

May 13, 1958

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Dear Edith and Bill,

We had a division meeting and came up with three suggestions for replacement for Howard. Well, actually we had many more -- but three seemed favored.

A poet: William Jay Smith, husband of our alumna Barbara Howes. Lives in Fownal. Is a good poet. Has taught at Williams a bit. Is especially informed about French poetry, but knows other, too. If he came, W. Kaplan would ask to be relieved of Verse Writing and hand it over to him.

A novelist: Ralph Ellison. A Negro. A friend of S. Hyman, and has lectured some and could give a course on the American novel. Is the author of a novel much admired around here -- a very potent, violent novel called THE INVISIBLE MAN. He is living in New York now. Had a Prix de Rome or some thing last year and I guess the year before. We tried to get him once before -- maybe when we appointed W. Carrier -- I don't remember just when.

A critic: John Crowe Ransom. Someone thinks he is retiring from Kenyon this year and might light the idea of Bennington for a little while. Especially if he knew K. Burke was going to be here for the whole year.

Last night I also thought of May Sarton. I did not mention her name to the Division. I admire her novels and some of her poems, and one of my students told me she heard a fine lecture-reading of hers during NRT. I'll submit this name to the boys later, if you think it's a good idea.

There was division of opinion about whether we should have a poet, a novelist, a critic. The poets (or one or two of them) seemed to think we should have a novelist; two non-poets seemed to think we should have a poet. All agreed that either Smith or Ellison would be a pleasant addition to our staff.

P.S. It was not recommended that Ellison be given Prose Writing. We want K. Burke to go through with his plan for that course.

Yours aff

K. J.