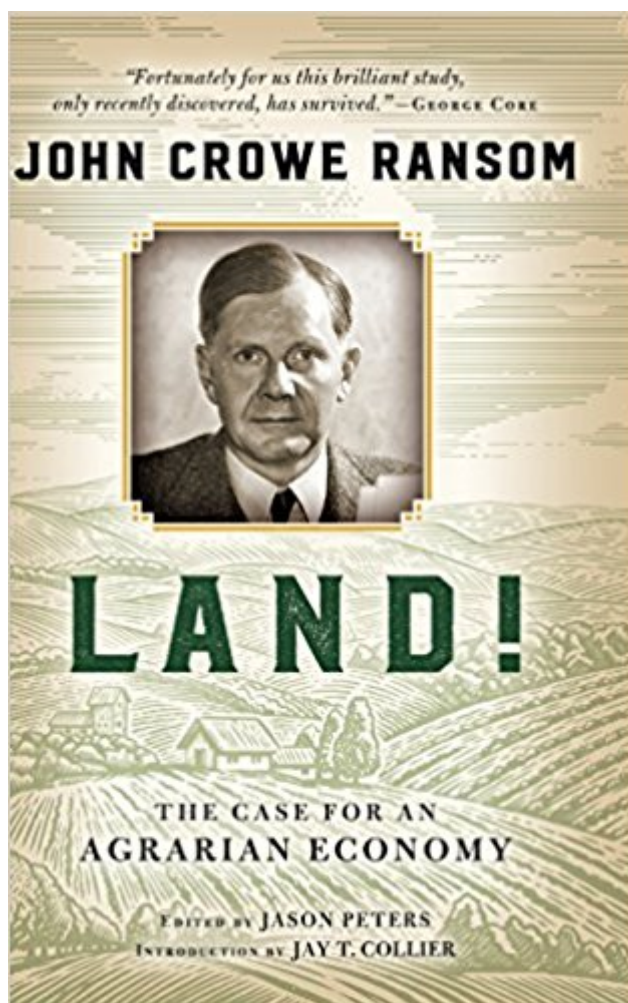


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Land!: The Case For An Agrarian Economy



Synopsis

The accomplished poet and scholar John Crowe Ransom made profound contributions to twentieth-century American literature. As a teacher at Vanderbilt University he was also a leading member of the Southern Agrarian movement and a contributor to the movement's manifesto *I'll Take My Stand*. Ransom's *Land!* is a previously unpublished work that unites Ransom's poetic sensibilities with an examination of economics at the height of the Great Depression. Politically charged with Ransom's aesthetic beliefs about literature and his agrarian interpretation of economics, *Land!* was long thought to have been burned by its author after he failed to find a publisher. Thankfully, the manuscript was discovered, and we are now able to read this unique and interesting contribution to the Southern Agrarian revival. After the publication of *I'll Take My Stand* in 1930, Ransom, who provided the book's *Statement of Principles* in addition to its lead essay, became convinced that the book had not adequately proposed an economic alternative to Northern industrialism, which had fairly obliterated the Southern way of life. *Land!* was Ransom's attempt to fill this gap. In it he presents the weaknesses inherent in capitalism and argues convincingly that socialism is not only an inadequate alternative but inimical to American sensibilities. He proposes instead that agrarianism, which could flourish alongside capitalism, would relieve the problems of unemployment and the "permanently unemployed." In particular, he argues that what he calls the "amphibian farmer"—who can survive in both a monetary and a non-monetary economy—would never, so long as he relied on himself for necessities, have to fear unemployment. America, Ransom claims, is unique in offering this opportunity because, unlike in European countries, land is plentiful. *Land!*

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"For students of American literature, for contemporary Agrarians, for historians of American ideas, and for all those who believe that a 'third way economics' deserves new attention in our raucous social-economic times, this is the equivalent to a musicologist's discovery of a long-lost symphony by Mozart or Brahms. John Crowe Ransom's 1932 essay *Land!* is insightful American history, at once splendidly old and remarkably fresh." —•Allan C. Carlson, editor, *The Family in America*"We owe Jay Collier and Jason Peters a debt of gratitude for a splendid edition of *Land!*, John Crowe Ransom's Depression-era treatise on political economy. A wide range of Americans who find modernity at cross-purposes with traditional values hear the reverberations still. *I'll Take My Stand* retains the power to 'wake us up,' and the audacity of the Southern Agrarians' project is evident in Ransom's economic sequel with its call to withdraw from the capitalist economy, to go forward by moving backward." —•Paul V. Murphy, Grand Valley State University"The question Ransom poses in *Land!* is as fundamental as it is perennial: how should people find their place in an economic order productive of the health and flourishing of the land and all its inhabitants? In proposing an agrarian solution, Ransom invites a rethinking of the bases of a sound and resilient culture. Far from being solely of historical interest, this text from the margins of mainstream economic thinking offers a fresh opportunity to reimagine the forms of our life together." —•Norman Wirzba, Duke University Divinity School"John Crowe Ransom's *Land!*, an idiosyncratic view of American economics in the early twentieth century, which has been intelligently edited by Jason Peters, adds a rich and considerable dimension to Agrarianism. Mr. Ransom's highly original argument unfolds in beautifully written prose as he presents the various forms of modern economic practices ranging from capitalism in Britain and the United States to socialism in Europe. Serious students of Ransom's work will want to read this engaging and thought-provoking book." —•George Core, retired editor of *The Sewanee Review*

John Crowe Ransom (1888–1974) was an American poet and critic whose book *The New Criticism* (1941) provided the name of the influential mid-twentieth-century school of criticism. He taught English at Vanderbilt University and Kenyon College where he founded and edited the literary magazine *The Kenyon Review*. He published numerous volumes of poetry, including

Selected Poems (1945, 1969), which won a National Book Award. Jason Peters is professor of English and the Dorothy J. Parkander Chair in Literature at Augustana College.

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