Puritan theology. Only four years before the publication of *The Liberal Imagination*, Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s *The Age of Jackson* won the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1946 by celebrating the social progressivism of Emerson, Thoreau, and other transcendentalists who challenged Andrew Jackson's reckless economic expansionism. Less than a decade before *The Liberal Imagination*, F.O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941) canonized the liberal ideals of the transcendentalists and their coming relevance for the modern age.

Triling sought to revive this liberal tradition in response to the political extremism on both the left and right that many feared in the postwar era. Western leftists had been divided since the late 1930's, when evidence of Stalin's show-trials and genocidal policies in the Soviet Union was publicized internationally. While some U.S. leftists, like W.E.B. Du Bois,

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defended Stalin and others tried to disconnect Western Marxism from the Soviet Union, others moved to liberal positions, like the *Partisan Review*'s editor, Philip Rahv. Trilling's anti-Stalinism and anti-Communism have been well documented, and he shared the anti-fascism that had driven the U.S. war effort. Public revelations about the Nazi Holocaust confirmed anti-fascist views while indicating that both the Stalinist left and Nazi right had conducted genocidal policies unmatched in history.

Trilling's often-quoted view in the preface to *The Liberal Imagination* suggests that liberalism is the only possible *rational* position in an age threatened globally by the irrational positions of Stalinism and Fascism:

> In the United States at this time liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition. For it is the plain fact that nowadays there are no conservative or reactionary ideas in general circulation. This does not mean, of course, that there is no impulse to conservatism or to reaction. Such impulses are certainly very strong, perhaps even stronger than most of us know. But the conservative impulse and the reactionary impulse do not, with some isolated and ecclesiastical exceptions, express themselves in ideas but only in action or in irritable gestures which seek to resemble ideas.

Later in the preface he warns us that "in the modern situation it is just when a movement despairs of having ideas that it turns to force, which it masks in ideology" (*Liberal Imagination*, 5; hereafter *LI*). On February 9, 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy would make his infamous pronouncement that there were members of the Communist Party in the U.S. State Department, a claim he never proved, but which would lead to his anti-Communist witch hunts. In his introduction to the *New York Times* Classic Edition of *The Liberal Imagination*, Louis Menand, another influential student of Trilling's, notes that Trilling never defines *liberalism*, preferring to specify what it is *not*. Trilling's liberalism occupies the political "middle" between the extremes of Stalinism and Fascism. Trilling's novel *The Middle of the Journey* (1947) specifically invokes a middle course for U.S. postwar society, which complements the "centrist" position of his more conservative contemporary, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., in *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (1949).

Today it is difficult to imagine "liberalism" as a political middle course, because since the anti-war, civil rights, and women's movements of the late 1960's, "liberalism" has moved steadily to the left in U.S. popular culture.

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The label "liberal" in political contests today inevitably designates a "left-leaning" person incapable of bi-partisan cooperation in practical politics. Moderate Democrats running for political offices avoid the designation "liberal," and a politician like President Barack Obama, who endorses many liberal positions, has had a very hard time claiming the "middle ground" and "bipartisanship" that were hallmarks of his successful presidential campaign.

The Liberal Imagination was remarkably influential for a book that is an add amalgam of literary and cultural essays previously published. The chapters do not develop a progressive thesis, even if they return to several central themes, and they do not offer even a clear "great literary tradition." As a specialist in late Victorian and early twentieth-century literary modernism, Trilling includes four influential but by no means representative modern U.S. writers: Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Henry James, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Their works serve Trilling as examples of various sorts of modern realism, rather than radical avant-garde experimentalism. Henry James stands above the other three as a triumphant psychological realist best able to imagine the complexities of the liberal individual. Trilling's nineteenth-century literary authors include William Wordsworth, Mark Twain, and Rudyard Kipling, suggesting the importance of English influences on the American literary tradition. Other chapters on *The Partisan Review*, Freudian approaches to literature and culture and classical

history may address various challenges to Trilling's humanist tradition, but there is no clear argument connecting the sixteen chapter of the book.

Trilling's preface is often quoted, but despite its involuted, scholarly style it relies on journalistic claims rather than analytic arguments. None of these aspects of *The Liberal Imagination* accounts for the book's substantial influence in scholarly and public intellectual circles over the next two decades. What does account for its impact is its overall invocation of a critical spirit of the age, at least in the United States, which had been building from the fin de siècle to the post-World War II era. Trilling's term for this critical attitude is aptly and quotably "the liberal imagination," the faculty Wordsworth famously contends the poet possesses in greater "degree" but no "kind" from the ordinary man. Louis Menand is thus not entirely correct to claim that Trilling never defines the *liberal imagination*. Although Trilling only offers a negative definition of the phrase in his

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preface, each chapter offers an exemplification of the liberal imagination, especially those chapters devoted to great literary works and authors.

The qualities of the liberal imagination are clear and distinct. First, the liberal subject (author or citizen) is capable of imaging other positions and values than his own. A crucial function of this imaginative faculty is the "negative capability" Trilling admired in Keats's formulation of the ability to avoid settled ideas and recognize a certain ignorance or horizon to one's own knowledge, in order to keep the mind open to new ideas and experiences. Second, the liberal imagination relies on a "critical spirit," which identifies "a discrepancy between…present particular manifestation" of liberalism and its ideal (*LI*, xxi). Trilling was influenced strongly by the English romantics' and American transcendentalists' criticism of the political liberalism that supported unregulated economic progress, territorial expansion, and personal freedom. Trilling feared liberalism itself could become an ideology without new ideas, as it had during the Presidency of Andrew Jackson (*LI*, xvi). Third, the liberal imagination depended upon a complex philosophical and psychological subject whose individualism was built upon both creative and analytic powers, such as those Coleridge named primacy and secondary imaginations, and thus could not be reduced to his political or class affiliations.

Caught between being used by The Sun and Moon anarchists group as an assassin and the lure of aristocratic wealth and power, James's Hyacinth Robinson in *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) finally chooses suicide. In Trilling's interpretation of one of James's most politically explicit novels, Hyacinth represents the tragic fatality for the individual who is ideologically manipulated: "Hyacinth dies sacrificially, but not as a sacrificial lamb, wholly innocent; he dies as a human hero who has incurred a certain amount of guilt" (*LI*, 85). Unlike Hyacinth, Henry James can imagine both political extremes, weigh their respective intellectual and psychological appeals, and yet avoid their coercions. Fourth, the liberal imagination is characterized by modern cosmopolitanism and its apparent advocacy of universal human rights. Trilling's *Liberal Imagination* is transnational in a highly limited way, relying on Anglo-American modernism and invoking a European, Sigmund Freud, only insofar as he had entered into the dominant cultures of England and the United States. "Universality" for Trilling remains structured by the most civilized cultures and is in no way qualified by subsequent criticisms of Eurocentrism.

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For Trilling, the West *is* the best because its cultural achievements, especially in literature, exhibit the best examples of the "liberal imagination." All of this suggests why the transnational

Henry James, whose "international theme" was so important for Trilling's Columbia colleague Fred Dupee, would achieve such a central position in Trilling's book.

What accounts for the success of *The Liberal Imagination* is in part the long legacy of such liberalism from Emerson to William James and John Dewey to Trilling and many of the New York Intellectuals, as well as the postwar cultural demand for a "middle ground" between the political impasses of Stalinism and European fascism. Trilling's version of liberalism is particularly conservative in its emphasis on bourgeois values, its defense of modernist realism over a more radical avant-garde, and its neglect of race, gender, and sexuality. Published four years before the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision of 1954, Brown vs. Board of Education, and in the midst of the growing unrest among African Americans regarding their continuing lack of civil, social, and economic rights, *The Liberal Imagination* has virtually nothing to say about the issues of race and ethnicity, despite its invocation of an international romanticism marked by its commitment to abolition and universal human rights. There is one weird footnote in the essay "Art and Fortune" about the "question of whether the American attitude toward 'minority' groups, particularly Negroes and Jews, is not the equivalent of class differentiation" (*LI*, 250-53). Trilling's answer is clearly that "minority groups" don't suffer from the same discrimination as those relegated to a lower class, because "the excluded group" faces "no real cultural struggle, no significant conflict of ideals," insofar as it "has the same notion of like and the same aspirations as the excluded group" (*LI*, 250-3). By linking "Negroes and Jews," Trilling tacitly claims to know experientially what he is saying here, having faced discrimination as a Jewish professor at Columbia, but his assumption that all such "minority groups" share the concept of life and human aspirations with all other groups, especially the "excluding group," belongs to the ideology of American assimilation and consensus history. The fact that Trilling buries his one observation about ethnic minorities in a footnote under the urgent historical circumstances I have mentioned needs little further comment.

Trilling's hero in *The Liberal Imagination* is clearly Henry James, but Trilling has little to say about James's ability to imagine the social

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and psychological bondage of nineteenth-century women to patriarchal values and nothing to say about James's ambivalent sexual identity and its imaginary representation in his fiction. It is possible to think liberally about Hyacinth Robinson, for example, without considering the extensive coding of *The Princess Casamassima* in reference to the gay subculture of Victorian London? Because of the particularly repressive social climate for gays and lesbians in the United states in the 1950s, challenged aggressively by one of his best students, Allen Ginsberg, Trilling ought to have reflected critically on the politics of sexuality, as do three of his most important literary examples: Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, and Henry James. For a book in which the cultural significance of Freudian psychoanalysis is addressed in three separate chapters–chapter 4, "Freud and Literature; chapter 10, "Art and Neurosis"; and chapter 14, "The Kinsey Report"–Trilling's neglect of gender and sexuality is an noticeable as his disregard of race and ethnicity.

Of course, Trilling does address rather infamously "homosexuality" in his review of Alfred Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy, and Clyde Martin's Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (1948). "The Kinsey Report" is the fourteenth essay in *The Liberal Imagination*, and it is one of the central examples of how Trilling's "literary criticism" might by applied to "society" as his subtitle promises. Trilling addresses homosexuality in the Kinsey Report by concluding that "the psychiatrists have thereby judged homosexuality to be an unexceptionable form of sexuality," but he himself cannot help but read into the report that "their option of the etiology of

homosexuality as lying in some warp–as our culture judges it–of the psychic structure has not, I believe, changed" (*LI*, 232). This conclusion is certainly more subject to Trilling's interpretation than the report to the conclusion we ought to draw from the report that homosexuality is "an unexceptionable form of sexuality": "There can be no doubt that a society in which homosexuality was dominant or even accepted would be different in nature and quality from one in which it was censured" (*LI*, 232). Trilling knows indubitably that in Anglo-American societies from the late Victorian period (his exact area of scholarly specialization) to the United States in 1950, homosexuality has been "censured" by severely punitive laws. Rather than engage the issue of the discrimination against homosexuals, Trilling prefers instead to a *accept* the social constructedness

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of "liberal society" as one in which such discrimination is part of the social contract. Trilling then follows the odd, conservative conclusion with an indictment of what today we understand by the phrase "liberal permissiveness": "The Report has the intention of habituating its readers to sexuality in all its manifestations; it wants to establish, as it were, a democratic pluralism or sexuality. And this good impulse toward acceptance and liberation is not unique with the Report but very often shows itself in those parts of out intellectual life which are more or less official and institutionalized" (*LI*, 232-33). Trilling confesses that this "generosity of mind" is "to be admired," but "when we have given it all the credit it deserves…, we cannot help observing that it is often associated with an almost intentional intellectual weakness" (*LI*, 233). The "liberal imagination," it would appear, has certain limits for Trilling.

Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* marks the turn of American liberalism from a progressive political position committed to specific social reforms to an aesthetic ideology. To be sure, nineteenth-century liberalism often suffered from a tendency to "aesthetic dissent" rather than to political criticism. The Emersonian tradition has often stressed philosophical and psychological changes over practical reforms, and Trilling fits squarely within this heritage. Yet the great nineteenth-century social reform movements in the United States–abolition, women's rights, and Native American rights–were shaped profoundly by liberal activists. Although its publication in 1950 is too early to mark the beginnings of "neoliberalism," which does not appear until the so-called Culture Wars of the 1980s, *The Liberal Imagination* nonetheless provides a cultural milestone for the transformation of a liberal tradition that for a century had informed political critique and social reform in the United States.

The familiar story is that liberalism was hijacked by neoconservatives during the Culture Wars of the 1980s and that the "multiculturalism" of the late 1980s and early 1990s suffered from meliorist efforts to satisfy neoconservative demands of "equality for all," including those historically privileged, and in response to a vigorous campaign against "political correctness." One result was that neoconservatives cynically appropriated liberal positions and values in a neoliberal rhetoric unmatched by political action; the other consequence was that liberalism, now confused with neoliberal rhetoric, suffered from leftist critiques of its ineffectiveness and ideological co-optation. Some neoconservative intellectuals, often

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supported by private foundations, argued that they were "classical" liberals, tracing their values back to the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment and conveniently sidestepping contemporary social issues. Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) exemplifies a neoconservative intellectual position that relied on "classical liberalism," which Bloom traced back to Plato's *Republic*, to condemn problems in contemporary education ranging

from deconstruction and analytic philosophy to rock and roll. Positively reviewed by the liberal political philosopher Martha Nussbaum and the conservative intellectual Harry V. Jaffa, *The Closing of the American Mind* was a best seller and mainstay of neoconservative attacks on higher education and its "tenured radicals." Despite the historical distance of nearly four decades separating Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind* and Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination*, the books have much in common, especially their advocacy of high culture as a defense against extremist political ideologies, their contempt for popular culture, and their neglect of race, class, and gender/sexuality as central social and political issues.

The decline of liberalism from Trilling's contention in 1950 that it "is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition" to it neoliberal cooptation and condemnation by the left in the 1990s tells only part of a much longer history from the nineteenth century to the modern period. I identity my own work with the political left, but I also recognize that the left has trivialized the work of liberal culture, either subordinating it to conservative politics or rejecting it as inadequately critical of the dominant ideology. But such a position is mistaken in terms of the functionality of liberalism in nineteenth-century and modern U.S. society. Working through liberal values may be the most effective means of achieving lasting change, as Martin Luther King Jr. understood in the civil rights movement and second-wave feminists did in the era of the National Organization of Women. Liberalism appeals to a popular base that can understand, even if it cannot fully share, the suffering of minoritized peoples. For this reason, conservative interests have traditionally sought to appropriate the popular appeal of liberalism, turning its moral interests in the oppressed into political opportunities.

My aim is not to offer a defense of liberal culture and politics, as Lionel Trilling does in *The Liberal Imagination*, but instead to offer an oppositional interpretation of liberalism that respects its immense popularity,

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even defining function, in U.S. history. Without liberal culture, Barack Obama would never have been elected president. Dismissing or ignoring liberalism and treating it reductively as socialism or communism in disguise are equally inadequate responses to its social and cultural power. My goal is to respect what liberal culture has achieved while also recognizing how its genealogy can lead to genuinely conservative values, as it has in the neoliberal phase. By the same token, liberalism had much to recommend it, especially in its claims to "sympathetic" cultural recognition of others. This scholarly study focuses on modernist literary texts that engage issues of race, class, and gender/sexuality from Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives* (1909) to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952). Just how such liberalism could be transformed into a resource of neoliberals in the past twenty-five years is part of this story, which I attempt to tell through a series of literary interpretations of postwar writings by contemporary U.S. authors with strong liberal credentials–Harper Lee, Thomas Berger, Louise Erdrich, and Philip Roth–each of whom represents a different aspect of the spectrum that stretches from liberalism to neoliberalism.

Scholars commonly assume that avant-garde literary modernism in the United States relied on a political liberalism that marginalized issues of race, class, and gender/sexuality that would become the governing social issues in the post-World War II era. In this book, I contend that high modernism often addressed these questions in progressive ways, calling for specific reforms symbolically enacted in many literary works. Distinct from the deeply conservative politics of avant-garde modernists like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, John Dos Passos, William Faulkner, and Ralph Ellison took seriously the social inequities of U.S. racism, sexism, and classism. Each tried to identify with the situations of peoples marginalized in these ways and offered the literary *imaginary* as a possible means of calling for and proposing specific

social, legal, and economic reforms. Employing avant-garde styles and forms to disrupt the conventional modes of cultural representation, they also worked to include minorities as participants in the debates of the avant-garde.

Whatever their political persuasions, avant-garde modernists responded to second-stage modernization as a transnational process that had specific consequences for discrete nation-states. With its twentieth-century emphasis on immigration and diversity, the United States claimed to incorporate

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new transnational forces into a sort of "super-nation" that would offer its democratic values, social inclusiveness, successful economy, and progressive politics as models to be exported around the globe. By our present moment, such hyper-nationalism has become a distinctive characteristic of U.S. neo-imperialism, evident in the countless ways international issues are transformed into domestic problems. Thus the global "way on terror" is in fact the U.S. fight against its enemies and often in pursuit of its own national self-interest. Women's rights in Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia are treated in terms appropriate to idle-class, white American women. Racial and ethnic conflicts in Africa and India are interpreted in terms of the U.S. civil rights movement.

Although attentive to this problem of nationalizing global issues, the U.S. literary avant-garde also contributed to the problem. In Three Lives, Stein treats the female, German-American, immigrant protagonists of "the Good Anna" and "gentle Lena" as complements to Melanctha Herbet, the African-American protagonist of the central and best-known novella, "Melanctha." In doing so, Stein creates unexpected transnational affiliations but also risks treating racial and national questions in reductive ways. Dos Passos sets *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) in New York City as the new metropolitan center of global flows, treating the Russo-Japanese War, European colonial conflicts in Morocco, and other international news as equally important to the New Yorker as the local news. Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) traces Sutpen's slaveholding fortune and ideology to the West Indies, where he traveled from poverty in Virginia to make his fortune and then fled during British emancipation. Ellison's *Invisible Man* acknowledges World Wars I and II as deepening racial conflicts when African Americans discovered that their military service did little to change their second-class citizenship at home. Nevertheless, Ellison rejects the internationalism of Communism to offer his ambivalent protest against U.S. policies in the novel.

I argue that modernism's characteristic liberalism survives in postwar fiction in two distinct ways: as a continuation of avant-garde modernism's efforts to represent political and cultural otherness and as a neo-liberalism intent on neutralizing race, class, and gender/sexuality as real social issues. Both modes on modernist political protest depend on the elaboration of this notion of "internalizing" international issues in U.S. domestic policies. Harper Lee's small-town racial drama is interwoven

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with transnational dimensions, from the "missionary" work the First Purchase African M.E. Church in Maycomb does in Africa as an extension of its origins in international abolition to the traces of Cherokee culture on which the town of Maycomb is built. The class conflicts of the fractured middle class in Berger's Neighbors (1980) draws on Berger's Crazy in Berlin series, in which his characters witness in postwar Germany the collapse of the proletarian utopia crushed both by Hitler and by Allied troops. In Louise Erdrich's fiction about Euroamericans and the Ojibwe, the transnational drama acted out in North American history is that of European

imperialism and the genocide of native peoples and destruction of their cultures. In Philip Roth, a new internationalism threatens the comfortable stability of Cold War-era, assimilated Jewish Americans, who ought to have provided the model for other immigrants and oppressed minorities, but somehow have been overwhelmed by the madness of multicultural differences, identity politics, and inassimilable foreign influences. To be sure, Roth's defense of U.S. nationalism seems the closest to contemporary neoliberalism.

Dismissed by the political left as merely an effort to appropriate race, class, and gender/sexuality by the white, male, bourgeois values of "classical" liberalism and demonized by the conservative right as leftist "fellow travelers," postwar liberal writers actually did substantial work in the interests of racial, class, and sexual justice. Other scholars have made similar arguments about avant-garde modernism, in particular Michael North in *The Dialect of Modernism* (1994) and Ann Douglas in *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (1995), but they have generally exaggerated the abilities of modern liberal writers to internationalize and engage the primary issues of race, class, and gender/sexuality. Although I build upon their work, I also contend that modern liberalism always confronts a certain strategic limitation, a horizon that it cannot transcend when it comes to the task of representing and identifying with "otherness." In most of the works discussed in this book, that limitation is the U.S. nation, whose form is presumed to encompass cultural, racial, political, and sexual differences, but only as long as they fit the national symbology.

The title of this book, *Afterlives of Modernism*, relies on the double meaning of afterlives: the heritage of liberal modernism in the post-World War II era; the shared motif in all of these novels that their authors live

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through characters whose "other" lives exemplify problems of race, class, and/or gender/sexuality identified by their authors as central to broader problems in U.S. society. Just how the authors manage to channel their characters to reach a better understanding of how social justice might be achieved is one of the organizing principles of this book. Trilling's "liberal imagination" treats uncritically the human ability to imagine another person's situation, especially when it differs from one's own. In the chapters that follow, I interpret both the possibilities and limitations of imaginative identification. What specific interests (race, class, gender/sexuality, nation) shape our identifications, especially in literary works in which character's virtual individualities may disguise their broader social and political affiliations? We know that the imperial imaginary often works by projecting its own desires onto strange peoples and lands, so powerfully that European imperialists often fabricated people, animals, and lands that did not in fact exist. We also know that well-intentioned efforts to help "save" nineteenth-century indigenous peoples attempted disastrously to remake them in the Euroamerican image. In the simplest possible terms, when is imaginative identification good and when is it bad? And does the timing of such identification change our ethical judgment? If we have today the benefit of historical perspective, then do we interpret differently the imaginative identifications of literature produced in an earlier period? And are there cases, rare to be sure, when such literary identifications transcend their times and places to achieve a measure of universality?

Afterlives of Modernism is divided into two parts: the first part treats U.S. literary texts from the first half of the twentieth century; the second part interprets U.S. novels since the 1960s. My focus on Trilling's *Liberal Imagination* suggests an approximate historical division of the two parts of the book into 1900-1950 and 1950-2000, even though I have chosen to include Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) in the first part, dealing as that novel does with racial issues in the U.S. between World War I and World War II. My choice of works in both parts is

not meant to be representative, but exemplary. Whereas many other works and authors might have been considered, the works I have chosen provide good examples of the varieties of liberal responses to race, gender, sexuality, and class in these two broadly conceived historical periods. In addition, each work addresses the modern U.S. nation in relation to transnational issues

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that prefigure of in some cases coincide with contemporary processes of globalization.

Part I, Liberal Modernism and Transnationalism, treats four avant-garde modernist U.S. narratives by authors who have had broad, international influence: Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives* (1909), John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952). The political position of each writer at the time she or he wrote the work considered is not self-evidently "liberal," but each exemplifies some of the key political problems resolved by liberalism in the first half od the twentieth century. Between 1905 and 1906, when she wrote *Three Lives*, Stein lived in Paris supported by an income from her family's investments, managed by her older brother, Michael Stein, after their parents' deaths in 1888. A student of William James's at Harvard, an early supporter of cubism, and a practitioner of avant-garde literary experimentation, Stein was a cultural radical whose personal politics ranged from her advocacy of lesbianism to such bourgeois avocations as art collecting and gourmet cooking…

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Finally, these four modernists suggest that the cosmopolitan individualism their protagonists approach but do not quite achieve is best embodied in the figure of the literary author[…] Each work offers a different version of modern cosmopolitanism as an alternative to specific regional, class, ethnic, and sexual or gender identities that trap the fictional protagonists. Neither Anna nor Lena nor Melanctha ever escapes her specific subordination as working-class, minority woman, even though each rebels against these subaltern roles. But Stein's own Jewish-German-American and lesbian identities are combined with her Radcliffe education and European travels to create a cosmopolitanism firmly rooted in U.S. culture.