



Middlebury

Brett C. Millier
Reginald L. Cook Professor of
American Literature
English Department
millier@middlebury.edu
Axinn Center, 14 Old Chapel Road
Middlebury, VT 05753
802.443.5026
middlebury.edu

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Dear Alumni College Students!

I am delighted to know that you have decided to spend your Labor Day weekend at Alumni College, and in my course on “Reading Modern Poetry.” One of the pleasures of my teaching career has been convincing skeptical undergrads that they actually *can* learn to understand and talk about how poems work. If there are skeptics among you, fear not! We will have fun reading, dissecting, and then reassembling great poems, with an eye to identifying the multi-faceted strategies poets use to make meaning.

Poetry is notoriously theory-resistant, and another advantage of teaching it is that we can all have the text in front of us to examine as we talk about it. So I am not assigning you any specific reading in advance of the course, though I do hope that you will **acquire and bring with you my favorite short and inexpensive anthology, *The Voice That is Great Within Us* (ed. Hayden Carruth) (ISBN: 0553262637)** easily available new or used, ordered online or from your favorite bookstore. I will of course inundate you with handouts as well; no anthology is entirely satisfactory. And you should also feel free to bring a poem that you love or that has always eluded you for us to work on together.

I do intend to offer the opportunity for memorizing and reciting poems, which you can work on while at Bread Loaf or beforehand. There is no better way to see into the life of a poem than to read it 50 or 100 times on the way to memorizing it. This will be optional, of course!

I am thrilled, as we all are, that Alumni College is returning to the mountain this year. I look forward to meeting you, and embarking on our exploration of great poems, which, by the way, don’t mean the same thing to everyone who reads them—or even to you or me, as we grow and change and see the world differently.

See you in September!

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