

# The New Criterion

Notes & Comments November 2010

## William B. Warren 1934–2010

*In memoriam.*

It is with great sadness that we report the death of William B. Warren, a dear friend of the editors and an invaluable steward of *The New Criterion's* material progress. Although Bill's name may be unfamiliar to many readers of *The New Criterion*, he was a vital, enabling presence at the magazine for many years. By trade an attorney, Bill was by avocation and disposition a distinguished inhabitant of that nearly extinct role, the gentleman of letters. On many subjects, he combined the knowledge of experts with the enthusiasm of the amateur—a word, Bill liked to point out, that derived from the Latin word for love. Bill's attachment to classical culture was deep and abiding. He assiduously—no, we should say, he delightedly—kept up his Latin and Greek through reading groups with a small circle of cognoscenti. All Autumn was devoted to Horace. The following Spring it was Homer. Bill's knowledge of German and Austrian culture was as deep as it was unostentatious. He several times made the pilgrimage to Bayreuth for Wagner's "Ring." He was an authority on Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663–1736), a military genius of the first water. Eugene's crushing defeat of the Turks at the Battle of Zenta in 1697 was a decisive turning point in Christendom's long conflict against the paynim foe. (Bill, quietly allergic to political correctness, would have liked the deployment of words like "Christendom" and "paynim foe.") Bill greatly admired Eugene's astonishing military prowess. Looking about at global affairs *circa* 2010, he occasionally opined that the world needed another such martial prodigy. But what made the Savoyard commander a fit object for the Warren pantheon were his equally distinguished activities as a bibliophile, art collector, and builder (the Belvedere Palaces in Vienna are his). Eugene was a commanding cultural as well as military force. In his fine essay on the prince, Bill quotes an English authority who judged Eugene "the most influential private patron in Europe."

Bill's cultural interests were not confined to the distant past. He was a great admirer—and collector—of the work of Anthony Powell. A few years back, he mounted a memorable exhibition of Powelliana, drawn mostly from his own collection, at the Grolier Club, the great bibliophile's retreat in New York of which Bill was a distinguished member and past president. He sat on many boards, which meant that he aided many institutions. The Academy of American Poets, the Metropolitan Opera, the John Carter Brown Library, *The Hudson Review*, St. John's College—the small, distinguished college whose devotion to great books and primary sources won

Bill's approbation and devotion—all benefitted from his time and attention. *The New Criterion* also greatly benefitted from Bill's wise counsel and generous benefactions. He understood exactly what the magazine was about both in its polemical adventures and in its battle against the encroaching vacuum of cultural amnesia. Boon companion, discriminating judge, faithful steward: we shall miss you. *Quid nos, quibus te vita si superstite/ iucunda, si contra, gravis?*

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This article originally appeared in *The New Criterion*, Volume 29 Number 3 , on page 3

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