

THE IRREGULAR LITTONIAN

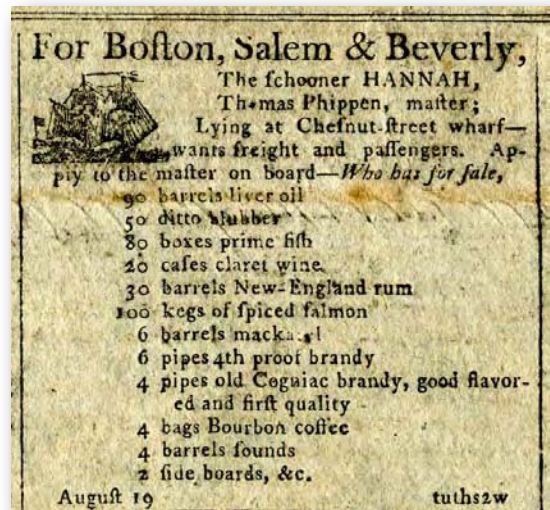
Fall, 2007 - Number 37

Dear Alums & Friends,

Acorns are on the ground, parking lots are thinning, and essays are due; in the rounding of the year it's that magical season again. It's time for precepting.

Way back when the college first opened, advising was called preceptorial teaching; every student was expected to meet with her or his faculty preceptor for extra-curricular educational fun. Preceptors and groups of 6 to 8 preceptees might head to Philadelphia to visit the museums, have a cookout, or discuss a book that they were all reading. The idea was great when the preceptee to preceptor ratio was good; but the experiment was quickly abandoned. It was over by 1976 (the first stats I can locate), when the Literature & Language program had 91 majors and 15 faculty (remember, this is when LITT and LANG were united). Things are very different today, with 359 majors in LITT alone (up from 214 in 2000), and 9 LITT faculty.

Precepting today generally means providing students with clear and solid advice about next semester's courses. But we still manage time for discussions about books, or literary life, or whatever might come after college. The program is proud of our offerings for the Spring 2008. We offer two sections of Senior semi-



nar per term now. Ken Tompkins will be focusing on monsters & monstrosities and Debby Gussman will be focusing on intertextuality. Here is a quotation that Debby is using to introduce the course.

Let us agree on this: that we live our lives through texts. These may be read, or chanted, or experienced electronically, or come to us, like the murmurings of our mothers, telling us of what conventions demand. Whatever their form or medium, these stories are what have formed us all, they are what we must use to make our new fictions . . . Out of old tales, we must make new lives. – Carolyn Heilbrun, *Hamlet's Mother and Other Women* (1990)

We are offering the usual core courses, *LitMeth* and *Intro to LITT Research* (2 sections and 3 sections), plus a range of other good stuff. Here are some highlights.

- ☒ *British Literature II* – Lisa Honaker
- ☒ *American Literature II* – Kristin Jacobson
- ☒ *Children's Literature* – Marion Hussong
- ☒ *Culture Shock in Travel Writing* – Judy Copeland
- ☒ *The Search for the Grail* – Ken Tompkins
- ☒ *Video Game Narrative Studies* – Brian Kim Stefans
- ☒ *Popular Epic Fantasy & Post Modernist Theories* – Lydia Fecteau
- ☒ *English Language & Grammar* (the old HELGA course) – Tom Kinsella
- ☒ *The Greek Tragedians* – Dave Roessel
- ☒ *Milton* – Tom Kinsella
- ☒ *Contemporary African-American Novel* – Linda Nelson
- ☒ *Greek Literature in Context* – Fred Mench
- ☒ *Shakespeare* – Ken Tompkins
- ☒ *Literature after the Holocaust* – Marion Hussong
- ☒ *Creative Writing Workshop* – Nathan Long
- ☒ *Experimental Writing Workshop* – Brian Kim Stefans
- ☒ *Advanced Poetry Writing Workshop* – Stephen Dunn & Peter Murphy

A full listing (for the insatiably curious) is available here:

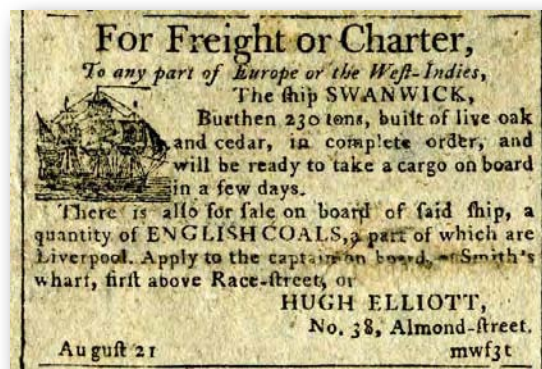
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Even if you graduated recently, you may not recognize every name on the list above. As the number of Literature majors has grown, so has the number of faculty. Back in 2000 we had 5 members. Now we have nine full-time faculty and several adjuncts and associates. Mary Steinacker and Lydia Fecteau are two of

our valued adjunct colleagues. Mary has been teaching *Introduction to ESL* for several semesters; many of you will remember her. Lydia has been teaching for us for more than a decade and is still rolling out new courses such as *Popular Epic Fantasy*. A balanced curriculum could not be offered without our adjuncts and program associates. GT Lenard is off the list only because she is serving as Director of the Freshman Year experience. She'll be back teaching for us in Fall 2008. Linda Nelson is once again teaching her popular course on the contemporary African-American novel. Judy Copeland is offering a course on the much neglected genre of travel literature, and David Roessel is offering a range of courses in classical literature and beyond that rival the offerings of Fred Mench. Fred, as we have reported, is in his final year before retirement. In January we will welcome Katherine Panagakos, who succeeds Fred as Stockton's Latin classicist.



Three full-time literature faculty are new this year (or somewhat new). Adalaine Holton arrived in September after a two year post-doctoral stint at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. She received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Cruz and specializes in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature, especially African American literatures. Marion Hussong has been a member of the Stockton community for seven years. You may remember her as a Professor in the Education program. She recently transferred to Literature. We are very pleased by this; her knowledge of European and world literature is a welcome addition to the program. Brian Kim Stefans, who taught last year as a one-year replacement for Scott Rettberg, has been hired as our Professor of New Media Studies. He has already begun to stir new interest in electronic media within the program.





Kristin Jacobson & Lisa Honaker listen to Tom Kinsella blab on about something at the June 2007 Summer Litt retreat.

Mustard or Ketchup

As a special introduction to our newest LITT faculty members (Adalaine Holton, Marion Hussong, and Brian Stefans), the current editor of *The Irregular Littonian* has devised a series of revealing questions. Here they are:

- 1) Mustard or Ketchup?
- 2) When did you get home from the prom?
- 3) Name two places you do not want to visit?
- 4) What book have you read more times than any other book?

Believing that answers reveal much, but also that too much should never be revealed, we present the answers without attribution.

- As the Germans say, Es ist mir scheiss egal.
- Mustard
- Definitely mustard. I don't understand ketchup. In Maryland we put malt vinegar on our french fries, not ketchup.

- We did not have proms in Austria, where I grew up, but we did have a formal ball. To Austrians, the Cindarellian notion that one turns into a pumpkin if not home by midnight is absurd. In fact, to the Viennese, anyone dull enough to call it quits by midnight would deserve to be turned into a rutabaga or something equally bland. It was acceptable at my high school to dance all night for a special ball and then show up for school in your ball gown. That's what I did, and I'm glad!
- Too early.
- I didn't go to my own prom—I went to the one at the rival high school. I think I was home by 1:00 am. (I had overprotective parents.)
- A slave ship on the Middle Passage. Eastern State Penitentiary during the 19th century.
- The Azkhaban Prison. Tchernobyl.
- The Arctic after it melts. My mother's funeral.
- The *Selected Poems of Ezra Pound* (what else?)
- I am a chronic re-re-re-reader. But I cannot pin one down with certainty.
- Probably Harriet Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* or *Kindred* by Octavia Butler.



News from the Faculty

Debby Gussman writes

This past year has been busy and rewarding for me. During the spring, I helped to organize the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Catharine Maria Sedgwick Society in Stockbridge, MA.

<http://www.salemstate.edu/imc/sedgwick/prog.html>

It was exciting to reconnect with friends and colleagues who have been hard at work for many years bringing greater scholarly attention to this important American writer, and to meet younger scholars, including graduate and undergraduate students, who are studying and doing innovative research on Sedgwick. I was just elected to a second term as Vice-President for Membership and Finance of the Catharine Maria Sedgwick Society, and I'm looking forward to working on a variety of activities with that group. When I can find the time for research, I'm still working on a Sedgwick project, and have started a new project on Susan Warner, author of the 19th-century best-seller, *The Wide, Wide World*. On the teaching front, I'm enjoying working with Lisa Honaker on the Ordinary Lives of Engagement project, and incorporating service learning into my *Rhetoric and Composition* courses. My students' responses to becoming more active in the community have been overwhelmingly positive, and I hope to create additional opportunities for service learning in some of my LITT courses in the future.

When I'm not working, I'm happy to be at home just hanging out with my family, and watching *The Office*, *The Simpsons*, *30 Rock*, and reruns of *Arrested Development*.

Adalaine Holton writes

Over the summer, I visited Greece with my extended family and traveled to New York to research the playwright Alice Childress at the Schomburg Center. I am truly enjoying my first semester at Stockton, especially my course on Black Radicalism, which closely relates to my current book project *The Practices of Black Radical Print*. I am also an avid knitter, and am currently knitting a very compli-

cated nineteenth-century style bed jacket, which I will proudly wear to class if and when I complete it.

Lisa Honaker writes

After a summer teaching *British Romantics* and *Detective Fiction* online, I made some decent progress on my ever-present to-do list. I finished a review of a scholarly book on film adaptations of Henry James novels for the journal *English Literature in Transition*. I collaborated with Deb Gussman, Emari DiGiorgio, Marcello Spinella, Tara Fayter, and Mike Hozik on a grant proposal for the Political Engagement Project. The grant, called Ordinary Lives of Engagement, brings in speakers who have made a difference in their communities and ties service-learning projects in three writing classes to the issues these speakers have championed. The grant not only got proposed, it got funded (!) and is currently underway during this fall.

On the home front, I also helped my husband remodel our basement and literally threw away a ton of household stuff. I grew some tasty tomatoes, but found the yield a little low on the Big Boys and Early Girls. Through my husband's mistaken purchase, though, I thoroughly enjoyed an abundance of cherry tomatoes, heretofore no favorite. For fun, I rode roller coasters with my sons and went to the beach in New Jersey and North Carolina. I am improving my dreadful pool game on a new used pool table. I read fewer novels than I would have liked but finished the new Harry Potter novel shortly after its release. I also read Richard Russo's *Empire Falls*, which I recommend.

I am doing a lot of new reading for my *Contemporary British Fiction* course, which makes me very happy. I am continuing to direct the Political Engagement Project and have been named a Carnegie Scholar for 2008-2009 for my participation. (What this means is working trips to Palo Alto, California and Snowbird, Utah, which sound like fun.) I have plans to attend conferences and present papers on the Ordinary Lives project with Deb Gussman and Emari DiGiorgio this winter and spring. I am also planning to make my way through every season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel: The Series*, and *Veronica Mars* as part of my preparation for an article on serial fiction and TV. I am eagerly anticipating Joss Whedon's

return to TV with the series *Dollhouse*, though that is many months away. All in all, my life is good. I hope yours is, too.

Marion Hussong writes

I am continuing my work on Austrian writers who resisted the Nazi regime. At the moment, I am engaged in two related projects: the translation of the short stories of Franz Kain, and a monograph on Kain's life and relevance to post-war Austrian literary history. Franz Kain was persecuted during the Third Reich as a political opponent to Nazi rule in Austria. He was also one of the first authors who openly discussed the participation of ordinary Austrian citizens in the atrocities of that regime. His work is not yet available in English. A translation of his short stories is long overdue. My research on this fascinating author, who dared to bear witness at a time when Austrians tried to bury their past, will bring some new perspectives on post-Holocaust literature to my students.

Kristin Jacobson writes

This fall I have been busy with home renovations: I'm finishing the last set of revisions on an article about the ABC reality show *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* and the Beecher sisters' nineteenth-century domestic manual *The American Woman's Home*. The essay will appear in the journal *Legacy* in 2008. (Revising an essay is a lot like renovating a home!)

In addition to keeping up with my domestic duties, I also presented a series of lectures this fall on American culture at Medford Leas, a continuing care retirement community. Nearly 100 residents and local folks from the Medford, NJ area signed up for the series. Like our Stockton students, they lead busy lives and so we had regular attendance of about 60 or so participants at each lecture. I found the participant discussion that followed each hour lecture invigorating. I enjoyed the challenge of making popular culture, the topic of many of the lectures, relevant to the retirees. I especially enjoyed having dinner with several participants after each lecture. For example, through this outreach project I met one of the first female lawyers in New Jersey and conversed with folks who were conscientious objectors during World War II. You can listen to the lectures and discussion and read more information about the course at the following link:

<http://titania.stockton.edu/medfordleas/>

The participants' commitment to lifelong learning is something that we can all aspire to emulate.

I also want to highlight a couple of projects my fall GAH students in *Perspectives on Women* are working on. One project they put together is already up on the web: it is a series of interviews with Stockton students about their definitions of feminism:

<http://titania.stockton.edu/womensstudies/student-podcasts/>

And, the other project is still in the works and will be complete by the end of the term. The students are also conducting interviews with New Jersey women:

<http://titania.stockton.edu/womensstudies/nj-womens-voices/>

Please check out their work when you get a chance and sample a few local perspectives on women.

Tom Kinsella writes

I am working on an article about the book buying habits of John Quincy Adams during his first diplomatic post as an adult. JQA served as American Minister to the Netherlands from 1794-1797, residing in The Hague. In the swirl of French revolutionary forces that controlled much of Europe during that time, The Hague maintained its reputation as a first class place to buy books. JQA, on his own for the first time, and pulling down a decent salary, spent an inordinate amount of his income on new and used books. He kept a daily journal that chronicles both purchases and books that he is reading. I'm currently chasing down and completing some of the same reading so that I can better understand his perspectives. JQA dislikes Thomas Paine very much, so I am reading Paine's *The Age of Reason* (1794), a tract with little good to say about organized religion; I am also reading Andrew Fuller's *Gospel Its Own Witness* (1799), a reply to Paine. Finally, I'm digging into JQA's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (1810) as well. Fun.

Nathan Long writes

This summer I worked on revising a collection of short short stories into what I hope will be my second chapbook (another word for very small book). In the process, I found an interested article against the short short genre in *Story South*, an on line journal, and wrote a rebuttal essay to the editor. Surprisingly, he liked it and agreed to print it (<http://www.storysouth.com/>).

This fall I've been working on an essay about my years living on a commune in central Tennessee for the print journal *Tin House*. I've been going through old personal journals to find interesting details, thankful I had plenty of time then to record my daily life. Somehow, the process reminds me of the compost bin I've installed in the back yard of my garden – the constant throwing in of scraps which hopefully yields, eventually, something richer and usable.

Brian Kim Stefans writes

Much of my past year has been spent getting the New Media Studies Track in order and working on several projects with students, including *The Fhiz* (<http://thefhiz.com>), a cultural blog that will have lots of regular columns by students on stuff they like – video games, movies, local events, music, general opinion – which will launch in late November. *Richard Stockton Overdrive*, a dvd anthology of films, writing, music, games, etc., by students, will also appear next year. The NMS track itself is looking really good; I've added a class called *Video Game Narrative Studies* which everyone's quite excited about, and added more programming elements to the existing classes, so they will now work on more complex forms of digital narrativity as well as be trained in how to make social networking sites and 3D environments. We'll also be reading more print literature – Borges, Calvino and the like.

Though I haven't been writing much lately, a number of things of mine have appeared in print over the past year: *Blurred Vision*, a journal of experimental comix, published a collaboration I did with cartoonist Gary Sullivan called "Pasha Noise"; *Viz. Inter-arts* from San Francisco published a collaboration I did with writer Kevin Killian – a long, campy Albee-esque satire called "The American Objectivists"; *Model Homes* published four poems of mine; *President's Choice*, an-

other small magazine, published my short play "Being John Malkovich (or, Gandhi Groans)," a Jarry-esque political satire; *McSweeney's*, a prominent journal of fiction from New York, published my short appreciation of Donald Barthelme in their latest issue; the *Noulipian Analects*, an elegant book publication that collected the writings of the Noulipo conference I attended at Cal Arts three years ago, has just appeared; *The Gig*, a small but eminent magazine based in Toronto and Cambridge (UK), is including several of my poems in their final issue; lastly, a journal out of Providence called *Combo* is publishing my long poem "The Further Adventures of Oedipus Mess in the Countess Second's Flat." Most of these can be ordered online if you are interested.

Ken Tompkins writes

I once saw Igor Stravinsky conduct one of his works and before he took the podium he remarked to the audience that he understood most of them had said – before they bought their tickets – "Let's go see Stravinsky before he dies!" Given that I have taught almost all of the alums reading this and that I have been teaching 42 years and that I am just a bit less than four score in age, I suspect many of my students think of me the way that Stravinsky thought his audience did.

I recently took six students to Fairleigh Dickinson to the annual Shakespeare conference the theme of which was "Time and Its Passing." It was a wonderful fall day and we all enjoyed the experience.

My Senior Seminar – as Prof. Kinsella mentioned above – will be on Monsters and Monstrosities this Spring. Monsters are a hot topic in Medieval Studies these days so it is time that I examined the scholarship on the topic. Seniors in the class will work on the theory applied to the Medieval period and then will apply that theory to more modern works.

I am as heavily immersed in technology as I always was. I still require papers to be digital, I correct them on a tablet computer, I'm an obsessive emailer and insist that any new program prove itself in the classroom.

My private technological passions have to do with 3D modeling especially landscapes.



The Wrapup

In my two sections of Research this fall we've been focusing on early Irish literature. The stories are strange to the twenty-first century reader, with an unfamiliar set of conventions, and at times unfamiliar messages. We've been talking quite a bit about oral literature, the jump to a semi-literature culture, and cultural authorship. Lately, the Literature program has been cooking up some community, if not cultural, authorship of its own. You can read about the effort of the "LITT by Phone Contest," and view the results, here:

<http://titania.stockton.edu/literature/litt-by-phone/>

Finally, we remind you that you can find all our e-mails on the Stockton webpage. We'd love to hear from you. You might also note the new address of our program webpages:

<http://titania.stockton.edu/littprogram/>

We have also begun an electronic archive of program documents. You can see what we're up to here:

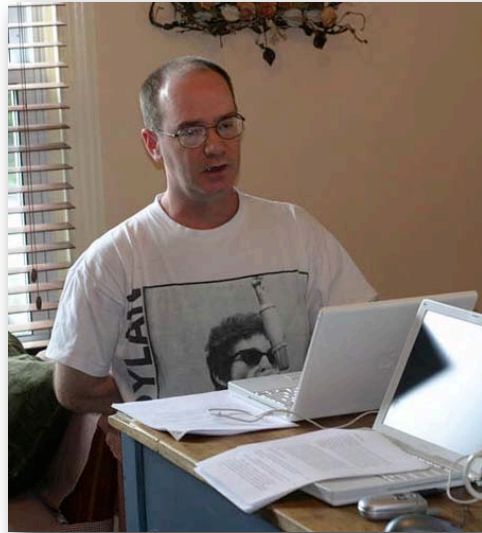
<http://titania.stockton.edu/littarchive/>.

We hope that you have had a pleasant fall, and that the winter will be kind as well. We'll be in contact again next spring.

For the Literature Program,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas E. Kinsella". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a dark ink.

Tom Kinsella



Kinsella blabbing on
about something at the June 2007 Summer Litt retreat



This endpiece and the printer's device on the fifth page are from *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of Mr. Thomas Grigg, B.D.*, delivered by Symon Patrick. London: Printed by Robert White, for Francis Tyton, at the Sign of the three Daggers in Fleet-street, 1670. The shipping advertisements were taken from an issue of the *Philadelphia Gazette & Universal Daily Advertiser*, August 25th, 1797. The celtic printer's device on the second-last page is from *The Bog of Stars*, by Standish O'Grady, London, 1893.