

2005 Yearby Avenue
Durham, North Carolina
20 March 1944

Mr. W. Robert Wunsch
Black Mountain College
Black Mountain, North Carolina
Dear Mr. Wunsch;

I am writing you in the hope that I may be of use to you at Black Mountain College.

You may remember that in 1942, after the publication of my first book, The Mind's Geography, I received a Guggenheim Fellowship in poetry for the completion of my second, which is now finished, and awaiting publication. Currently, I am working on two other volumes, and also working for a belated A.B. at Duke University. With the help of a 4F draft classification, I have managed to be excused from the physical education requirements, which were directly responsible for an abrupt and rather unfortunate termination to my previous academic career here.

I feel that the nature of my profession fits me for teaching courses in modern poetry, and guiding a course in creative writing. I say "guiding", because the word most accurately describes my concept of how such a course should be managed. I think that in any such course there is a great danger of the instructor imposing his personality on the work of the students, and that this danger is particularly imminent when the instructor himself is a poet. However, I feel so strongly on the matter that you will find me most active in discouraging imitation of my particular manner. I do not believe that such a course is an excuse for the instructor to do nothing, but you will realize that there is a wide gap between the varieties of dictatorship and energetic, tolerant guidance.

As for modern poetry, the presentation given briefly in the Black Mountain catalog has a fair correspondence to my own concept of its proper presentation. I believe that literature generally should be studied with an attempt to relate it to the intellectual and cultural movements with which it is, or was, contemporary.

Remembering my own rather irregular academic career, I should attempt to adjust my teaching as much as possible to the interests and abilities of the individual student.

I can, of course, teach other than modern poetry, if you do not insist that an instructor outside the arts have an M.A. or Ph.D. My personal attitude toward the higher degrees is simply that they are valuable training for people who are interested in research, but since my own interests are rather removed from the usual scholarly activity, I feel no need for spending my time in such training.

I believe that you might be interested in my experience in building construction and maintenance. I have worked in general maintenance for the New Jersey Builders, Inc. (1938), and as a house painter for several employers. In 1943 I was in charge of building and grounds maintenance at C.P.S. #52, Powellsville, Maryland. Besides being competent in supervisory capacities, I am competent as a plumber, metal worker, electrician, and a fair carpenter. At the C.P.S. camp, I was responsible for every detail of maintenance, extending from making and repairing kitchen utensils to raising buildings to renew the foundations.

Prior to receiving my Guggenheim Fellowship, I was employed by the Windbuel Iron and Metal Works, Essex Fells, New Jersey; a small shop where I was engaged in machine operation and maintenance, sheet metal templet, and drill jig making, and general metal work.

Another field in which I have had experience is model making, both mechanical and architectural. I do not know that these abilities would be of service to you, but I mention them in the event that

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you might find them of interest.

And I can also drive a truck.

I must warn you that my abilities are limited by my physical strength. I am willing and able to work hard, but on heavier work I do require a helper.

I believe heartily in the Black Mountain system of allowing students to do as much building and maintenance work as they wish. Experience has taught me that a great many people, even those who work with their hands, are unable to cope with the simple machinery which surrounds our lives.

If you are sufficiently interested in my qualifications, I can arrange to visit Black Mountain over a week end for an interview. I can also offer references, mostly academic.

Sincerely yours,



George Zabriskie

Duke University
DURHAM
NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Duke Station
Durham, North Carolina
March 21, 1944

Dear Mr. Wunsch:

When George Zabriskie told me last night that he is applying to you for a teaching position, I promised him to write you in support of his application. Although I have had no direct contact with Zabriskie in the classroom, I have seen him often and know him well. As you probably know, he is a very able young poet. Knopf brought out his Mind's Geography in 1942, a volume which led to his being awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in poetry in 1942-1943. After a year's absence from college, he returned this year to complete his undergraduate work. He will get his degree in June.

Owing to certain obvious idiosyncrasies, George/would not ^{probably} ~~probably~~ be a successful lecturer. But I believe he would adapt himself well to the type of teaching you encourage at Black Mountain. He has read very widely in several literatures, talks well in small groups, and would be, I believe, a stimulating teacher.

I remember with pleasure my visit to the College as examiner in English three years ago.

Faithfully yours,
William Blackburn
Associate Professor of English

Mr. Robert Wunsch, Rector,
Black Mountain College,
Black Mountain, N. C.