**Southern Agrarians**

The Southern Agrarians were twelve writers from the American South who advocated a return to an agrarian-based economy throughout the 1920s and 30s. In their 1930 collection of essays *I’ll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*, John Crowe Ransom (1888-1974), Robert Penn Warren (1905-1989) and others attacked the system of modern industrial capitalism and its effect on the traditional way of Southern life. The Agrarians argued that large-scale industrial labor was alienating and resulted in the unequal distribution of wealth, yet they remained opposed to communism. Critics accused the movement of rendering nostalgic the antebellum plantation economy and several members later repudiated the writings. The essays nonetheless provide a valuable record of the country’s fraught social and economic terrain seventy years after the Civil War. The Agrarians were affiliated with Vanderbilt University where a number of them also belonged to a writing community that published the influential literary magazine *The Fugitive* between 1922 and 1925. The aim of the Fugitives, borrowing their name from the magazine, was to make poetry ‘as natural and reasonable an act as conversation on the front porch’ (Davidson 8), a goal that made them forerunners of American social realism and fitting advocates for the simplicity of the agrarian lifestyle.

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**References and further reading**

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