



English Department Newsletter

Wake Forest University

Journey of Faith Continues

By Jennifer Thompson ('05)

For Dr. Andrew Ettin, a Jewish man from New Jersey transplanted into the Bible Belt of the South, this past summer marked the culmination of a journey that began almost 20 years ago. It was then that Ettin became a professor at Wake Forest University, an event which would spur him to achieve one of the greatest accomplishments of both his spiritual and his professional life: being ordained as a rabbi of the Jewish faith.

Surrounded by the deeply religious culture of the South, Ettin felt the need and the desire to establish a religious identity of his own. "I found, as I began to explore the religious traditions, that not only was it interesting to me, but that I was employing many of the skills that I had... I'm trained to



Andrew Ettin, Professor of English and Rabbi

analyze classic texts, including texts in other languages, to appreciate their meaning and to explore their relevance to modern culture," says Ettin. But Ettin soon found that his interest in the Jewish faith went beyond just academic study. "I was

also interested in developing my understanding of the faith in order to transmit it to others. I could do that to some degree as a scholar. But I am a teacher. A teacher aims to provoke as well as to teach," says Ettin. It was that teacher's spirit that ultimately led Ettin to life as a rabbi.

Ettin first established a relationship with Temple Emmanuel in Winston-Salem as a substitute rabbi for services. "I really enjoyed doing that. But I wanted a place where I could develop that role," says Ettin. He found such a place in nearby Salisbury, N.C., where a small Jewish community was in need of a leader. So in without much time to prepare, Ettin found himself at the helm of a congregation, (see page 5)

Literary Magazines Make Fresh Start

Every semester some of the brightest minds on the Wake Forest campus submit their creative works of literature, art, photography and their intellectual academic essays for publication to be appreciated by their peers. The problem is that most students aren't even aware

that Wake Forest has a literary publication, let alone two. But according to Natalie Bonomo and Kezia McKeague (the editors of *3 to 4 Ounces* and *The Philomathesian*, respectively), that is all about to change. This semester has been one of revival and rededication for

the campus literary community, each magazine making great strides towards a more stable and successful future.

3 to 4 Ounces made a strong showing on campus this fall with more advertising and the addition of specialized workshops for writing, painting, (see page 5)

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ROTFLMAO

By Geoffrey Barton ('05)



Senior English major Geoffrey Barton is the director of the campus comedy troupe, The Lilting Banshees, and plans to study architecture in graduate school.

The average vocabulary of a 14-year old has plummeted from about 25,000 words 50 years ago to only 10,000 words today. Blame modern communication?



Stop playing outdated video games on your Atari, all you Gen X hipsters; there's a new class of cool kids in town. The hipsters of today express themselves not with outlandish hairstyles or angry music, but with a new kind of speech. The exponential rise in technology words has given us a fashionable, meaningless cryptology that poses a threat to real words that once had real meaning. Anyone who has signed on to AOL Instant Messenger knows that LOL (laugh out loud) has replaced actual laughter and an L (laugh) is just as meaningful as a real emotion.

Or is it? The information age has left us each with laptops, camera phones, and a different outlook on the world in which we live and the language that we use.

Technology has been introducing words into pop culture ever since the first murmurs of an Internet at MIT 40 years ago, but the prevalence of gadgets has reached an all time high, resulting in a new wave of techno-speak. Cyber-slang—or geek-speak—has somehow managed to gain supremacy despite its connotation with nerdy stereotypes perpetuated by Hollywood in the 1984 classic, "Revenge of the Nerds."

Somewhere along the line, it became cool to stare endlessly at a computer screen "chatting" with "buddies." So why be a techie if you can't talk like one? Most often, the new jargon takes the form of acronyms such as j/k (just kidding), brb (be right back), or the nonsensical "rotflmao" (rolling on the floor laughing my ass off). Apparently, AOL has yet to come up with a suitable replacement for laughter or a font for sarcasm. Electronic communication is largely to blame for this new language of acronyms. It saves letters to type out a couple of words rather than a longer phrase. But online slang dictionaries, such as www.netlingo.com have sprung up, indicating that some people are still a little clueless when it comes to understanding electronic jargon.

And the jargon might not be worthy of scrutiny if it were contained within the realm of electronic communication, but, sadly, that may not be the case. Many of these new words have been appropriated in daily conversations to the extent that it has caused us to forget words that we used to know.

Sound far-fetched? Well, according to Oberlin professor, David Orr, the average vocabulary of a 14-year old has plummeted from about 25,000 words 50 years ago to only 10,000 words today. And what, you may ask, is to blame? One easy target is modern communication. The speed at which communication now takes place forces us to use non-specified word choices. Our sentences are duller, and often loaded with broad clichés. The handwritten letter, now only associated with the business world, used to allow the sender to process thoughts before executing them in writing.

But those days are over. With IM and email comprising the bulk of our interpersonal interactions, the new generation has less time to think before solidifying thoughts into words. The result is a few words that can mean virtually anything ("cool!") and meaningless words that we use as space fillers: "like, you know."

But this all points to a much larger problem. We have begun to treat impersonal entities like cell phone reception "bars" and the "@" symbol as if they are our best friends. It seems that the ascendancy of tech-speech—and technology in general—does not only mean death to robust language, but to interpersonal relationship skills as well.

For example, many have even begun turning to technology to avoid a bad date. A service offered by Cingular Wireless called "Escape-a-Date" will rescue you (at a cost, of course) from being held hostage by a terrible rendezvous. With this service, Cingular will automatically call your cell phone and prompt you through a series of statements to get out of a date in progress. Since when did we begin viewing dates as possible train wrecks instead of possibilities to fall in love?

As more and more hipsters use cell phones, IM and email, communication has become increasingly impersonal. Without it, though, hipsters and old folks might actually be forced to talk with one another. Tech speak has become a fashionable cryptology which separates hot from not, young from old, and hip from lame. But at what cost? We are losing sight of anything that is not immediate, at the expense of the English language and our ability to relate to others. And that's nothing to LOL about.

Wayne King Named to Who's Who of American Teachers

By Jennifer Thompson ('05)

To his students, he is an unmistakable icon. To his department, he is an irreplaceable asset. And now a renowned honorary publication has taken notice of his reputation. Wayne King is officially one of the Who's Who Among America's Teachers. King is no stranger to honorary awards. In addition to his 1968 Pulitzer Prize, he has already been recognized as a Who's Who in a number of other categories in the past. But he still finds himself humbled by this most recent accolade. "I must admit I was pleased by the Teachers listing - I was nominated by a former student who graduated several years ago."

That student was Lamaya Covington, a graduate of the class of 2001. King describes her as "a great lady who is accomplished, young, and gifted." Covington, now the assistant director of multicultural affairs at Wake Forest, has plenty of kind words for her former teacher as well. "He possesses all of the quali-

ties of great teachers: he's intelligent, experienced and funny. Anyone who takes a class with him learns from his expansive journalistic expertise, and, if they're like me, they can't help but remember all the crazy stories about people he's interviewed."

King's under-the-breath humor and conversational tone make his classes memorable. As one former student describes it, "Having class with Wayne is like striking up a conversation with the guy on the stool beside you at the bar. He tells stories, and you listen. You leave thinking that you were just entertained for an hour or so, but as it turns out, you learned more from that one conversation than you ever would have suspected."

It is that sort of unique and unforgettable teaching style which touches each of King's students, and which is now rightfully recognized in a national publication.

"Having a class with Wayne King is like striking up a conversation with the guy on the stool beside you at the bar."

—a former student of
Professor King

Rallying Support for the Edwin G. Wilson Chair in English Literature

By Emily Brewer ('98) and Catherine Frier Korzen ('82)

Surely the walls in Tribble C-216 will long recall the poetry of the British Romantics as vivified by Provost Emeritus and beloved Professor of English Ed Wilson. Certainly there can be no greater tribute to a professor than a gift of such a legacy.

Ed Wilson first came to Wake Forest as an undergraduate on the Old Campus in the town of Wake Forest, NC. Besides serving in the Navy during WWII and pursuing doctoral study at Harvard, Dr. Wilson has spent his entire adult life at Wake Forest, influencing and inspiring countless students and colleagues with his passion for the British Romantics, his devotion to and belief in the ideals of the university and his contribution to campus and the Winston-Salem community.

To honor Dr. Ed Wilson and his monumental gifts to Wake Forest, the university is

collecting financial gifts for the Edwin G. Wilson Chair in English Literature. This special chair will fund a distinguished senior scholar in any field of English Literature.

For more information about how to honor Ed Wilson and to support the English Department in the Campaign for Wake Forest, contact:

Office of University Advancement
P.O. Box 7227 Reynolda Station
Winston-Salem, NC 27109-7227

or call (336) 758-5383. If you would like to make a donation, please send checks made payable to The Edwin G. Wilson Chair in English Literature Fund to the address above.



Dr. Ed Wilson has devoted years of service to the Wake Forest community. As a gesture of our deep gratitude for his dedication to students, faculty, and the pursuit of higher learning, the university is proud to establish the Edwin G. Wilson Chair in English Literature.



Meet the New English Professors of 2004-05

Bonnie Carr - PhD and MA from Washington University, BA from Hamilton College. Her field is in American literature, and her dissertation explores the relationship between celebrity and authorship in the mid-19th century. Dr. Carr teaches the Writing Seminar and Introduction to American Literature.

William Hacker - PhD and MA from Cornell University, BA from Brown University. His specialization is in the literature of the Romantics. Dr. Hacker teaches the Writing Seminar and Introduction to British Literature.

Marlon Kuzmick - PhD from Cornell University, MA in English from Cornell University, MA in Critical Theory from the University of Sussex, BA from the University of British Columbia. His field is British literature, literary theory and Victorian literature. Mr. Kuzmick teaches the Writing Seminar and Introduction to American Literature.

Andrew Leiter - PhD and MA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, BA from the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. His field is twentieth-century American literature with a concentration in African-American and Southern writers. Dr. Leiter teaches the Writing Seminar and Introduction to American Literature.

Michael Malouf - PhD, M Phil, and MA from Columbia University, MA from North Carolina State University, BA from New York University. His specialty is in Irish literature, and his dissertation explores the literary and cultural history linking Ireland and the Anglophone Caribbean. Dr. Malouf teaches the Writing Seminar and Introduction to British Literature.

Jason Powell - D Phil and M St in Research Methods from University College at Oxford University, BA from Trinity University, San Antonio. His specialty is in literature of the English Renaissance, and his dissertation focused on the letters and original prose of Thomas Wyatt. Dr. Powell teaches the Writing Seminar and Introduction to British Literature.

Kersti Powell - D Phil and M St from the University of Oxford, MA from the University of Tartu, BA from the University of Tallinn. Her primary field is in Irish literature and has recently completed a book entitled *Irish Fiction: An Introduction* designed to provide American students with a background in historical, theoretical, and generic approaches to Irish fiction. Dr. Powell teaches the Writing Seminar and Introduction to British Literature.

Stéphane Robolin – MA and completing PhD from Duke University, BA is from Tulane University. His primary fields are postcolonial African literature and African American literature. Mr. Robolin teaches the Writing Seminar and Introduction to British Literature.

Chad Trevitte - PhD and his MA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, BA from Wake Forest University. His field is twentieth-century American Literature. Dr. Trevitte teaches the Writing Seminar and Introduction to American Literature.

Jon Whitman is visiting us this fall from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Professor Whitman earned his PhD and his AM from Harvard University, his BPhil from Oxford University, and his BA from Columbia University. Most recently, he has served as the Director of the Center for Literary Studies at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he has also been a Senior Lecturer since 1986. His field is Medieval literature, and at present he is at work on a volume provisionally entitled *Time, History, Romance: Studies in Arthurian Literature*. Dr. Whitman taught The Legend of Arthur and Early English Imagination.



*To current and former Majors.
To old and new friends: "Do let
us know what significant events
have taken place in your life."*

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*We also welcome comments and
suggestions for the newsletter.
Don't forget to include your full
name and graduation year!*

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one which he is still close with today. Ettin achieved his official rabbinic ordination through the Institute of Jewish Higher Education in Chicago, Illinois. The institute allowed him to obtain his masters degree and his PhD in Jewish studies and still remain a full time professor while attending classes and seminars on the weekends and in the summers to supplement a rigorous course of individual study. With those professional degrees underway, Ettin began working with the English and Religion departments to develop new courses based around Jewish subject matter, including Ancient and Modern Judaism and Literature of the Holocaust. Ettin then had to face the challenge of finding a rabbinic program flexible enough to allow him to accomplish these ambitious academic goals for the university and continue his quest towards being ordained. He found just such a program at ALEPH, The Alliance for Jewish Renewal. The ALEPH program is tailored towards people much like Ettin who are already involved in academic fields and the study of Jewish texts, but who are ready to study under the tutelage of experienced rabbis. “When you are ordained as I was this summer,” says Ettin, “you then become a peer to those teachers.”

This fall, Ettin joined a different set of peers when he began teaching at the Wake Forest Divinity School. He has also offered his religious counsel to students at the Wake Forest Medical School, helping first year medical students to better understand their patients from a religious perspective and to help them explore the clinical ethics of the medical profession. Ettin credits the university as having been, “incredibly supportive,” throughout his entire religious journey. As a result, Ettin has no plans to leave the university in favor of a full-time pulpit. “I feel as if this is a good place for me... where I can continue to balance my academic life with my religious life,” says Ettin. The students of Wake Forest University have certainly benefited from that balance, both in the enriched curriculum that Ettin continues to develop and through Ettin himself. With a kind heart and an ear that is willing to listen, Ettin provided his students with pastoral counsel long before he retained the title of rabbi. Today, as rabbi, professor and counselor, Ettin’s dedication and scholarship informs the entire University and region.

(“Literary Magazines Make Fresh Start” cont. from page 1)

photography, and even self-publishing. Bonomo believes that the student body was already talented, but what they lacked were the opportunities and the supplies necessary to pursue a passion or try their hand at a new art. These workshops have resulted in many new student submissions to the magazine. But student input shouldn’t end there. “A lot of people don’t realize it, but anyone can join the editorial selection process. Any student on campus can have a say in whether or not a submission should be published,” says Bonomo.

The Philomathesian is also trying to generate interest in its editorial board. “Almost all of our editorial board members will be graduating this year and we are looking for good people to carry on our mission next year,” says McKeague. It is McKeague’s hope that the fresh new design of the fall issue will catch the eye of younger students who can then get involved in the spring. What the magazine wants to avoid is another dormant semester where there is not enough material or motivation to even produce a publication. According to McKeague, this year’s senior staff is, “strong, more motivated, and working together much better than others have in years past.” *The Philomathesian* still depends heavily on professors to encourage their students to submit academic essays for publication. “Students are accomplishing great things in the classroom. Our mission is to provoke that level of intellectual conversation outside the classroom as well,” says McKeague.

The English department has long been a strong contributor to both magazines, and Bonomo and McKeague hope that tradition will continue, especially as they work to engage younger undergrads in their editorial process and secure the future of this crucial aspect of Wake Forest’s liberal arts environment.

“When you are ordained as I was this summer, you then become a peer to those teachers.”

—Dr. Andrew Ettin





Pro Humanitate

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A Letter from the Department Chair

After Gale Sigal ably led this department for four years, she decided to step down from her position as chair. In July, I took over as head of the department. My first semester in this role has been hectic but fruitful. I have especially appreciated the encouragement of my colleagues and students. Any success I've enjoyed so far has issued from this support.

My hope is that this newsletter can continue to be a bearer of our department's important news and an invitation to you to let us know what you've been up to. We're always happy to hear

about the special achievements of our current and former majors as well as of our old and new friends. So, please do let us know what significant events have taken place in your life. We'd love to spread the news in future issues of this newsletter.

I would like to highlight one ongoing piece of departmental news. Our department is still collecting funds for the Edwin G. Wilson Chair in English Literature. As you will see in another entry in this edition, there are many ways that you can contribute to the funding of this chair. I know that many of you were

deeply touched by Ed's teaching, so you can understand how excited our department is at the prospect of housing a chair in his name. I hope that you will agree that this chair will be an important addition to our department and that you will want to support our fund-raising efforts.

Sincerely,
Eric G. Wilson