



The Autumn of the Middle Ages

By Johan Huizinga

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"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*

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Editorial Review

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In 1919, Johan Huizinga revealed in the original version of this book that the ideals, aspirations, and behaviors of humanity in history were dramatically different from those in present day. In *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*, he recalled the waning years of the Middle Ages--the low countries in northern Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries--and argued against those who claimed that human belief systems remain the same even if contexts change. His account rested not on historical fact, but on the emotions and ambitions of the people as expressed through the art and literature of their culture. Many people treated the book as groundbreaking work, and it was translated into English in 1924. This new translation is a complete, more direct version of the original and allows modern readers a full appreciation of life in an era rarely revisited.

Review

The new translation will no doubt bring Huizinga and his pioneering work back into the discussion of historical interpretation and encourage the English-speaking world to appreciate his achievement. -- *The New York Times Book Review*, Rosamond McKitterick

Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

Original Language: Dutch

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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