

The New Criterion

Notebook

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Jacques Barzun at 100

by [Jeffrey Hart](#)

On the centenary of the celebrated historian.

On November 30, 2007, *deo volente*, Jacques Barzun, one of the most distinguished figures in the history of Columbia University, will be one hundred years old. An undergraduate at Columbia, class of 1927, Barzun remained at the school until his retirement in 1975, earning a Ph. D. and becoming Seth Low Professor of History, Dean of the Graduate School, Provost, and finally a University Professor. Throughout his life he has written over forty books, some of them of permanent importance, all of them useful, and culminating in *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life, 1500 to the Present* (2000), his summa as a cultural critic.

How many times in one's life does one get to welcome a masterpiece, which, without a doubt, that amazing work certainly is? Its 800 pages of text move quickly. With seeming ease, its architecture covers 500 years of Western history, which is the large movement of ...

Jeffrey Hart's most recent book is *The Making of the American Conservative Mind* (ISI).

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