

Introduction

“I EXPECTED YOU to make mistakes your first year. We all do.” So begins Jasper’s Grand Remonstrance of his younger cousin, Charles Ryder, the hero of Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*. At issue is Charles’s louche coterie at Oxford. Jasper goes on: “But you, my dear Charles, whether you realize it or not, have gone straight, hook, line and sinker, into the *very worst set in the University*. You may think that, living in digs, I don’t know what goes on in college; but I hear things. In fact, I hear all too much. I find that I’ve become a figure of mockery on your account at the Dining Club.”

For twenty-five years, the undergraduate editors of *The Dartmouth Review* have been, for the Jaspers of Dartmouth, the “very worst set” in the College on the Hill. To their supporters, through a blend of activism and journalism, they have shown Dartmouth to be an institution that celebrates free expression while maintaining a byzantine code of permissible conduct and thought. To their detractors, they have made Dartmouth a figure of mockery at the Dining Club of progressive academia.

The editors of *The Dartmouth Review* have been a public embarrassment, willfully so, to the good name of Dartmouth’s liberal administrators, faculty, and trustees. This book is the story of *The Dartmouth Review* in its own words. It does not take a Dartmouth Man to draw a lesson from it. The experience of the *Review* is a chapter in the struggle of youth against intellectual ossification, as youth has perceived it. Its story illustrates what happens when you give precocious twenty-year-olds unfettered control of a six-figure-a-year media operation, and what can come of the combination of indiscretion, energy, and insight.

In 1955, the conservative counter-reformation of American universities took shape with the publication of *God and Man at Yale*, William F. Buckley Jr.’s challenge to the secular pieties of his alma mater. In the years to follow, conservative displeasure on campus, which Buckley’s book gave voice to, was galvanized as the radicals of the 1960s

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found tenure in the increasingly progressive universities of the 1970s and 1980s.

In 1980, a small college in New Hampshire, population 4,000 undergraduates, suddenly found itself front and center in this confrontation. A few editors of the official student daily, shackled by the political diktats of a liberal college administration, decamped to Main Street and hung out a shingle for their own independent newspaper.

Financial and moral support for this new venture came from the Collegiate Network and those alumni who felt rejected by a college ashamed of its history. At any college, at any time, such support might be expected. But at Dartmouth, by 1980, there had emerged such a stark divide between conservative alumni and an administration that sought at all costs to advertise its left-liberal credentials that this support was swift and overwhelming. The newspaper, available by subscription and distributed door-to-door on campus, forged a direct, immediate, and powerful connection between once-marginalized students and their supporters. "I look at us as being the first real example of *God and Man at Yale* in practice," noted *Review* founder Gregory Fossedal '81. From its first issue, the *Review* was able to draw a significant source of revenue from alumni, who perceived the newspaper's not-for-profit cause as an alternative to the College Fund.

At the outset, *The Dartmouth Review* broadcast the message of a conservative candidate, John Steel, who ran successfully for the Dartmouth Board of Trustees by means of a petition ballot, bypassing the liberal Alumni Council. At the same time, the newspaper became the home of the 1980s brand of Ivy League misfit: super-smart students who supported the candidacy of Ronald Reagan, who found communion in the deathbed conversion of Lord Brideshead, and who sought their role models not in Karl Marx or Che Guevara but in Alexander Pope, Stanford White, and the gentleman tennis player Bill Tilden.

Beyond mere reporting, the editors of *The Dartmouth Review* also perceived their journalistic mandate as a call to arms: to force the dominant culture of Dartmouth, the "party of resentment," as Harold Bloom called it, to contend with their own conservative ideas. Former Editor-in-Chief Dinesh D'Souza '83 described such an animating principle in this way:

Typically, the conservative attempts to conserve, to hold on to the values of the existing society. But what if the existing society is liberal? What if the existing society is inherently hostile to conservative beliefs? It is foolish for a conservative to attempt to conserve that culture. Rather, he must seek to undermine it, to thwart it, to destroy it at the root level. This means that the conservative must stop being conservative. More precisely, he must be philosophically conservative but temperamentally radical. This is what we quickly understood at the *Review*. We recognized that to confront liberalism

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fully we could not be content with rebutting liberal arguments. We also had to subvert liberal culture, and this meant disrupting the etiquette of liberalism. In other words, we had to become social guerillas. And this we set out to do with a vengeance.

Another former Editor-in-Chief, Harmeet Dhillon '89, put it simply when she wrote that "*The Dartmouth Review* has, several times in its history, gone too far in its criticism of College policies so that other people will feel compelled to go far enough."

The *Review* today still fills this role as an example and an encouragement to Dartmouth's conservative-minded students. It continues to thrive. This book is in no way meant to be a final say: It does not signal the end of a story but rather a mid-course report. The *Review* has succeeded for a quarter-century through vigorous, sometimes vicious, opposition; there is little doubt that it will continue writing its own history well into the future. As we complete this anthology, new issues of *The Dartmouth Review* are landing outside the doorways of Dartmouth dorm rooms; the *Review's* alumni circulation continues to be thousands strong, bolstered now by a public website at www.dartreview.com that has become a digital clearing-house for the conservative voice on campus.

The process of creating this book, on the suggestion of the board of *The Dartmouth Review*, afforded us a long look at what the *Review* has done well. Below the surface of provocative antics, with which we ourselves were well acquainted as student editors, we discovered a coherence and narrative arc. That narrative is the story of a college's methodical campaign against student liberties, in an ironic appeal to tolerance and the "principles of community." This initiative can be tracked through five Dartmouth presidencies: those of John G. Kemeny (1970–1981), David McLaughlin (1981–1987), James O. Freedman (1987–1998), and now James Wright. In the first ten years of the newspaper, this effort manifested itself in nearly annual attempts to suspend *Review* editors and writers. From 1990 on, this campaign broadened to take on student liberties in many areas of campus life, not only in the freedom of student assembly but in the freedom of student behavior. In the past ten years especially, the Dartmouth student body has felt the scrutiny of an administration once reserved only for Dartmouth Reviewers. Dartmouth students are now perceived as guilty for merely matriculating at Dartmouth. Through proposals like the Student Life Initiative, and a circus of college programming, the administration has sought to undertake their political reeducation.

The Dartmouth Review has been in a unique position to report on all of these developments. As editors of this anthology, we have isolated these episodes into thematic chapters, single stories made up of multiple articles that we present in general chronological order.

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Separated by a quarter century, and framing this story of the *Review*, has been the election of Dartmouth trustees by means of petition ballot. *The Dartmouth Review* has never fallen under the system of controls that the College maintains to “de-politicize” contentious petition elections. In this regard, the *Review*’s independent voice poses the greatest challenge to the status quo. Inaugurating its first issue with the candidacy of John Steel, documented in the chapter “The Man of Steel,” *The Dartmouth Review* consistently reported on petition candidates up through the latest 2004 and 2005 elections. In these cases, documented in “Rebel Yell,” three new petition trustees were elected in succession by direct alumni vote: T. J. Rogers, Todd Zywicki, and Peter Robinson. The fact that Robinson, an early contributor to *The Dartmouth Review*, could one day be elected to the Dartmouth Board of Trustees testifies to the newspaper’s transformation from a fringe element of college culture into a powerful voice of the mainstream. Over twenty-five years, the newspaper has changed the terms of campus debate. Dartmouth is finally catching up with *The Dartmouth Review*.

What occurred between these election victories is the rest of the story. From “The First Case,” an episode in which a *Review* founder defended himself before biased administrative jurors, the stakes of contention between the College and the newspaper quickly escalated. “No Jive” and “Once Bitten” start with a controversial and deliberately offensive column arguing against affirmative action, and end with a college administrator biting another *Review* founder as he distributed issues. These chapters also document the national notoriety the *Review* attained early on.

“Bill Cole” and “An Inside Look” begin with offending articles of their own—one concerning the teaching habits of the chairman of the music department, the other a meeting of an association of gay students—and go on to describe the multi-year fallouts from each episode. “The Indian Wars” challenges a basic assumption of a progressive institution: the offensiveness of its once-accepted symbol. At the time of the founding of *The Dartmouth Review*, the mere appearance of the Dartmouth Indian symbol, or the expression of Indian-related school spirit, was grounds for College discipline. By the middle of the 1980s, following a survey of tribal leaders conducted by *The Dartmouth Review*, and repeated editorials about the issues of free expression, freshmen students felt emboldened to unfurl Indian banners at College football games.

The strategy of ideas put into action reached its apogee over the issue of South African divestment. As documented in the chapter “Divestment,” several *Review* editors performed the most famous act of right-wing guerilla art of the 1980s. They first challenged, in print, the illegal construction of protest “shanties” on the college Green, as well as contesting the wisdom of the cause of divestment. Following College inaction, the editors then set about removing the protest structures themselves.

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With each new episode, College sanctions against *Review* editors increased. In “Bill Cole Strikes Back,” the multi-term suspension of Reviewers, over another altercation with the chairman of the music department, was overturned by state court. The defense of these students cost over a quarter of a million dollars. The *Review* was able to pay its legal bills through a special grant from the Olin Foundation, which not only saw college justice reversed, but also faced down future threats. While this was merely the penultimate great confrontation between the college and the newspaper, it became the final episode thus far in which Dartmouth College attempted to undermine the *Review* by attacking its editorship.

Following “Sex Ed,” a chapter on the College’s early inclinations toward student reeducation, several chapters document the lead-up to and fall-out from *The Dartmouth Review*’s most serious test to date. “The First Stone,” “Liberal Fascism,” “Sabotage,” and “The Freedman Legacy” follow the College’s decade-long direction under President James O. Freedman, as he manipulated the charge of anti-Semitism into a blanket campaign that nearly devastated *The Dartmouth Review* through false charges. So strong was Freedman’s desire to eliminate the *Review*, in fact, that he risked damaging the reputation of Dartmouth to accomplish it. William F. Buckley Jr. wrote at the time, “There is nothing Dartmouth President James Freedman is better at doing than calling the attention of the whole world to the putative delinquencies of his own college.”

Following the high tensions of what has become known as the “Hitler Quote incident,” which sparked national controversy and even a parody of *The Dartmouth Review* by the *Harvard Lampoon*, Dartmouth broadened its campaign against student freedoms. From freedom of the press, the College went after the freedom of association in Dartmouth’s fraternity system, documented in “The Freedom of Assembly,” and the freedom of religious expression, documented in “God & Man at Dartmouth.” In its place, Dartmouth proposed an alternative, progressive student culture in the form of programming and diversity deans, as reported in “Deviance on Tap.” It was these recent campaigns against student life that motivated alumni dissatisfaction over college governance to the point where Rogers, Zywicki, and Robinson could be elected in succession.

Finally, in this anthology, on the occasion of the *Review*’s twenty-fifth anniversary, we have collected seven new essays on the history of the newspaper, written by the people who shaped it. All of these articles have appeared, or are slated to appear, in issues of *The Dartmouth Review*.

An unfortunate but unavoidable consequence of our editorial selection has been the omission of material that has often defined the newspaper’s style. A word on those omissions is in order. The *Review* covers a wide variety of campus matters, from courses and faculty to new campus architecture to sports. It has demonstrated an abiding interest in culture and

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the arts, publishing reviews of books, music, and campus events. The newspaper has conducted regular interviews with an array of public figures, including Betty Friedan, Ralph Nader, Czeslaw Milosz, Abbie Hoffman, Richard Nixon, Donald Rumsfeld, Bobby Seale, Charlton Heston, Allen Ginsberg, Charlie Daniels, Gennifer Flowers, and Norman Podhoretz. Particularly indicative of the newspaper's jaunty tone are the Last Word (a collection of famous quotations compiled on the last page of each issue, an editorial tradition inaugurated by *Review* founder Gordon Haff) and the Week in Review (jocular notes on campus and extramural affairs). While notice of these sections has been precluded by the narrative form we have adopted for this anthology, we do not intend for these contributions to be regarded as any less vital to *Review* history.

It is with such jocularity in mind that we present to you the title of this anthology. *The Dartmouth Review Pleads Innocent* is not intended as a victimology. Impugned and bitten though it may have been, the newspaper has found its greatest successes through adversity, not in spite of it. The *Review* is at its best when it is both writing about and making the news.

In order to add perspective to this dynamic, we have included commentary from other newspapers and magazines, occasioned by events at Dartmouth involving *The Dartmouth Review*.

The masthead of *The Dartmouth Review* includes the phrase "Special Thanks to William F. Buckley Jr." We reiterate these thanks for his allowing us to reprint his syndicated columns on *The Dartmouth Review*. Mr. Buckley once wrote, "students of liberal behavior should be as interested in Dartmouth College these days as Charles Darwin was in the Galapagos." No outside observer can rival Mr. Buckley's scientific insight into the odd situations in which *The Dartmouth Review* often found itself.

Through nature and nurture, the environment of Dartmouth sustained *The Dartmouth Review*. Yet this newspaper would never have germinated, much less thrived, without the care of one man, to whom this anthology is dedicated. A beloved professor of English at Dartmouth College, not to say mentor to a generation of students, Jeffrey Hart has lent more than his advisement to the *Review*. With a joy for confrontation and a deep interest in literature, Jeffrey Hart has provided a model for gentlemanly behavior and the life of the mind that is otherwise absent from College life. *The Dartmouth Review* represents the institutionalization of his qualities.

The *Review* has been an education. We hope this anthology will instruct a future generation of Reviewers, wherever they may be.

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& Hanover, New Hampshire
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