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Huizinga's 'heimwee': responding to Burckhardt's 'Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien' in times of loss

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ABSTRACT



This article offers a new interpretation of the historical relation between two foundational works in cultural history: Johan Huizinga's 'The Autumn of the Middle Ages' (1919) and Jacob Burckhardt's 'The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy' (1860). The tension between these works has commonly been understood as a scholarly dispute over the proper historical periodization of European fifteenth-century cultural practices: whilst Burckhardt reconstructed his material in terms of its technical novelty, its ability to 'create' (*schöpfen*) a post-medieval world, Huizinga emphasized how fifteenth-century culture continued to 're-create' (*her-scheppen*) culture according to medieval symbolic codes. The present article suggests understanding this tension not as a product of a trans-historical scholarly dispute over the character of a given period of time, but as a consequence of Huizinga's experience of loss and nostalgia, his 'heimwee' for past times. Between 1903 and 1905, Huizinga witnessed a large-scale destruction of early-seventeenth-century architecture in Amsterdam so as to make way for 'the spirit of entrepreneurship,' and it was first in this context that Huizinga grew interested in the importance of historical recreations to European culture. This article shows how Huizinga's experience of urban modernization and 'the inhabited ruin' mediated his critique of Burckhardt's book on Renaissance Italy.

KEYWORDS

Johan Huizinga; Jacob Burckhardt; cultural history; historical experience

1. Introduction

Johan Huizinga's 'The Autumn of the Middle Ages' (1919) is commonly read as a direct and explicit critique of Burckhardt's 'The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy' (1860)¹ – and for good reason: in 1919, Huizinga (1872–1945) wrote to the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne (1862–1935) that 'Autumn of the Middle Ages' was meant to expose the 'grave flaws' in Burckhardt's *Renaissance-begriff*.² As a rule, both books are listed among the earliest examples of the cultural historical genre, but the antagonism between them becomes palpable through a juxtaposition of their respective appreciations of the Flemish painter Jan van Eyck (1390–1441).³ According to Burckhardt (1818–1897), van Eyck's technical innovations had helped 'lift a veil from nature,' and had contributed to the 'discovery' of a new conception of human individuality.⁴ According to Huizinga, on the other hand, van Eyck's interest in technical detail was merely a new means to late-medieval symbolic ends.⁵ Van Eyck's technical advancements, he argued, had to be understood not in terms of their novelty, but in terms of the medieval ideals they continued to serve. From such

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observations, authors such as Jo Tollebeek have inferred that ‘both historians had climbed the same mountain, but had started from different sides.’⁶ Where Burckhardt emphasized a technical innovation, Huizinga stressed its continued symbolic heritage.

The present article looks to problematize a supposition not only in Tollebeek’s account, but in most literature on the antagonism between Burckhardt’s ‘Civilization’ and Huizinga’s ‘Autumntide.’ Since the 1940s as well as since the revival of Huizinga scholarship in the 1970s, most accounts on this issue have generally understood the antagonism as a disagreement over the periodization of fifteenth-century practices.⁷ This literature, however, often glances over, or sometimes even neglects the crucial fact that Huizinga and Burckhardt were not discussing the same cultural practices. Burckhardt had written in German about the northern Italian city-states of 1350–1550; Huizinga explored in Dutch the chivalrous culture in Burgundy of 1300–1500, and only very rarely do their historical analyses concern the same historical objects – van Eyck’s *The Arnolfini Wedding* (1434) being one of only few such instances. Hence, it appears misguided to straightforwardly state that Huizinga’s ‘Autumntide’ and Burckhardt’s ‘Civilization’ had climbed ‘the same mountain.’ In later publications, Huizinga indeed criticized more directly Burckhardt’s *Renaissancebegriff*, but it would be anachronistic to read ‘Autumntide’ in this light.⁸ But: how, then, should one interpret Huizinga’s aforementioned claim from 1919 that ‘Autumntide’ had responded to Burckhardt’s ‘grave flaws’? Along what dimension did Huizinga understand ‘Autumntide’ to oppose Burckhardt’s ‘Civilization’?

This article offers a twofold answer to the above question. Firstly, it argues that Huizinga’s objection in ‘Autumntide’ to Burckhardt’s conception of the Renaissance is, to begin, fruitfully approached as an epistemic objection. Huizinga disagreed not with Burckhardt’s particular reading of this or that historical example; Huizinga objected to Burckhardt’s narration of cultural creativity as a disruptive and singular ‘creation’ (*Schöpfung*). According to Huizinga, cultural creativity should generally be understood not in terms of creation but of ‘re-creation’ (*her-schepping*).⁹ Burckhardt’s *Schöpfung*, and Huizinga’s *her-schepping* drew from the same proto-Germanic etymological root – *skapjaną* –, but through their respective discursive-temporal signatures they each mediated a fundamentally different image of fifteenth-century culture. Secondly, this paper argues that Huizinga’s epistemic investment in cyclical temporalities was typical of an ‘ethics of preservation’ common among certain Dutch artists and academics of his generation. This generation had witnessed and mourned a dramatic modernization of medieval and early-modern cityscapes, such as in Amsterdam, and in response grew convinced that it should ‘not [be] necessary to abandon the old in order to love the new.’¹⁰ Huizinga’s objection in ‘Autumntide’ to Burckhardt was, thus, not solely epistemic, as it drew from and was part of an ethical response to the lived experience of cultural loss: a heightened appreciation of the creative potential of preservation in history.¹¹

By making this argument, this article contributes not only to the scholarship on Huizinga’s relation to Dutch *fin-de-siècle* culture, which has generally focussed on the morose autumnal discursive features of his writing rather than on the experiences of an age.¹² This article also makes a methodological case in point for Dariusz Gafijczuk’s understanding of the ‘inhabited ruin’ as a helpful perspective unto the historiography of the early twentieth century.

Gafijczuk has defined such ruins as ‘spaces of active exchange between presence and absence,’ whose ‘temporal hesitation’ becomes constitutive of a particular, modern experience of history:¹³ at these sites, history is imagined not as ‘consecutive forms of presence’ but as an absence revealed in and by a ‘decayed present.’¹⁴ As urban spaces across Europe transformed at a tremendous speed, Huizinga and his peers had ample opportunity to and did experience their worlds as ‘ruins’ in the above capacity: history had ceased to spill over into the present, it appeared in and as dissolution, waning and erosion. For this reason, Gafijczuk’s vocabulary enables an interesting perspective unto cultural history’s development: Huizinga’s studies of the late Middle Ages were not an escape from his tumultuous times. On the contrary, Huizinga’s autumnal Middle Ages were the experience of ‘ruins of the past in the present.’¹⁵

For these purposes, the main body of this article has been divided into three parts. First, Burckhardt's depiction of the 'creative force' of Renaissance culture is explored. Next, the role of 'recreative forms' as a regulative principle in Huizinga's historical reconstructions of late medieval culture is examined. In the third section, Huizinga's historical-epistemic interest in the image of 'recreation' is embedded in early twentieth-century experiences of cultural loss, and conservative ethics common among Huizinga's peers. Finally, the concluding section ties these observations together so as to argue for the particular early-twentieth century character of Huizinga's retrospectively constructed relation with Burckhardt. This observation is of value not only to the understanding of these two authors, but also to an understanding of the cultural conditions under which cultural history took shape and developed.

2. Burckhardt's culture of 'creation'

Burckhardt's account of the Italian Renaissance commenced from the political balances between the northern Italian city-states 1350–1550, especially Florence and Venice.¹⁶ The capricious political circumstances among and within these city-states in the fourteenth and fifteenth century were both cause and result of a new interest in calculation (*Berechnung*) and the world's malleability:¹⁷ leaders were not given but 'possible' (*möglich*), events were not catalogued but 'calculated' (*berechnet*), a given situation was not 'fixed' but 'uncertain' (*unsicher*). Action, in short, was not taxonomical but statistical, and its calculation was not principled but instrumental.¹⁸ This new political uncertainty was performative of a new experience of unpredictability and possibility, of history and future, and it amounted, Burckhardt argued, to the removal of the medieval 'veil [of] faith, illusion, and childish prepossession.'¹⁹ Uncertainty and transformation, in yet other words, had become the new fabric of the state:

The wondrous Florentine spirit, at once keenly critical and artistically creative, was incessantly transforming [*umgestaltet unaufhörlich*] the social and political condition of the State, and as incessantly describing and judging the change. Florence thus became the home of political doctrines and theories, of experiments and sudden changes, but also, like Venice, the home of statistical [science].²⁰

The political uncertainty fed into an altogether different kind of politics whose business it was to 'incessantly transform' the conditions (*Zustand*) of the state according to whimsical circumstance. The state became 'a calculated and conscious outcome' rather than a given authority; it became itself a 'work of art,' a 'creation' (*als Schöpfung*) rather than its mere commissioner.²¹ The instrumental conception of politics belonged to the defining features of the Renaissance, according to Burckhardt, and at numerous occasions in *Die Kultur*, he emphasized the unprecedentedness of this new 'living thing' (*ein neues Lebendiges*) in history:²² it embodied nothing less than 'a new position' (*auf einem neuen Boden*), 'a wholly different foundation' (*die Basis ist eine andere*) from which personhood, agency, creativity, and the entire natural world were experienced anew, and 'essentially differently from the Middle Ages' (*von der des Mittelalters wesentlich verschieden*).²³ But how, then, did conceptions of state alter the very borders of human individuality? How did political circumstance translate into the emergence of a new 'spiritual individual' (*geistiger Individuum*)?²⁴ Consider the following passage:

Despotism [fostered] in the highest degree the individuality not only of the tyrant or Condottiere himself, but also of the men whom he protected or used as his tools – the secretary, minister, poet, and companion. These people were forced to know all the inward resources of their own nature [*seine innern Hilfsquellen*], passing or permanent; and their enjoyment of life was enhanced and concentrated by the desire to obtain the greatest satisfaction from a possibly very brief period of power and influence.²⁵

The instrumental logic of the modern city-state affected both despots and subordinates, as both found themselves answering to new and perpetually changing conditions, and ultimately it fed into a new experience of personality and individuality. The decisive feature of one's life was no longer the general group to which one belonged – *Rasse, Volk, Partei, Korporation, Familie*²⁶

–, but one's ability to respond to and manipulate changing circumstances. Medieval interest in the preservation of traditional social taxonomies had been replaced by images of incessant transformation, in whose storm only images of 'immortality' (*Verewigung*) and 'greatness' (*historische Größe*) offered direction.²⁷ Burckhardt called this new individuality *uomo singolare*, or *uomo unico* – the agent of 'free creation' (*freie Schöpfung*).²⁸ This new human was prepared to dispense at its convenience with any tradition, promise or alliance in its pursuit of survival, either through worldly subsistence, immortal legacy, or both.²⁹

In sum, according to Burckhardt, a new experience of uncertainty in the fourteenth and fifteenth century had inspired a new conception of state and person. This uncertainty deflated medieval images of promise, and salvation, and introduced a new, secular ground for action. Not salvaging re-lease, mimetic re-creation, and divine re-semblance, but images of monumental honour, enforced by furious creation, and 'overflowing energy' inspired action. Burckhardt's *uomo singolare* had substituted holiness and moral ideals with '[the] cult of historical greatness'.³⁰ Burckhardt's Italian Renaissance had cultivated an inherently malleable world of human *Schöpfung*.

3. Huizinga's culture of 'recreation'

Huizinga admired Burckhardt, and called him his 'great teacher'.³¹ Yet, his appreciation was not uncategorical. In a letter to Pirenne from 1919, Huizinga distinguished between two 'Jacob Burckhardts': one of them had prepared the lectures that would later become 'Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen,' the other had written 'Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien'.³² Huizinga bestowed undivided praise unto the former throughout his writing life; the latter, however ground-breaking and inspiring, he met with considerable hesitation.³³ In 'Autumntide,' Huizinga states that Burckhardt had 'overestimated the distance between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, between Western Europe and Italy'.³⁴ In his aforementioned letter to Pirenne, which was mentioned in the introduction, Huizinga accused Burckhardt of having made 'grave flaws' in his reconstruction of Renaissance culture.³⁵ But on what account did Huizinga fault Burckhardt? What kind of flaws had Burckhardt allegedly made?

Burckhardt, Huizinga argued, had overestimated and misconstrued the independence of cultural creativity from authoritative ideals and 'rules'; he had misunderstood the role of 'chivalrous ideals' in the cultural practices of the fifteenth century.³⁶ This alleged misunderstanding was not of an empirical nature – after all, Huizinga's accusation followed *not* from an exploration of Burckhardt's actual material; Huizinga's temporal and geographical scope in 'Autumntide' was altogether different from that of Burckhardt in 'Civilization'.³⁷ Rather, according to Huizinga, Burckhardt's misunderstanding was epistemic in nature, and its correction relied, quite literally, on a different way of looking, a new appreciation of 'historical form.' The role of ideals in cultural practice, Huizinga defended, could be exposed only through a specific historical sensitivity to the 'fundamental moods' (*grondstemmingen*) of human culture.³⁸ Only through a certain kind of ethical awareness, could documentation of historical practices reveal the ideals that once informed them. In fact, Huizinga went as far as saying that 'Autumntide' had been a study of the 'forms of life' wherein historical 'content' rested.³⁹ In order to explore the meaning and historiographical consequences of Huizinga's appreciation of recreation, a closer look at his methodological conception of 'fundamental moods' is in order.

At the beginning of 'Autumntide,' in its second chapter,⁴⁰ Huizinga spelled out three ideal typical 'moods' in whose image historical reconstructions could be erected.⁴¹ These moods or mentalities did not follow from historical reconstruction; historical reconstruction followed from them. Huizinga's three 'moods' were (1) asceticism, (2) labour and (3) playfulness. The attitudes of asceticism and labour, Huizinga argued, could not do justice to the life of the medieval mind: late-medieval culture had spun vast systems of social rituals and symbolic communitarian behaviour – so it was not ascetic –, which, in turn, were altogether independent from any notion of 'progress' – so they were not labour. And so, where Burckhardt's description of fifteenth-century culture centred

around images of ‘the powerful and creative people,’⁴² Huizinga’s descriptions privileged images of ‘play.’ Fifteenth-century Burgundian culture, Huizinga stated, was most aptly retrieved in what he called ‘re-created forms.’⁴³ Here, Huizinga used ‘recreation’ in a technical capacity. In order to explore its meaning, consider the following passage on the recreative mentality:

Now what is the effect on life of the third attitude: the yearning for a finer life in accordance with a dreamed-of ideal? It re-creates the forms of life as forms of art. But it is not only in the artworks as such in which it expresses its dreams of beauty; this attitude seeks to ennoble life itself with beauty, and fills society itself with play and forms. Here, it is precisely the personal art of living on which the highest demands are placed, demands that can only be aspired to by an elite engaged in an artful game of life.⁴⁴

A particular kind of ‘longing’ (*zucht*) laid at the heart of Huizinga’s third ‘mood’ of playfulness. This longing was not a longing for something beyond itself; it was not, for example, a longing aching for its own dissolution upon the improvement of living conditions, increased status, happiness, or even an impending moment of utter blissfulness. According to Huizinga, this longing was self-contained, and could be conceived of as an end in itself, as an ‘art,’ a ‘game of life.’⁴⁵ In art and life, as well as in games, Huizinga argued, the material world is ‘recreated’ in the image of rules and ideals. In the image of chivalrous honour, what had otherwise been a fleeting sound, becomes an enduring promise; in the image of providence, each natural detail becomes a symbol of divinity. In other words, from within a playful frame of mind, Huizinga held, a dreamt ideal carries the ability to ‘recreate the forms of life into forms of art,’ without materially altering their composition or conditions.⁴⁶ By means of its ability to recreate a world independently from the contingent material circumstances, the playful mind is able to find freedom – and *that* mentality was to regulate Huizinga’s reconstruction of the late Middle Ages: an age frantically, even desperately engaging in play in order to feed an cataclysmic craving for meaningfulness in times of unspeakable suffering and destruction.

The importance of Huizinga’s conception of playfulness in his ideal typical description of late medieval culture is helpfully exemplified in his discussion of van Eyck, which was mentioned at the outset of this article. Where Burckhardt had characterized van Eyck’s work in terms of its technical improvements to ‘reflect the real world,’ Huizinga’s regulative ideal of playfulness teased out an altogether different feature of van Eyck’s images.⁴⁷ For Huizinga, the character of van Eyck’s work laid not in its technical ability, but in its recreational potential – that is, in the traditional ideals through which it reinterpreted, recreated the material world. No matter how far van Eyck had technically advanced his pictorial representational ability, the central question for Huizinga would always be: by which ideals is the representation informed? For this reason, Huizinga was prepared to make a distinction between a technical art history, and a symbolic cultural history:

With the art of the Van Eycks the pictorial portrayal of things holy attained a degree of detail and naturalism that in a strict art-historical sense might be called a beginning, but in the cultural-historical sense signifies an end. Here the earthly representation of the divine had been stretched to the limit; the mystical content of such representation stood ready to flee from those images, leaving behind only the delight in the colourful form.⁴⁸

Huizinga recognized the unprecedentedness of van Eyck’s technical ability to picture detail: technically, it was ‘a beginning.’ Yet Huizinga was unwilling to equate technical development with historical movement: the reason van Eyck was interested in natural detail to begin with, Huizinga argued, was to increase the symbolic density on the canvas. Van Eyck’s technical obsession with detail was, Huizinga held, driven by a continuously increasing fear for meaninglessness, ‘*horror vacui*.’⁴⁹ In this sense, Huizinga understood van Eyck to still be exemplary of medieval culture: van Eyck’s art recreated its world in the image of an increasingly elaborate system of established symbols and rituals. Van Eyck’s art was at once the climax and the exhaustion of the Middle Ages.⁵⁰ For present purpose, what matters is the following observation: that Huizinga privileged symbolic continuity over technical novelty, thus arriving at conclusions paradigmatically different from Burckhardt’s observations, was a methodological decision that drew directly from Huizinga’s understanding of ‘playfulness’ as the regulative principle of the historical reconstruction of

Burgundian culture. The difference between Burckhardt's image of 'creation' and Huizinga's image of 'recreation' was epistemic, not empirical.

So far, two points of particular importance have been made for the present investigation: (1) Burckhardt's *uomo singolare* conveyed the image of a creative, amoral individual who answered to the honour of historical greatness rather than to a moral ideal; (2) Huizinga's conception of the playful medieval human soul pre-emptively ruled out Burckhardt's conclusion: the *creative capacities* of the human soul and human culture at large, Huizinga argued, rested on a *recreative capacity*. Viewed from this historical-epistemic perspective, it appears that Huizinga's 'Autumntide' can indeed be understood as a response to Burckhardt account of the Renaissance. Huizinga did not agree with the methodological principles guiding Burckhardt's choice and description of historical practices. In order to understand Huizinga's moral investment in the image of 'recreation,' and the urgency he attributed to it as a historiographical principle, his experience of the rapid and drastic modernization of Dutch urban spaces needs to be explored.

4. Huizinga's experience of loss

That Huizinga should have taken an interest in the cultural importance of historical recreation was not a mere coincidence. Between 1903 and 1905, Huizinga worked as a *privaat-docent* at the University of Amsterdam, and during this period, he witnessed for the first time the accelerated modernization of the Dutch urban landscape.⁵¹ Huizinga mourned not only the loss of medieval canals as well as early modern architecture, but also the apparent carelessness with which historical heritage was destructed.⁵² The developments had instilled in him a feeling of 'heimwee,' Huizinga wrote in a letter to his friend and author Willem Bijvanck (1848–1925).⁵³ Especially from the 1870s onwards, Amsterdam had worked with renewed vigour to bring itself up-to-speed with other European capitals both industrially and socially.⁵⁴ Its concentric canals could not meet the demands of modern labour division and industrial logistics, which required straight streets and wide avenues for effective transport, and new neighbourhoods had to be built to relieve and expand the vastly overpopulated working-class neighbourhoods. As a result, and on a tremendous scale, Amsterdam's crooked streets were straightened, building blocks were replaced, and canals drained. At an industrial speed, new areas were built in a modern aesthetic, changing the city's face. Consider the following passage from an article on Amsterdam's 'rage of destruction' published in 1903 in the liberal newspaper *De Courant/Het Nieuws van de Dag*:

In the city's heart, around the traffic-vein of the Dam square [Amsterdam's central square], one sees on a daily basis large trucks pass by filled with rubble and broken plaster; and on our beautiful canals, boats loaded with beams, frames and stones – the remnants of numerous demolished plots, are brought to places where the debris is sold.⁵⁵ [...] Sturdy workers swing their sledgehammer so as to mow away once and for all that which no longer suffices, that which is old and deficient, sickly and decrepit.⁵⁶

Old, defect, sickly and decrepit: in the eyes of the editors of *De Courant*, 'sledgehammers' had to 'once and for all' make way for a 'conscious spirit of entrepreneurship' (*zelfbewuste ondernemingsgeest*). In a later article from 1916 titled 'Peaceful Destructions,' the Dutch artist, art critic and public intellectual Jan Veth (1864–1925) commented on the effect of these 'ruthless sledgehammers'.⁵⁷ The destruction by modern urban planners of aesthetic, transgenerational points of reference, Veth argued in his article, compromised the bedrock of human creativity. A 'tyranny of the present,' he argued, cannot bring forth art, because it will destroy its fruits the moment they have been created; after all, 'the present will be history tomorrow.'⁵⁸ In this sense, art and architecture continued to need a dialogue with, or at least a recognition of the past in order to 'create' (*scheppen*).⁵⁹ This historicism, Veth insisted, drew neither from mere antiquarianism nor ignorance of the 'instability of all things,' but from a realization that creativity – both in the past, present and future – relies on an independence from contingent fashion and temporary whims.⁶⁰ The connection Veth laid between the ongoing

modernization of Dutch urban space and the conditions of cultural creativity resonated with Huizinga, arguably one of Veth's most avid readers.

Huizinga had corresponded with Veth since at least 1895, when they both became involved in the newly founded Christian-socialist magazine *De Kroniek*.⁶¹ Huizinga embraced Veth's suspicion towards the on-going urban modernization in the Netherlands. In 1915, a day after having heard Veth's presentation of an early draft of 'Peaceful Destruction,' Huizinga wrote to Veth that the architectural transformations of Amsterdam had given him stomach aches.⁶² 'You and I,' Huizinga proceeded to write in this letter, share the same 'emotion of beauty.' The similarity of their conservative conception of cultural creativity – that is, of a creativity relying on a continued dialogue with the past – is apparent in 'Autumntide,' which Huizinga had been working on since 1906, and which appeared a couple years after said letter.⁶³ The opening passage of the book would be devoted to the virtues of medieval architecture and urban planning, and in the preceding foreword to the first edition, Huizinga reflected more generally on the need to appreciate the fertile soil of historical cultures:

It is usually the origin of the new that our mind seeks in the past. [...] Yet in searching for the new life that was emerging, one easily forgets that, in history as in nature, dying and being born perpetually keep pace with one another. Old forms of civilization die off at the same time and in the same soil in which the new finds the nourishment to blossom.⁶⁴

Historians, Huizinga argued, had tended to privilege the singular beginning of 'the new,' and to forget that 'the new' can only grow on and from the soil of that which has preceded it. On this seasonal soil, the new appropriates the material already present at its inception – there is no singular, original, and independent raw creation; there is only recreation. By placing such reflections at the very outset of his book on the late Middle Ages, Huizinga addressed at once at least two different points: he addressed (1) on both a methodological and ethical level Burckhardt's understanding of the Renaissance as a unique, ahistorical, and singular *Schöpfung* supposedly independent of the preceding medieval times; and (2) he responded along Veth's arguments to the 'peaceful destruction' of medieval urban planning and early modern architecture both in Amsterdam and beyond.⁶⁵ Regarding both points, Huizinga drew from his aforementioned predisposition towards a conservative aesthetics the conclusion that human creativity has been (his historiographical claim) and must continue to be (his ethical claim) involved with the ideals of the past.

The implicit role of Huizinga's experiences of modernity in his medieval historiography was embedded in a pronounced feature of the Dutch historical discourse at the time. In the Netherlands, the historical discipline had grown especially since 1830 from an elaborate system of historical societies, journals, and museums, each differently trying to explore and make sense of the many archives that had been made available to the public since the Batavian Revolution and the Napoleonic occupation that ensued.⁶⁶ From the 1840s onwards, several publications on Dutch national history by Dutch historians such as Guillaume Groen van Pinsterer (1801–1876), Reinier Bakhuizen (1810–1865), Robert Fruin (1823–1899), Petrus Blok (1855–1929) had contributed to the politicization of especially medieval and seventeenth-century Dutch history.⁶⁷ By emphasizing, downplaying, or straight-out neglecting either of these periods, historians could and did express sympathy for a variety of political and ethical positions regarding monarchism, republicanism, liberalism and the role of religious pluralism in Dutch identity. Huizinga was well aware of the ethical-political potential of historical research. To him and his peers, historical works could accommodate contemporary concerns alongside empirical diligence, impartiality and precision.

Huizinga's book on the 'autumn' and 'crisis' of the late Middle Ages was conceived and composed as the inner city's medieval anatomy and seventeenth-century architectural heritage receded from the urban landscape's character (Figure 1). The synchronization of these two 'crises' by Huizinga took place on at least three levels:⁶⁸ (1) both the late Middle Ages and the early twentieth century experienced the destructive forces of 'decadence' and 'mechanization';⁶⁹ (2) the 'mechanization' and 'optimization' of the modern urban spaces brought about the gradual



Figure 1. The canal along the *Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal* had been dug in the fifteenth century, and was drained in 1884 in order to accommodate traffic and the transportation of goods. As a consequence, the figure of Atlas, located on the roof of the royal palace, overlooked not silent water (left) but buzzing traffic (right).

destruction of architectural references to the past; in effect, (3) the medieval past was understood both in ‘Autumntide’ and in early twentieth-century urban planning in terms of precisely its non-functional nature and value. In order to appreciate and conceptualize the relation between (1) these three levels of historiographic interconnection between modernity and the Middle Ages and (2) Huizinga’s ‘*heimwee*’ for a past reduced to debris,⁷⁰ consider the following passage from Darius Gafijczuk on ‘the burden of the past,’ and ‘the ruin’ as a form of ‘historical awareness.’⁷¹

[Inhabited] ruins, weighed down by the “burden of history” and the trauma of destruction, invent a past that “lives as nervously and unpredictably as the present into which it protrudes its face.” Inhabited ruins, as forms of unique modern presence based on distance ontology, act as *frontier formations*, where something begins its presencing, not a boundary at which something ceases. This frontier is marked by a present that has partially collapsed under its own weight.⁷²

Huizinga did not merely respond to the external object of the ‘waning’ of an architectural heritage. Rather, the experience of the its disappearance – its becoming debris, and its subsequent transportation to dumping grounds (Figure 2) – mediated, conditioned Huizinga’s historical depiction of fifteenth-century Burgundian culture. In Gafijczuk’s Ankersmit-inspired vocabulary: Huizinga’s ‘inhabited ruin’ – a Netherlands in an industrial aesthetic transition – conditioned the dramatic ‘form’ wherein the Middle Ages were made urgent, were made ‘present’ precisely through their disappearance.⁷³ Under these conditions, the late Middle Ages appeared to Huizinga at the beginning of the twentieth century in terms of their failed resistance to the instrumental, industrial ethics of modernity. Huizinga’s late Middle Ages –

both in 1403 and 1903, so to speak – took shape in their contrast to the malleable and instrumental world of industrial ‘labour’⁷⁴.

When Huizinga wrote of his ‘*heimwee*’ for the pre-modern city, he wrote not of a diachronic wish to access an inaccessible past; he expressed a synchronic sympathy for a frame of mind sensitive to non-instrumental considerations. Huizinga’s ‘*heimwee*’ and his depiction of the Middle Ages were not answers established independently of and in response to the question of how to feel at home in a modern world. Huizinga’s ‘*heimwee*’ did not stand outside of the ruin it addressed. If anything, Huizinga’s depiction of late medieval culture was itself the ruin, or, in Gafijczuk’s vocabulary, the ‘inhabited ruin’ of his world: Huizinga’s appreciation and his account of late-medieval culture were the dialectic counterparts of the modernization he witnessed, whose ability to transform revealed at once the need and responsibility to preserve, and re-create. In this capacity, Huizinga’s inquiry into the Middle Ages, and its call to remain sensitive to ‘the eternally balanced pace’ between past and future was always in antagonistic dialogue with ‘the tyranny of the present’ experienced.⁷⁵ Huizinga’s Middle Ages began in 1903 as a modern experience of loss.

To conclude, Huizinga, like Veth, fell into neither a romantic idealization of the past, nor a pessimistic rejection of change. Huizinga privileged, first and foremost, the need to engage with, and not reject the past as one seeks avenues for aesthetic renewal. This conviction transpired both through (1) the fact that he wrote a book on the virtues of medieval culture in times hostile to the medieval aesthetic, and (2) his narration of this medieval culture. Huizinga’s image of the agents of late medieval culture was congruent with his own ethical self-understanding: van Eyck reinvented, recreated and remediated medieval aesthetic ideals through new technological abilities; similarly, Huizinga



Figure 2. Between 1870 and 1920, Amsterdam accommodated innumerable sites of demolition. In areas around *De Jordaan* (left), *Spuiplein* (middle) and the central canals (right) buildings were replaced by modern housing projects. The newspaper article from 1903 cited above would have referred to such construction work. As a consequence of this urban renovation, the transportation debris and rubble over streets and canals became part of daily street life.

feared that an outright rejection of historical images would give way to a destructive and raging instrumentalism and an ensuing sense of homelessness, both in personal and urban life. Only through recreative play, Huizinga held, can human culture and the material world belong to each other – and in order to play, Huizinga held, one needs to dutifully hold on to the rules which are handed down by those images called historical.

5. Conclusion

Huizinga understood his ‘Autumntide of the Middle Ages’ as a response to a book published seven decades earlier, Burckhardt’s ‘The Culture of the Renaissance in Italy,’ and most literature on the relation between these two books has understood Huizinga’s response in terms of medieval periodization: where did the Middle Ages end, where did modernity start? However, in order for two works to negotiate the borders of a given historical period, they must explore similar or at least complementary historical material – and this is by no means straightforwardly the case in the books at hand. For this reason, the present article has offered a different interpretation of Huizinga’s response; it has understood the opposition of ‘Autumntide’ to ‘Civilization’ not in terms of a historical debate over the nature of commonly defined empirical material, but in terms of an ethically-invested, epistemic difference. Epistemically, where Burckhardt suggested privileging the novelty of mechanical innovations and how they constituted the new, inherently malleable world of Renaissance Italy, Huizinga insisted on privileging the medieval ideals and symbols these technical innovations continued to serve. Ethically, Huizinga’s epistemic emphasis on the creative potential of recreation fed into a conservative ethics aroused by his experience of loss through urban modernization.

For reasons belonging to the mid-nineteenth-century context of Switzerland and the German Confederation, Burckhardt had described Renaissance Italy in terms of its ability to shake off the shackles of moral principles, metaphysical categories, and historical traditions. Huizinga admired Burckhardt’s description, and had studied it closely, but given the context of early twentieth-century Netherlands, Burckhardt’s admiration for historical rupture was lost on Huizinga. From at least 1903, Huizinga grew aware of and upset with the destruction of historical heritage in Dutch urban landscapes. Against the background of the industrial logic driving the aesthetics transition, the symbols of medieval culture were understood in terms of their ability to reproduce the antithesis of instrumental reasoning: timeless ideals. What at the turn of the century appeared as the non-instrumentality of medieval and early-modern architecture and urban planning became, for Huizinga, its historical essence and virtue: Huizinga’s Middle Ages did not labour, they played; they did not erupt, they mirrored; they did not produce, they reproduced. The epistemic opposition between ‘Autumntide’ and ‘Civilization’ was thus embedded in an ethical context: Burckhardt had been worried about the consequences of nationalist myths; Huizinga mourned the loss of the traditions of the past. As a consequence, they each saw a different image of history and modernity in the mirror of van Eyck.

Alongside its historical dimension, this argument carries also a historiographical claim. This article offers a case in point for the potential of Gąfijczuk’s historiography of the ‘inhabited ruin’ to our understanding of the relation between, on the one hand, the wide-spread aesthetic transitions of the 1900s and ‘10s, and, on the other hand, the reconstruction and experience of the space of history and historical imagination in that period. The transformation of the urban spaces offered, quite literally, new sites of history, where a crumbling past appeared to be in need for reproduction and salvation. This particular appearance of a ruinous history tied into a wider ethics of preservation that appealed to numerous academic authors of Huizinga’s generation – say, those born in 1860s and ‘80. Huizinga’s history was itself the lived experience of ruptures, sudden transformation, ensuing uncertainty, and the subsequently experienced duty to preserve past ideals. This ethics of preservation not only influenced his understanding, interpretation, and appreciation of historical actors; according to Huizinga, this ethics of preservation was what constituted the

existence history to begin. The history of culture was one of incessant re-creation – and this conviction reappeared in several forms time and again in Huizinga's later writings of the 1920s, '30s and '40s.

Notes

1. The titles in the original languages are respectively *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* and *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*. Throughout this article, these works are respectively referred to as 'Autumntide,' and 'Civilization.' Until the most recent translation by Leiden University Press (2020), *Herfsttij* has commonly been translated as 'Waning.'
2. 'Graves défauts,' BW I: Huizinga-Pirenne (1919): 271. All references to Huizinga's personal letters draw from Huizinga's collected correspondence, published in 1989, *Johan Huizinga: Briefwisseling I-III* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1989). These references have the following anatomy: BW [band number]: [sender-recipient (year): (page)].
3. See e.g. U. Daniel, *Kompendium Kulturgeschichte* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001); P. Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).
4. J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1981), 181.
5. J. Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, trans. D. Webb, ed. G. Small and A. van der Lem (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2020), 398; VW III: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 330. All references to Huizinga's original publications in Dutch draw from his collected works, published 1948–1951: J. Huizinga, *Johan Huizinga: Verzamelde Werken I–IX* (Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon N.V., 1951). These references have the following anatomy: VW [band number]: [title (year): (page)].
6. J. Tollebeek, "Renaissance" and "Fossilization": Michelet, Burckhardt, and Huizinga', *Renaissance Studies* 15, no. 3 (2001): 358.
7. Th. J.G. Locher, 'Johan Huizinga', *Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde*, 1946, 101; W.K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought* (New York, Chicago, Dallas, Atlanta & San Francisco: The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1948), 369; E. Gombrich, *In Search of Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 28; W. Kaegi, *Vom Begriff der Kulturgeschichte: Zum hundertsten Geburtstag Johan Huizingas* (Leiden: University Press Leiden, 1973), 5; W.J. Bouwsma, "The Waning of the Middle Ages" by Johan Huizinga', *Daedalus* 103, no. 1 (1974): 37; H.M. Pachter, 'Masters of Cultural History III: Johan Huizinga – The Historian as Magister Ludi', *Salmagundi*, no. 46 (1979): 108; F. Haskell, 'Huizinga and the Flemish Renaissance', in *History and its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993), 483; W. Krul, 'In the Mirror of Van Eyck: Johan Huizinga's "Autumn of the Middle Ages"', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27, no. 3 (1997): 355–6; E. Peters and W.P. Simons, 'The New Huizinga and the Old Middle Ages', *Speculum* 74, no. 3 (1999): 604; C. Strupp, *Johan Huizinga: Geschichtswissenschaft als Kulturgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 135; Tollebeek, "Renaissance" and "Fossilization", 358.
8. E.g. Huizinga's 'Renaissance and Realism,' published 1920, and 'The Problem of the Renaissance,' published in 1926. VW IV: *Het Probleem der Renaissance* (1920): 231–75; *Renaissance en Realisme* (1926): 276–97.
9. The Dutch 'herschepjen' is translated with 'recreation,' but in Dutch this term does not have the leisurely connotation of its English counterpart: it means literally to re-create.
10. '[Veth] bevestigde mij, wat het hart mij zei, dat het impressionisme niet de eenige weg was ter vernieuwing, en dat het niet noodzakelijk was, het oude af te zweren, om het nieuwe lief te hebben.' VW VI: *Jan Veth* (1927): 482.
11. The relation between 'Autumntide' and the Dutch fin-de-siècle has been mentioned before, see W.E. Krul, "Het Leven der Woorden. Taalkunde en Geschiedenis in Huizinga's Vroegste Wetenschappelijke Werk," *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (1989): 365; H. Kaminsky, "From Lateness to Waning to Crisis: The Burden of the Later Middle Ages," *Journal of Early Modern History* 4, no. 1 (2000): 85–125. Neither article, however, mentions Huizinga's experiences of the urban projects explored in the present piece. While Krul focusses on the role of WWI in Huizinga's medievalism, Kaminsky explores Huizinga's fin-de-siècle vocabulary.
12. L.J. Dorsman, 'Periodisering als Integrale Benadering: Nederlandse Historici in het Fin-de-Siècle', *Theoretische Geschiedenis* 16, no. 3 (1989): 292; W.E. Krul, 'Het Leven der Woorden. Taalkunde en Geschiedenis in Huizinga's Vroegste Wetenschappelijke Werk', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (1989): 371; W.E. Krul, *Historicus Tegen de Tijd* (Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij Groningen, 1990), 131–2; H. Kaminsky, 'From Lateness to Waning to Crisis: The Burden of the Later Middle Ages', *Journal of Early Modern History* 4, no. 1 (2000): 85–125; W. Simons, 'Wrestling with the Angel', in *Rereading Huizinga: Autumn of the Middle Ages, a Century Later*, ed. P. Arnade, M. Howell, and A. van der Lem (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 41–64.
13. D. Gafijczuk, 'Dwelling within: The Inhabited Ruins of History', *History and Theory* 52, no. 2 (2013): 149, 163.

14. Ibid., 157, 169.
15. Ibid., 153.
16. For works on the relation between Burckhardt's conception of Renaissance culture and his own political times, see especially L. Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt: A Study in Unseasonable Ideas* (London/Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 13–108; M.A. Ruehl, *The Italian Renaissance in the German Historical Imagination, 1860–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 61–70.
17. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 47; Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 44.
18. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 2, 2, 79; Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 2, 2, 75.
19. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 81.
20. Ibid., 48. The original reads:

Der wunderbare florentinische Geist, scharf rasonierend und künstlerisch schaffend zugleich, gestaltet den politischen und sozialen Zustand unaufhörlich um und beschreibt und richtet ihn ebenso unaufhörlich. So wurde Florenz die Heimat der politischen Doktrinen und Theorien, der Experimente und Sprünge, aber auch mit Venedig die Heimat der Statistik und allein und vor allen Staaten der Welt die Heimat der geschichtlichen Darstellung im neuern Sinne. Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 45

21. '[Der] Staat als berechnete, bewußte Schöpfung, als Kunstwerk.' Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 2.
22. Burckhardt, 2. The Phaidon Press edition has translated this with 'a new fact;' I suggest 'a new living thing,' or 'a new life' instead.
23. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 5, 217, 279; Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 4, 205, 261.
24. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 81; Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 76. Huizinga discusses this term coined by Burckhardt in VW IV: *Het Probleem der Renaissance* (1926): 245.
25. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 82; Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 77.
26. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 81; Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 76.
27. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 160, 262; Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 151, 245.
28. Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 336. These terms appear in the notes to *Die Kultur*; they did not make it into the translation by Phaidon Press.
29. The extent of this instrumental opportunism and amorality was described by Burckhardt at several instances in purposively unsettling prose:

At his court, the most brilliant in Europe, since that of Burgundy had ceased to exist, immorality of the worst kind was prevalent; the daughter was sold by the father, the wife by the husband, the sister by the brother. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 27; Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 25

30. '[daß] an die Stelle des christlichen Lebensideals, der Heiligkeit, das der historischen Größe trat.' Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 262; Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 245.
31. 'de grote leermeeester,' BW I: Huizinga-Brom (1919): 257.
32. BW I: Huizinga-Pirenne (1919): 271.
33. According to Wessel Krul, Huizinga first read Burckhardt's 'Civilization' around 1893. Krul, *Historicus Tegen de Tijd*, 120.
34. Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, 93. 'Het schijnt mij toe, dat dit een der punten is, waarop Burckhardt de afstand tussen Middeleeuwen en Renaissance, tussen West-Europa en Italie te groot gezien heeft.' VW III: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 79.
35. BW I: Huizinga-Pirenne (1919): 271.
36. Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, 90–105; VW III: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 76–87.
37. As was mentioned in the introduction, Huizinga would later address Burckhardt's empirical material in an essay from 1920 titled 'The Problem of the Renaissance' see VW IV: *Het Probleem der Renaissance* (1920): 231–75. In this article, and following Konrad Burdach (1859–1936), Huizinga argued that the creativity of the Italian Renaissance was also 'empirically' a matter of recreation. The very term 'Re-naissance,' Huizinga held, had at its time been adopted through the awareness of the creative potential of conservation. In the present article, however, I have chosen *not* to read 'Autumntide' in the light of this later essay by Huizinga.
38. Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, 44; VW III: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 35.
39. Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, 4; VW III: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 4. The importance of this emphasis is further illustrated by the book's very subtitle: 'a study of forms of life and thought of the

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in France and the Netherlands.' Huizinga had made a similar statement in his first book on American culture, *Mensch en Menigte*, which had been published a year earlier, VW V: *Mensch en Menigte in Amerika* (1918): 251.

40. This was also the case in the book's first edition, which had a different table of content, consisting of 14 rather than 22 chapters.
41. Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, 42–75; VW III: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 34–65.
42. 'die kräftige und schöpferische Menschen,' Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 310.
43. Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, 51; VW III: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 43.
44. Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, 51–2.

Hoe werkt nu op het leven de derde houding: de zucht naar het schonere leven volgens een gedroomd ideaal? Zij herschept de vormen van het leven in kunstvormen. Maar het zijn niet enkel de kunstwerken als zodanig, waarin zij haar schoonheidszin uitdrukt, zij wil het leven zelf veredelen met schoonheid, en vult de samenleving zelf met spel en vormen. Hier worden juist aan de persoonlijke levenskunst de hoogste eisen gesteld, eisen, die alleen kunnen worden nagestreefd door een elite, in een kunstig levensspel. VW III: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 43

45. Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, 111; VW III: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 91.
46. Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, 51–52. VW III: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 43.
47. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 181; Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 170.
48. Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, 398.

Met de kunst der Van Eyck heeft de picturale uitbeelding der heilige dingen een graad van detaillering en naturalisme bereikt, die misschien strikt kunsthistorisch een begin kan heten, maar cultuurhistorisch een einde beduidt. De uiterste spanning in het aards verbeelden van het goddelijke was hier bereikt; de mystische inhoud dier verbeelding stond gereed om uit die beelden te ontvlieden en enkel de lust aan de bonte vorm achter te laten. VW III: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 330

49. Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, 371; VW III: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 312.
50. The original title of 'Autumntide' had, in fact, been 'In the Mirror of van Eyck.' A. van der Lem, *Johan Huizinga: Leven in Werk in Beelden en Documenten* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1993), 138.
51. Later, Huizinga would also address in writing the urban modernization of Leiden, Delft, and Haarlem. Huizinga's experience of and response to changing urban landscapes will be discussed in a forthcoming piece by Anton van der Lem regarding the city of Leiden, where Huizinga lived 1915–1942. A. Van der Lem, *Verbreuk Nooit een Oude Rooilijn! Huizinga over Stadhuis en Stadsschoon in Leiden* (Leiden: Antiquariaat Klikspaan, 2021).
52. A recently published piece on Huizinga's reconstruction of historical urban cultures leaves strangely unmentioned his personal experiences of urban culture and urbanization. J. Dumolyn and É. Lecuppre-Desjardin, 'Huizinga's Silence', in *Rereading Huizinga: Autumn of the Middle Ages, a Century Later*, ed. P. Arnade, M. Howell and A. van der Lem (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 65–84.
53. In his letter to Willem Bijvanck, Huizinga, wrote that he felt *Heimweh* (*heimwee*) for the medieval, 'pre-Sarphatic Amsterdam.' Samuel Sarphati (1813–1863) was a Dutch physician and prolific city planner; his name had become synonymous with the larger project of Amsterdam's nineteenth-century modernization. BW I: Huizinga-Bijvanck (1913): 139.
54. See e.g. James C. Kennedy, 'Vooruitgang en Crisis, 1870–1949', in *Een Beknopte Geschiedenis van Nederland* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2017).
55. 'In het hartje van de stad, rondom de verkeersader den Dam, ziet men dagelijks groote wagens met puin en verbrokkeld pleister en in onze fraaie stadsgrachten schuiten, zwaar beladen met balken, binten en steenen, de overblijfselen van tal van gesloopte perceelen, welke naar plaatsen afgevoerd worden, waar "afbraak" geveild wordt.' 'Verbouwingen in Amsterdam', *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, 22 June 1903, 14.
56. 'Het moet toch wel de aandacht van velen trekken, dat in verschillende drukke wijken van de stad de handen uit de mouwen worden gestoken, allerwegen gehamerd, gemetseld en gegraven wordt en men stoere arbeiders den moker ziet zwaaien, om voor goed weg te maaïen wat niet meer deugde, wat oud en gebrekkig, ziekelijk en afgeleefd was.' 'Verbouwingen in Amsterdam,' 14.
57. 'meedogenloze moker,' J. Veth, 'Vredes-Verwoestingen', *De Gids* 80, no. 1 (1916): 512.
58. 'ook het heden zal morgen weer gisteren zijn en zoo min als dat heden de toekomst mag tyranniseeren, mag het rauwelijks van achter ons ligt verdonkermanen.' Veth, 'Vredes-Verwoestingen', 524.
59. Veth, 'Vredes-Verwoestingen', 524.
60. 'onbestendigheid aller dingen,' Veth, 'Vredes-Verwoestingen', 523.
61. Huizinga and Veth continued to correspond until Veth's death in 1925, and in 1927, a eulogical biography of Veth by Huizinga was published. VW VI: *Leven en Werken van Jan Veth* (1927): 339–480.
62. BW I: Huizinga-Veth (1915): 181.

63. Regarding the dating of Huizinga's book project, see e.g. BW I: Huizinga-Colenbrander (1906): 81. In his autobiography, written in German confinement in 1943 and posthumously published, Huizinga later wrote that he had conceived of the book and its central claim 'between 1906 and 1909, probably in 1907.' VW I: *Mijn weg tot de historie* (1947): 39.
64. Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, 3.

Het is meestal de oorsprong van het nieuwe, wat onze geest in het verleden zoekt. [...] Doch bij het zoeken naar het nieuwe leven, dat opkwam, vergat men licht, dat in de geschiedenis als in de natuur het sterven en het geboren worden eeuwig gelijke tred houden. Oude beschavingsvormen sterven af terzelfdertijd en op dezelfde bodem, waarin het nieuwe voedsel vindt om op te bloeien. VW III: *Herfst-tij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 3
65. In this period, Huizinga's political and aesthetic conservatism was laced with the greatest personal loss of his life to that date: on 21 July 1914, his wife Mary V. Huizinga-Schorer died of cancer. In his personal correspondence of the time, Huizinga wrote of an 'inexpressible sadness,' which appears to have loomed over him for decades rather than years. The role of his grief in the narrative of 'Autumntide' is yet to be properly explored, and likely of significant importance, yet lies beyond the methodological scope of this article. BW I: Johan Huizinga – Jakob Huizinga (brother) (1914): 165. Arguably, this sadness continued to loom over him for another two decades until he met Auguste Schölvinck. They entered a happily communion in 1937.
66. The networks, practices and interests from which the Dutch historical discipline grew have been studied with admirable detail in J. Tollebeek, *De Toga van Fruin. Denken over Geschiedenis in Nederland Sinds 1860* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1996); P. Huistra, *Bouwmeesters, Zedenmeesters: Geschiedoefening in Nederland Tussen 1830 en 1870* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2019). Huistra's book in particular is truly foundational and indispensable for any comprehensive understanding of Dutch 19th-century historical culture.
67. See e.g. Groen van Prinsterer's 'Kort overzicht van de geschiedenis des vaderlands' (1841), Bakhuizen's 'Handboek der geschiedenis van het vaderland' (1846), 'Het voorspel van den Tachtigjarigen Oorlog' (1859–60), Blok's 'De geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Volk' (1892). Each of these works addressed more or less explicitly the common political state of affairs through 'impartial' (*onpartijdig*) historical inquiry.
68. Huizinga himself used the word 'crisis' to describe both his own and the late medieval period.
69. Here, Huizinga used language typical of *fin-de-siècle* culture as analytical terms to describe the medieval mentality.
70. BW I: Huizinga-Bijvanck (1913): 139.
71. Gafijczuk, 'Dwelling within: The Inhabited Ruins of History', 150. In this citation, Gafijczuk cites respectively Quignard's 'The roving shadows' and Heidegger's 'Building, dwelling, thinking.'
72. Gafijczuk, 'Dwelling within: The Inhabited Ruins of History', 164.
73. Gafijczuk here draws from Ankersmit's understanding of the 'sublime experience of history.' Roughly stated, this 'experience' is defined as the manifestation of an untheorized awareness that the present has somehow 'broken off' from the past, thus allowing for a particular experience of history as lost. Ankersmit meant to '[resuscitate] the notion of experience [in] historical writing,' after both structuralist and post-structuralist tendencies had dispelled it from the historian's toolbox. F.R. Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 9.
74. A review of Huizinga's 'Autumntide' from 1926 commented on this feature: 'One continually perceives an idealistic spirit trying to make its way through the contemporary climate of ideas, which appears to be ruled exclusively by political and economic considerations and values.' F.W.N. Hugenholtz, 'The Fame of a Masterwork', in *Johan Huizinga 1872–1972*, ed. W.R.H. Koops, E.H. Kossmann, and G. van der Plaats (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), 94.
75. My preferred translation of 'eeuwig gelijken tred,' VW III: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919): 3. Diane Webb's translation is 'perpetually keep pace with one another.' Huizinga, *Autumntide of the Middle Ages*, 3.

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Photographs

Figure 1 – left: Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal (undated), unknown photographer. *Stadsarchief Amsterdam*. Archival code: OSIM00008003998.

Figure 1 – right: Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal (1910), Bernard F. Eilers (1878–1951). *Stadsarchief Amsterdam*. Archival code: 010186002314.

Figure 2 – left: *Lindengracht* (1895), Eduard H. J. Weismüller (1849 – unknown). *Stadsarchief Amsterdam*. Archival code: 0814FO000030.

Figure 2 – middle: Spuistraat (1906), unknown photographer. *Stadsarchief Amsterdam*. Archival code: OSIM00001003635.

Figure 2 – right: *Keizersgracht* (1906), George. H. Breitner (1857–1923). *Stadsarchief Amsterdam*. Archival code: 010104000033.