

The Waning Of The Middle Ages

Johan Huizinga, one of the founders of cultural history, ranks among the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century. Published in the 1930s, his *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, *Homo Ludens* and *Erasmus* were immediately recognised as masterworks and widely translated. Perhaps the most influential is Huizinga's study of the formative role of play in human culture in the celebrated *Homo Ludens*. This engaging study by the renowned Dutch scholar Willem Otterspeer shows the same hallmark passion with which Huizinga immersed himself in history. For Huizinga, philology was the mother of all interpretative endeavour, the master skill from which all branches of humanities originate and to which they all ultimately return. Reading and writing were both part of a collective ritual that channeled human passion into beautiful forms, while passion, and how to master it, remained the fundamental fact of human life. Throughout this powerful analysis of Huizinga's oeuvre, Otterspeer remains faithful to his main philosophical tenets, in which contrast and harmony, memory and desire, are the warp and weft of his work. And again, this is precisely what Otterspeer does. Reading and writing, passion and detachment, method and mysticism are here combined in a way that would have delighted Huizinga himself.

A reappearance of Huizinga's (1872-1945) controversial classic arguing that the Middle Ages were not simply a marking of time between the Roman Empire and the Renaissance that of course vanished as soon as people found something interesting to do. Rather, he says Medieval culture was distinct and vital, declined through internal processes, and was

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This book represents the first calm, detailed, and rational description of the imminent end of western industrial civilization as we know it. Despite this alarming premise Gimpel is far from pessimistic, save in the short term: with the sure hand of the historian, he emphasizes how humanity has always recovered from its previous collapses in the past, and will certainly do so again. The unique value of this book is that it gives us a baseline from which we can now work into the future. This book represents the first calm, detailed, and rational description of the coming end of our current world culture. The author seeks to show that, particularly when we compare actual technological reality in the 1990s with the heady predictions of futurologists back in the 1960s, technology has levelled off, reached a plateau--even in the leading-edge areas like infomatics, space, and medicine. Even that plateau will prove to be temporary, claims Gimpel, and the end of western industrial society as we know it will inevitably ensue. However exceptional, our civilization has no reason to expect that it will evolve any differently from every civilization before it: decadence and decay have engulfed them all, one after the other. The unique value of this book is that it gives us a baseline from which we can now work into the future. The conclusion, which is not pessimistic--save in the short term--points out that humanity has always recovered from such collapses, and gone on again to reach new heights. By way of making his case, Gimpel leaves us with a final simple thought: The future, he asserts, is China.

"Here is the first full translation into English of one of the 20th century's few undoubted classics of history." —Washington Post Book World *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* is Johan Huizinga's classic portrait of life, thought, and art in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century France and the Netherlands. Few who have read this book in English realize that *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, the only previous translation, is vastly different from the original Dutch, and incompatible with all other European-language translations. For Huizinga, the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century marked not the birth of a dramatically new era in history—the Renaissance—but the fullest, ripest phase of medieval life and thought. However, his work was criticized both at home and in Europe for being "old-fashioned" and "too literary" when *The Waning of the Middle Ages* was first published in 1919. In the 1924 translation, Fritz Hopman adapted, reduced and altered the Dutch edition—softening Huizinga's passionate arguments, dulling his nuances, and eliminating theoretical passages. He dropped many passages Huizinga had quoted in their original old French. Additionally, chapters were rearranged, all references were dropped, and mistranslations were introduced. This translation corrects such errors, recreating the second Dutch edition which represents Huizinga's thinking at its most important stage. Everything that was dropped or rearranged has been restored. Prose quotations appear in French, with translations preprinted at the bottom of the page, mistranslations have been corrected. "The advantages of the new translation are so many. . . . It is one of the greatest, as well as one of the most enthralling, historical classics of the twentieth century, and everyone will surely want to read it in the form that was obviously intended by the author." —Francis Haskell, *New York Review of Books* "A once pathbreaking piece of historical interpretation. . . . This new translation will no doubt bring Huizinga and his pioneering work back into the discussion of historical interpretation." —Rosamond McKitterick, *New York Times Book Review*

This volume is the first ever attempt to unite and translate some of the key texts which informed Johan Huizinga's famous study of the Burgundian court, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, a work which has never gone out of print. It combines these texts with sources that Huizinga did not consider, those that illuminate the wider civic world that the Burgundian court inhabited and the dynamic interaction between court and city. Through these sources, and an introduction offering new perspectives on recent historiography, the book tests whether Huizinga's controversial vision of the period still stands. Covering subjects including ceremonial events, such as the spectacles and gargantuan banquets that made the Burgundian dukes the talk of Europe, the workings of the court, and jousting, archery and rhetoric competitions, the book will appeal to students of late medieval

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The changing understandings of the Middle Ages from the Age of Reason to the present, and how these relate to wider historiographical and philosophical developments. This book unites and translates some of the key texts which informed Johan Huizinga's famous study of the Burgundian court in 'The Waning of the Middle Ages', a work which is taught in many history courses throughout Europe and the USA.

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