

John Crowe Ransom: Letters
MSS 773

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Vanderbilt University
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Biographical Note

John Crowe Ransom noted poet, critic, educator and editor was born April 30, 1888 in Pulaski, Tennessee. He graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1909, was a Rhodes Scholar at Christ Church, Oxford, 1910-1913, and joined the Faculty at Vanderbilt in 1914, where he taught English until 1937. While at Vanderbilt, Ransom was a major figure in both the Fugitive and Agrarian groups. He published in the *Fugitive* magazine (1922-1925) and contributed the introduction "A Statement of Principles" and the initial essay "Reconstructed but Unregenerate" for *I'll Take My Stand* which was published in 1930. In 1937 Ransom accepted a position at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio as Carnegie Professor of Poetry. While at Kenyon he founded and edited an important literary quarterly, *The Kenyon Review* (1939-1959). His works of poetry include *Poems About God* (1919), *Chills and Fever* (1924), *Two Gentlemen in Bonds* (1927) and *Selected Poems* (1945, 1963, 1969). Among the many honors and awards he received were the Bollingen Award in 1951 and the National Book Award for poetry in 1963. There are a number of books written about him and his poetry including Thomas Daniel Young's biography *Gentleman in a Dustcoat* (1976) He died in 1974 at the age of eighty six.

Scope and Content Note

This is a collection of 14 pieces of correspondence ranging from 1927 to 1957 that represents Ransom's correspondence with various publishers and editors with whom he worked over the course of his career. Many of the letters are written while he was editor of *The Kenyon Review*, a journal which he co-founded, from 1939-1959. The 8 letters from 1950 -1956 to World Publishing Company relate to the publication of a reader titled *Kenyon Critics*.

These letters reflect his interest and dedication in the poetry world at large, and specifically his work to advance the work of his fellow Fugitive poets.

The letters are arranged chronologically in three categories.

Container List

Editorial Matters

June 8, 1927 – typed letter signed, Ransom to Mrs. Knopf

June 16, 1927 – typed letter signed, Mrs. Knopf to Ransom

The National Book Award for Poetry

December 19, 1953 – typed letter signed, Ransom to National Book Award committee chairman William Cole

December 23, 1953 – typed letter signed, Ransom to William Cole

The Kenyon Review

December 13, 1944 – autograph signed from John Crowe Ransom to Mrs. Stagg

April 8, 1950 – typed letter signed, Ransom to William Targ, editor World Publishing Company

August 25, 1950 – typed letter signed, Ransom to William Targ, editor World Publishing Company

September 4, 1950 – typed letter signed, Ransom to William Targ, editor World Publishing Company

September 9, 1950 – typed letter signed, Ransom to William Targ, editor World Publishing Company

October 18, 1950 – typed letter signed, Ransom to James Putnam, editor World Publishing Company

February 20, 1951 – typed letter signed, Ransom to James Putnam, editor World Publishing Company

September 19, 1951 – typed letter signed, Ransom to James Putnam, editor World Publishing Company

April 20, 1956 – typed letter signed, Ransom to Ben D. Zevin, President World Publishing Company

May 24, [1957] – autograph postcard signed, Ransom to Harold Straus at Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Undated – typed postcard signed with autograph postscript with blurb for Ford's *The Good Soldier*