Remarks on the *Bucknell Review*

Delivered by Greg Clingham

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In its 161 year history Bucknell University has a great many accomplishments to its credit but few as notable and as surprising as the successful creation of a University Press, in 1968, and a publication called the *Bucknell Review*. Although eventually published by the Press, the *Bucknell Review* actually predated it, and maintained its independence from the Press for the fifty years it existed. We are here today to acknowledge and celebrate the contribution of the *Bucknell Review* – and those who ran and those who contributed to it – to the intellectual life of the university.

The *Review* came into existence in 1954 as an interdisciplinary forum, developed by the innovative insight of Gladys Cook and Harry Garvin. It emerged out of an existing, local journal, *Bucknell University Studies*, of which Gladys Cook was editor. Over its fifty year history the Review had eight different general editors, all of whom made their own particular contribution to its success. These were Gladys Cook, Harry Garvin, Michael Payne, James Heath, Mark Neuman, Richard Fleming, Pauline Fletcher, and Greg Clingham. As is so often the case, the success of these editors was made possible by their administrative and editorial staff, among whom one cannot forget the contributions of Dorothy Baumwoll, assistant and associate editor for more than thirty years, also Cynthia Fell, Jane Lentz, Steve Styers, and Andy Ciotola.

The identity and success of the *Bucknell Review* was determined from the beginning by the distinguished efforts of Mr. Harry Garvin, who served as its associate
editor and then general editor from 1954 until his retirement in 1984. Drawing on innovative new courses being taught in the English Department at Bucknell in the 1940s and ’50s, Mr. Garvin published interdisciplinary volumes that brought together new thinking on such topics as women’s writing, hermeneutics, phenomenology, structuralism, postmodernism, semiotics, intertextuality, historiography, art and literature, religion and literature, science and literature, ideology, and rhetoric. These innovative publications attracted a wide range eminent scholars and writers. Indeed, a list of the contributors over the years reads like a Whose Who of American academia of the late twentieth century. Contributors included Joyce Carol Oates, John Cage, M.H. Abrams, Hazard Adams, Sacvan Bercovitch, Norman O. Brown, Stanley Cavell, Theresa Ebert, Jonathan Goldberg, Nadine Gordimer, Jean Howard, Wolfgang Iser, James Kavanagh, Cynthia Ozick, Marjorie Perloff, Charles Segal, Helen Vendler, Jonathan Wordsworth, Thomas Mallon, and Sir Robert Lima, who is here tonight.

Not only was the Bucknell Review on the cutting edge of new scholarship for some years, it was particularly valuable in the context of Bucknell’s efforts to support and promote the scholarship of its own faculty, for it created and legitimized a space on campus for serious intellectual work in the humanities, it published Bucknell faculty side by side with those from other universities, and it eventually enabled a large number of Bucknell faculty members to guest edit volumes on a wide range of themes and issues – from environmental feminist politics to Irish literature – that arose from courses offered in English, Modern Languages, Philosophy, History, and other departments. Later on the Humanities Institute and the Social Science Colloquium, under the auspices of the Provost’s office, started sponsoring initiatives of this kind.
We honour Harry Garvin’s part in this impressive on-going history. Philip Roth has written about Mr. Garvin: “When you took a course with Garvin, you knew you were going to get Socrates along with Shakespeare, Beethoven with Beowulf and world history with world literature. Harry wove themes together, but always left a few seductive loose threads. I have been following those threads ever since.” And so too, in a way, have we, who have erected a new interdisciplinary publication, entitled *Aperçus: History Texts Cultures* within the space opened up by the *Bucknell Review* and in a similar spirit of enterprise and inquiry. Let’s hope others will be here in 50 years time celebrating our efforts as we celebrate those of the *Bucknell Review*. 