

BU ENGLISH ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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Letter from the Chair

Dear Friends,

It's been another successful year in the English Department. We say farewell to graduating majors and look forward to welcoming new students excited to read, write, and find meaning in literature. We are happy that so many



of our doctoral students are beginning rewarding career paths, and we wish the best to Professor Aaron Fogel, who is retiring after four decades of teaching modernist poetry, fiction, and classical literature at BU. English professors received mentoring, advising, and teaching awards this year, as well as prestigious national fellowships. English majors continue to win college-wide prizes, and College Magazine ranked BU's English Department #2 in the nation. One shouldn't put too much stock in such rankings, but we do know this: the department continues to be home to leading-edge researchers who are also dedicated teachers, and we are fortunate to have talented and diverse majors who inspire us every day. It has been an honor to serve as Chair over the last five years, and it is my pleasure to pass the baton to my colleague, Rob Chodat. I hope that your year has also been good and that you'll continue to stay in touch through our website (bu.edu/English), Facebook page (facebook.com/bostonuniversityenglish/), and our new Instagram account (@[bu_english](https://www.instagram.com/bu_english)).

Best wishes,
Maurice Lee
Chair and Professor of English

Undergraduate Profile: Daria Lugina



Daria Lugina is a double major in English and Painting and has worked extensively with BU faculty and students as a Designer at the Center for the Humanities, Resident Assistant on the Fenway Campus, Artemis Project Coordinator, and Computer Science Course Assistant. Daria has been honored with the Undergraduate Student Employee of the Year Award for BU and all of Mass, the Adobe Creative Jam First Place & People's Choice Award, several awards from the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program, and an Award from the BU Center for the Humanities. In addition to Daria's outstanding work inside and outside of the classroom, she is a freelance website designer and is fluent in Russian.

What energizes you about the study of literature?

The more I read and the more I write, the more I grow as a thinker and a person. I don't want to suggest that this is something that is unique to the discipline. I think that this is how learning works, but for me the field I want to keep exploring and learning from most deeply is literature. The study of literature, whether English or otherwise, is a magical (and sometimes overwhelming!) experience because there are always new things to read, new voices to meet, and new questions to explore.

Could you describe a scene or moment that reflects your love of literature?

There is a scene in Hayao Miyazaki's *The Wind Rises* where Jiro is talking to his hero, Caroni, in this strange dream space that spans space and time and the barriers between individual minds. I think it's a beautiful illustration of what the experience of reading is like. Perhaps it's a little too idealistic, but idealism is important sometimes, I think. Literature works better if you genuinely believe in its power.

What drew you to BU and the English Major?

I knew going into college that I wanted to paint while also getting an academic degree, so BU's dual degree program seemed like the perfect option. I ended up in the English department in a little bit of a roundabout way, but mostly because I simply could not imagine how I would spend four years in college without taking any literature classes. Having taken a few English classes for my writing requirements, I met so many wonderful people in the department I did not want to leave.

What are some of the challenges you faced at BU?

The most frustrating part of my BU experience has really been just fitting everything I want to do into four years of undergraduate study. There's so much that I wanted to try and to do during my time here. There's always so many interesting classes being offered across the university, and there's always lectures to attend, and so many projects and initiatives that one can get involved in. Doing as much as possible while also leaving myself time to really dedicate myself to projects has definitely been both a balancing act and a learning experience.

What are some of your favorite works and why?

It's too hard to pick an overall favorite, but my two favorite works I read in class would have to be George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. I think both novels share a fascination with both the possibilities and limitations of humanity and are deeply interested in problems of scale and perspective, which makes them such compelling works.

Continued on page 3

What are your plans after graduation?

Eventually the goal is to go to grad school and figure out a way to continue to combine my study of literature and my painting practice beyond the structure of undergraduate study. For now, I am taking a year off to work, prepare applications, and explore career options. On top of that, I will be doing an artist residency at the Thomas Hardy Museum in Dorchester this summer thanks to BU's Ada Draper Award. I am looking forward to a chance to learn more about Hardy and the land he wrote about. This would be a project where my studio practice and my academic work, which are always intellectually supplementing each other anyways, can come together in a really tangible way.

As a senior, do you have any advice for incoming first-year students in the English Major?

I feel a little guilty giving this advice actually, because I know it can cause a lot of anxiety, and it is hard to find free time in college, but I would say, if you can at all manage it, try to keep setting aside time for free reading. To continue to read and explore on your own is the best way to never forget why you are doing this in the first place. There's a weird transition that happens, I think, for many people when they choose to study English because their hobby suddenly becomes their academic work, and I don't think one can actually replace the other. There is space in your life to approach literature and reading from many angles.

Reviving *The Beacon*

BU's literary magazine, *The Beacon*, ran from 1876 to 1952, publishing poetry, fiction, essays, and reviews by BU faculty and students. Among the magazine's contributors in 1916 was the first-year undergraduate Louise Bogan, who went on to become the fourth Poet Laureate of the United States.

This year under the leadership of graduating English major Jonathan Han, *The Beacon* has been revived. Through a collaborative effort of more than a dozen undergraduates, most of them English majors, *The Beacon* published its first (or depending on how one counts, seventy-sixth) issue this May.



When asked about his reasons for reviving *The Beacon*, Han reflected on the “unceremonious end of college writing assignments”—they end up in the recycling. He wants instead that such writing be shared within the BU community, and he hopes that *The Beacon* will serve as a center of literary study and expression at BU. He imagines the magazine being “if not the hearth, the bookshelf beside the hearth, keeping record of those present and past.”

English professor Swen Voekel, who served as faculty advisor to *The Beacon*, attributes the initial success of the enterprise to the “experience, energy, and intelligence” of Han. He also hopes that the magazine will continue to grow under next year's editors, Liz McGrath and Brian Artabane.

The Beacon welcomes contributions from all BU faculty and students (past and present), who can submit their work to thebeaconbu@gmail.com. Printed copies of this year's issue are available in the English Department or online (<https://thebeaconbu.com/>).



Editorial Board of *The Beacon*, 1948

Heading for a Doctorate

Brett Driben is part of the first ever cohort of English BA/MA students at BU. By taking extra coursework, including graduate seminars, they receive both Bachelor's and Master's degrees



in English in four or four-and-a-half years. Brett grew up in Pennsylvania, loved his time in Boston, and in the fall is headed to UCLA's doctoral program in English.

What energizes you about the study of English?

First of all, reading books is fun! The fact that my daily work consists of reading a bunch of texts and then reading people who have thought a lot about those texts is so cool. At the same time, studying literature is a gateway to thinking about facets of the real world such as but not limited to climate change, identity, and the different ways we narrate the world around us.

Could you describe an image or word that reflects your love of literature?

One image that reflects my love of literature is the stacks of books in my room—many of which I haven't read. I mean to read all the books I've bought and borrowed from the library, and I hopefully will eventually, but the speed at which I acquire books exceeds the speed at which I can read them.

What drew you to BU and the English Major?

I was drawn to the BU English department because (like most English majors) I love to read. That and the Physics class I took my Freshman year at BU convinced me that I liked the idea of Physics more than Physics itself. I stayed in the English Department because of the faculty—they're amazing both as people and as thinkers.

What are some of the challenges of your BU and English Major experience?

One challenge was fitting in all the classes I wanted to take! There are so many great courses offered that, through I've taken more classes than required for the major, there are still professors I haven't had a chance to meet and classes I didn't have the chance to take.

What are some of your favorite works and why? What works do you want to read next?

One of my favorite books is *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. I first read it in an intro course required for the English major, and it's stuck with me since then. More recently, I've become really interested in the Queer Underground Comics movement that starts around the end of the 20th century and extends into the 21st century. Reading in that vein, I've been trying to track down and read more works by Howard Cruse, Roberta Gregory, and Robert Kirby.

Any classes or instructors who have made an impact on your life at BU?

I tend to work on nineteenth-century American literature and, in my time at BU, I've gotten to know most of the Americanist faculty in the BU English Department; they're all really smart and extremely funny. That said, the person in the BU English Department who has had the biggest impact on my academic and life trajectory is Anna Henschman, though she studies English, not American, literature, Anna has been an amazing mentor and advisor.

As a senior, do you have any advice for incoming first-year students in the English Major?

Go to office hours! Professors are 1) not scary and 2) really want to talk to you.

Department Drama Company Performs *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*

Most people have seen a Shakespeare play, but for two decades, English graduate students at BU have produced rarely performed English Renaissance drama through their theater company, Willing Suspension Productions. This year, they performed Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, a 1589 comedy of misunderstanding, magic, marriage, and (of course) a happy ending.

Directed by English doctoral students Megan Bowman, Julia Mix Barrington, and Liam Cruz Kelly, all staging, acting, and research associated with the production was done by Boston University graduate and undergraduate students. The play also included theatrical effects, as seen in the image below where one of Friar Bacon's devils (Allison Vanouse) smashes the cryptic Brazen Head (Jon Najarian).



Photo credit RJ Bacon: (left to right) Brazen head (Jon Najarian) and Devil (Allison Vanouse)

Willing Suspension Productions was founded in 1992 with the goal of staging wonderful early modern plays that are usually overshadowed by the popularity of Shakespeare. According to Mix Barrington, "Almost no one else is putting on the plays we do, so the opportunity to be in a production as an undergraduate or graduate student is a very special one. There is also a good deal of scholarly interest in our productions, which are filmed by BU Productions and posted on BU's youtube channel, BUuniverse." Indeed, Willing Suspension's 2011 production of Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* has over 12,000 views.

By producing and performing English Renaissance drama, and by doing the research needed to put on such plays, students advance their knowledge of the period's literature in ways that supplement traditional classroom study. Willing Suspension also provides BU students opportunities to interact with literature in a more casual and hands-on setting. Mix Barrington says, "We think Willing Suspension helps make BU a little smaller and more human for our Suspenders. We also think it helps to bring the English department together in a common project."

More information on Willing Suspension Productions is available at: <http://www.bu.edu/english/affiliations/willing-suspension-productions/>

Robyn Wiegman Gives Sedgwick Lecture

Founded by the BU Faculty Gender and Sexuality Studies Group in 2010, BU's annual Sedgwick Lecture honors the legacy of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a pioneering scholar in gender and sexuality studies who taught at BU in the early 1980s. The Sedgwick Lecture is a major event at BU, bringing together professors, graduate students, and undergraduates from across the university and beyond.

This year's Sedgwick Lecture was given by Robyn Wiegman, Professor of Literature and Women's Studies at Duke University, and a distinguished expert in feminist and queer theory. Wiegman's lecture, titled "Outrage," engaged the audience in a critical discussion of outrage and its political and ethical manifestations. Wiegman asked, "Is outrage a mode of survival? Is it a substitute for agency, or is it where agency now lives? What does outrage do? What intimacies does outrage invite? Is outrage a medium and a message?"

Co-organized by English Professor Takeo Rivera and Senior Lecturer in the CAS Writing Program Sean Desilets, Wiegman's lecture stirred strong responses among attendees, continuing the Sedgwick Lecture's tradition of generating engaged and challenging scholarly conversations. English Professor Erin Murphy also introduced Wiegman with collegial warmth and reminded the audience that "nearly ten years ago, the symposium was held in this same auditorium." According to English Professor and Director of Kilachand Honors College Carrie Preston, Sedgwick lectures "bring together faculty engaged in gender and sexuality studies across the university, foster interdisciplinary collaborations, bring important speakers to campus, and include students in our conversations."

Combining the love of music and literature

A native of Hudson, Ohio, Shannon Draucker majored in English and Music at Dartmouth College before entering the doctoral program in English at BU. Her research and teaching focus on Victorian literature and culture, music and sound, the history of science, and gender, sexuality, and queer studies. Outside of BU, Shannon plays clarinet in the Dudley House Orchestra at Harvard and in various chamber groups around Boston. She successfully defended her dissertation this spring and this fall will start as an Assistant Professor of English at Siena College.

Why did you pursue a PhD in English at BU?

What struck me most when I visited the English Department was that the faculty were not only brilliant and prolific, but also incredibly generous, supportive, and student-oriented. BU offers graduate students so many opportunities to independently design and teach our own classes. I was also especially excited about the Graduate Certificate in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. I knew immediately that BU offered the kind of stimulating and supportive intellectual environment in which I wanted to begin my career.

What energizes you about your research?

The sense of surprise I find at every turn! In my reading and my archival research, I am constantly realizing not only how bizarre the Victorians were, but also how vividly they imagined ways of being in the world that many thought impossible at the time. Though classical music was (and still is) often associated with highbrow and "conservative" ideals, Victorian writers often depicted music-making and listening as subversive acts. In the texts I explore, we see female violinists whose playing makes walls shake and muscles quiver, ghosts who return to haunt the living with their virtuosic singing voices, and musical instruments who can speak, touch, and feel.

Has your relationship to music changed since coming to BU?

My musical life used to feel quite separate from my intellectual life. Practicing clarinet and playing in orchestras used to be an escape or outlet from my academic work. Now, in rehearsals and concerts,

I can't help but think about how the sound is affecting our ear muscles and nerves – or how the Victorians may have written about it!

What energizes you about teaching?

To me, the most exciting moments in class are those in which my students and I are thinking and learning together – putting our heads together to puzzle out a strange literary passage or musical text. BU students bring so many diverse perspectives to the table. In my recent course on "Music, Gender, and Social Change," my students knew so many more musical



genres and songs than I did, and I was constantly returning home with new playlists. This kind of collaborative work, based on shared intellectual excitement, is what I love most about teaching.

How have you overcome challenges while at BU?

My friendships with my fellow graduate students have sustained me throughout my time at BU. Graduate school – and academic life in general – can be isolating, but I've been incredibly lucky to share this experience with a group of wonderful colleagues who will be lifelong friends.

If you could describe your experience as a graduate student in English Literature at BU in three words, what would they be?

Stimulating. Challenging. Inspiring.

Foltz Earns Tenure

Associate Professor Jonathan Foltz specializes in modernist literature and film. We caught up with him this May just after he earned tenure in the English Department.

What are you working on these days?

There's no rest for the weary! I'm currently at work on a number of projects: an article on the ill-starred 1931 film adaptation of *An American Tragedy* by the great and complicated director, Josef von Sternberg (and the subsequent court battle surrounding its release); a piece on the influential literary theorist, I. A. Richards, and his educational work for early public television; and a longer research project on the media history of stupidity and crudeness in modernist and contemporary writing and film. This last project will range from Buster Keaton and Gertrude Stein to Samuel Beckett, Harmony Korine, and slow-motion replays in college football games.



Tell us a bit about your teaching at BU?

What I love most about BU is the chance to meet and talk with students. I'm constantly inspired by the range of thoughtful, creative and interesting people in my classes who are working on music, art, fiction, criticism, poetry, filmmaking, and more. BU really does not get enough credit for the artsiness and eccentricity of its student body! To sit in a room filled with books, talking about *Twin Peaks* or the novels of Virginia Woolf or the films of Maya Deren or Robert Bresson with students discovering these things for the first time is just indescribable—a beautiful, beautiful thing.

Name a couple recent favorite films.

I've been so busy recently with work and a young toddler at home that I haven't had much chance to see movies in the theater. So when I do get a chance, I really savor it. I recently saw the new Robert Pattinson space film, *High Life*, directed by Claire

Denis. It was entrancingly beautiful and disturbing, a truly sublime sci-fi head-trip. I also really enjoyed *Annihilation*, which came out last year, as well as *If Beale Street Could Talk*, a film which is truly gorgeous, even excessively beautiful.

How are you celebrating tenure?

My wife brought home an ample quantity of champagne and a balloon, and we had a lovely evening watching my daughter discover the joy of balloons. As a casualty of the run-up to tenure, my wife and I haven't had a proper vacation in a couple of years. So we are currently nailing-down an indulgent trip to Greece next month. We'll be going to Athens, so I look forward to walking where Plato walked, but I am also excited about the prospect of staring at the ocean with a book in my hand and my head full of clouds.

Good News from English

We are pleased to announce the following prizes awarded to English faculty and students.

National Fellowships

- Prof. Anna Henschman*—American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship
- Prof. Joseph Rezek*—National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship
- Prof. Takeo Rivera*—Warren Center Fellowship

Teaching and Advising Awards

- Prof. Anna Henschman*—Undergraduate Academic Advising Award
- Prof. Takeo Rivera*—Undergraduate Research Opportunity Project Mentor Award
- Prof. Kate Snodgrass*—Dean's Award for Excellence in Graduate Education

PhD Awards

- Jonathan Najarian*—Graduate Teaching Prize
- Christopher Bartlett*—BU Center for the Humanities Award

BU Center for the Humanities Undergraduate Award Winners

- Hannah Dion, Sarah Eagan, Jeanne Coleen Ilano, Catherine Peerson, Catalina Uribe Saravia*

Alumni Corner: Christy Eichlin



Christy Eichlin received her English BA in 2018. She is currently working in Boston for the publishing company, Macmillan Learning, which produces course materials for secondary and higher education.

What has been your biggest challenge since graduating?

Moving to Boston permanently. I come from Southeast Pennsylvania, so it can be difficult to see my family as frequently as before, but I found a sort of family in the lovely people I live and spend time with now. I'll be back in PA soon to greet my soon-to-be-born nephew!

What's your job like?

On a typical day, my duties include managing the data for new projects in the humanities, social sciences, and STEM fields; creating bundles of print and digital products for regional sales representatives to offer professors; and sending files for new eBooks to vendors like Amazon, Chegg, and Google Play Books. I collaborate frequently with my colleagues across all departments in the company, and my work has provided me a holistic vantage point of the publishing process—from conception, to production, to marketing, to distribution.

What sort of intellectual interests are you pursuing these days?

Although I am not attending school (for now), I continue to foster the scholarly interests I developed at BU. I spend much of my time both at home and at work consuming books, usually (re)discovering old detective fiction like *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins and the (VERY short) novels of the Nancy Drew series, or reading contemporary memoirs and other life writing by David Sedaris, Helen Ellis, and Tara Westover. I also continue to pursue my

interests in gender and sexuality studies—with a specific focus on bisexuality—by reading about queer theory and history and engaging with local activists and groups.

Looking back, how do you feel about being an English major?

I feel fortunate to have chosen a discipline I really love, even if the path forward from my undergraduate career is not always clear. I relished the opportunity for creative and critical thinking in every reading and assignment. And with the teaching and encouragement of a few really wonderful individuals among the faculty, staff, and my peers in the English department and CAS, I became a more focused reader, organized writer, and confident speaker. The skills I developed during those courses have helped me to become an effective communicator and invaluable member of my team.

What's your next step?

I would like to work more closely with the Content Standards and Accessibility team at Macmillan Learning, which works incredibly hard to ensure the content that we publish is usable for students of all abilities. I admire their mission and hope to be a part of it.

PhD Placements

The academic job market in the Humanities has been exceptionally tight, and we are proud of our successes this year.

Julia Mix Barrington—English teacher,
Tabor Academy

Pardis Dabashi—Assistant Professor,
University of Nevada, Reno

Shannon Draucker—Assistant Professor,
Siena College

Annael Jonas-Paneth, Post-doctoral Fellow,
Tel Aviv University

Alex Macconochie, Visiting Assistant Professor,
Trinity College

Talia Vestri, Visiting Assistant Professor,
Vassar College

Patrick Whitmarsh, Lecturer,
Harvard University

Three Cheers for Professor Anna Henschman! Winner of an ACLS Fellowship and BU Advising Award

Professor Anna Henschman won two prestigious honors this academic year—an American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Fellowship, and Boston University’s 2019 Faculty Academic Advisor Award.

Henschman’s ACLS Fellowship will support research for her current book project, *Tiny Creatures and the Boundaries of Being in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination*. The book studies writers who explore the evolution of sentience and consciousness by imagining the world as it appears to beings radically different from humans, such as snails or worms. Focusing on scientists, philosophers, and literary authors, including Charles Darwin, Thomas Hardy, George Eliot, Margaret Gatty, and Charles Dickens, Henschman studies how literary techniques challenge models of mind that are hierarchal and human centered.

“I’ve always been interested in how we as human beings are able to get outside the constraints of our perception,” Henschman says, “which includes being very visually-oriented, being a certain size, and forward facing.” During her research, Henschman found that “one of the problems that intrigued me was how Darwinian theories of evolution reshaped the way that nineteenth-century thinkers conceived of perception and *mental* life. It was relatively easy to show anatomical continuity across a bird, a dog and a person. But there was a lot of resistance to thinking about sentience,



perception, emotion and thinking as continuous across beings. And that resistance still exists today.”

Henschman’s idea for *Tiny Creatures* was inspired by *Sea-Side Studies*, a popular work of naturalism by George Eliot’s partner, George Henry Lewes, who became fascinated by a snail displayed in the Britain Museum that after being shipped all the way from Egypt, survived the trip and began to explore its surroundings. Henschman realized that scientists, thinkers, and authors of the period often turned to tiny creatures to think about big questions, and she has followed her curiosity to look at how stones, shells, skin, and stomachs operate in nineteenth-century British literature and culture.

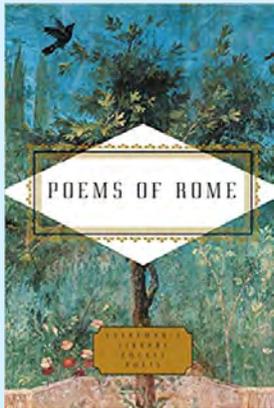
Henschman has also brought her research interests into the classroom. “I have explored the ideas in *Tiny Creatures* with students in courses on “The Boundaries of Life,” “Animals and Literature” and on conceptions of Time,” she says. “Each set of students has shaped my thinking in inspiring ways.” *Continued on page 10*

The feeling is mutual, as highlighted by Henchman's recent Faculty Academic Advising Award, a University-wide prize that honors undergraduate advising. Henchman's advisees and students call her "unimaginably supportive" and "always ready to support and mentor those around her." They appreciate how she "shows that imagination, creativity, and wonder are crucial components of intellectual work," and how she "creates opportunities for collaboration and community-building across disciplines, institutions, and academic hierarchies."

As a teacher, advisor, mentor, and Director of Undergraduate Studies, Henchman has touched the lives of hundreds of BU students and has been especially helpful in guiding them toward internships, honors projects, prizes, and undergraduate research opportunities. Her two awards pay tribute to her remarkable success in combining research excellence and a deep commitment to students.

Nicole Rizzo (EN '18) wrote and produced this newsletter with editorial direction from Maurice Lee.

Faculty Bookshelf



Poems of Rome (Everyman's Library Pocket Poets Series) (April 2018)

Karl Kirchwey, Professor of English

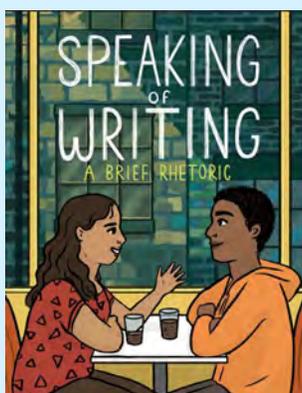
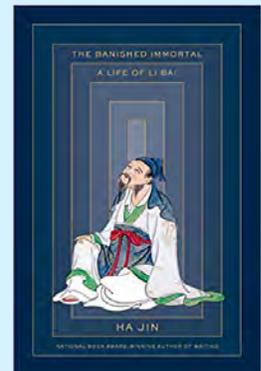
A beautiful hardcover Pocket Poets anthology of poems inspired by the art and architecture of the Eternal City.

Poems of Rome ranges across the centuries and contains the work of poets from many cultures and times, from ancient Rome to contemporary America. Its pages lead the reader from the Roman Forum to the Colosseum, from the Vatican to the Villa Sciarra, from the Pantheon to the Palatine Hill, all seen through the eyes of poets who have been dazzled by these glorious sites for centuries. The poets range from Horace and Ovid to Pasolini and Pavese, and from Byron and Keats and Rilke to James Merrill, Adrienne Rich, Derek Walcott, and Jorie Graham, in a collection of international talent as scintillating as the great city itself.

The Banished Immortal: A Life of Li Bai (Li Po) (January 2019)

Ha Jin, Warren Distinguished Professor of English

In his own time (701–762), Li Bai's poems—shaped by Daoist thought and characterized by their passion, romance, and lust for life—were never given their proper due by the official literary gatekeepers. Nonetheless, his lines rang out on the lips of court entertainers, tavern singers, soldiers, and writers throughout the Tang dynasty, and his deep desire for a higher, more perfect world gave rise to his nickname, the Banished Immortal. Today, Bai's verses are still taught to China's schoolchildren and recited at parties and toasts. They remain an inextricable part of the Chinese language, and the mysterious circumstances of Bai's death have become the stuff of legend.



Speaking of Writing: A Brief Rhetoric (June 2019)

Michael Prince, Associate Professor of English (with Allegra Goodman)

A concise yet comprehensive rhetoric with readings, presenting ample material for in-class discussion and activities.

Speaking of Writing is a graphic guide to college writing. Informed by recent and enduring scholarship in Writing Studies, this brief rhetoric follows four college students from diverse backgrounds as they face the challenges of reading, writing, and critical thinking in first-year writing and across the disciplines. Each chapter engages students in relatable, often humorous scenarios that focus on key challenges: understanding rhetoric, argument, and genre; working collaboratively with peers and tutors; finding and evaluating sources; and planning, drafting and revising diverse kinds of academic writing, presentations.