

# *"This, Here, and Soon"*

## Johan Huizinga's *Esquisse* of American Culture<sup>1</sup>

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To offer yet another essay on Johan Huizinga may understandably seem superfluous. Several fine articles about him have appeared in the United States, even more in Europe, and a great many in his native land. Huizinga has hardly been neglected since his death in 1945. His books remain in print. Indeed, most of them have been translated into various languages, which befits one of the masters of modern historical thought. In the familiar portrait (made in 1936 by H. H. Kamerlingh-Onnes), we see the scholar in his study, notice the inquisitive but calmly reflective face, long and upward-curving lines at the outer edges of his eyes, a short neck, rounded shoulders, and the humped upper back of a desk-bound man, age sixty-five, who had spent so much of his life reading and writing.<sup>2</sup>

Our sense of Huizinga's temperament is equally familiar, for it has been sketched often: anti-Freudian and anti-Marxian because both of those value systems were anti-Christian in their implications, and because Huizinga's mind was too subtle to be trapped by any mode of determinism. Then there is the conservative Huizinga: the man of delicate aesthetic sensibility, the harsh critic of technology (so mechanistic in its social implications) and of mass culture. At a conference held in 1972, at Groningen, to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of Huizinga's birth, E. H. Gombrich remarked upon his plea for renunciation. The stoic historian "wanted to persuade his contemporaries to exercise restraint, to practise austerity and to seek the simple life."<sup>3</sup>

Huizinga has been criticized for romanticizing the past, for anthropomorphizing culture, for elitism, for a lack of conceptual rigor, and for undue pessimism about the human conditions and its prospects.

The only aspect of the customary characterization of him that has been softened in recent years is the view (initially emphasized by Pieter Geyl and Jan Romein) that Huizinga was indifferent to political realities. As Robert Anchor wrote in 1978, however, Huizinga "plausibly viewed politics as *symptomatic rather than causative*," and "sought to diagnose the disease of which the myths of national and racial superiority, and the new justifications for violence, cruelty, and war were the most conspicuous signs. Such statements, indeed, were not neutral. The Nazis deemed them dangerous enough to detain Huizinga during the occupation in the out-of-the-way town of De Steeg."<sup>4</sup>

Despite familiar criticisms, Huizinga retains our respect. *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919) continues to be widely read; it is still regularly assigned as a required text at American universities.<sup>5</sup> When Huizinga's two books on the United States were published together in English translation (1972), that volume, entitled *America: A Dutch Historian's Vision, from Afar and Near*, enjoyed considerable success in various sorts of college courses in the United States.<sup>6</sup> Above all, *Homo Ludens* (1938), which was not translated into English until 1950, is frequently cited by scholars and popular writers alike. In *The Complete Book of Running*, for example, a best-selling manual for joggers published in 1977, Jim Fixx announces that "any decently thorough inquiry into the meaning of sport will eventually bring us to the source of much present-day thinking on the matter: Johan Huizinga's profound *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*" (p. 20). If, in fact, *Homo Ludens* has become Huizinga's best-known book, that may well be symptomatic of a remarkable increase in leisure during the past generation, and of our attention to leisure as a many-faceted cultural phenomenon. Surely, much has changed since 1931 when Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote that "one dreams of leisure but as the old farmer said, when he saw the hippopotamus, I don't believe there's no such critter."<sup>7</sup>

Although much has now been said about Huizinga and his views, no one (to the best of my knowledge) has yet undertaken a discrete examination of his changing perceptions of American culture—a story, or relationship, that essentially took place during the quarter century between 1916 and 1941. There are several reasons why I am glad to attempt such an assessment. First, because I must admit not merely my professional admiration for Huizinga, especially the wonderful range of his interests and reading,<sup>8</sup> but even a certain empathy for many of his cultural criticisms and predilections, however unfashionable they may be. Second, because Huizinga had the courage to generalize: about Dutch civilization, about the factors that had shaped the American national character, and, ultimately, about the destiny of

humankind and its evolving culture. Wallace Notestein, a distinguished historian from the United States who was nearly Huizinga's contemporary, wrote to a friend in 1933 that "we should all write more about History in its general aspects. Are we all thinking enough about that?"<sup>9</sup> Huizinga most certainly was, especially during that dark decade of the 1930's.

A third reason for looking at Huizinga's changing perceptions of American culture is that they are indicative, in microcosm, of the contrapuntal quality of Dutch-American cultural relations: on again, off again, alternately apathetic and enthusiastic. Between the 1860's and 1953 a frieze of frescoes was painted in the Rotunda of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. The frieze depicts many important aspects of American history, including the contributions of Columbus, Cortez, Pizarro, De Soto, Pocahontas, William Penn, and many others. Yet the role of the Dutch in the New World is strangely neglected. Nevertheless, American art and iconography obviously owe a substantial debt to the Netherlands. We can see it in the Hudson River School, and particularly in a major historical painting that was offered for sale in 1980: Robert Weir's large canvas called "The Landing of Henry Hudson," done in 1838. One finds evidence of confusion during the early 1930's about Dutch colonial settlements and traditions in America. But by 1937 a Netherlands Pioneer and Historical Foundation had been established, and a few years later the Library of Congress housed a Netherlands Studies Unit. In 1974 Paul O'Dwyer, president of New York's City Council, insisted that the official date for the founding of New York be changed from 1664, the time of England's conquest, to 1625, when Dutch colonists began to arrive. O'Dwyer introduced a bill in the City Council to alter the date on both the city's flag and its official seal. When interviewed, O'Dwyer explained that his initiative "was an effort to set history straight and to recognize the city's Dutch heritage on the 700th anniversary of the founding of the city of Amsterdam."<sup>10</sup>

Fourth, and perhaps most important, I believe that an examination of Huizinga's sketches of the United States will enhance our understanding of him as a writer in at least two, paradoxically contradictory ways. On the one hand, I find that his comparatively unfamiliar books on the United States (first published in 1918 and 1927) explicitly anticipate the major themes of his better-known books, especially *In the Shadow of Tomorrow* (1936) and *Homo Ludens* (1938). But on the other hand, I also find that Huizinga seems to have compartmentalized his studies of America and of Europe, with the result that emphases and insights that inform his work on the New World are often strangely missing from his writings on the Old, and vice versa. Curious? To be sure; but historians in general, even the very



Johan Huizinga, by H. H. Kamerlingh-Onnes, 1936

best, are neither consistent nor lacking in elements of the non-rational. A close look at Huizinga on America can teach us something fresh about the complexities and curiosities of the historian's craft.

## II

In about 1915 or 1916, Huizinga became interested in American history. He began to read those materials available to him in Holland, and in 1917-18 offered a general course at the University of Leiden on the history of the United States. Explaining that "we know too little about America," he published four long essays in 1918, and then two years later revised them as a book. Geyl rendered the title of this study as *Man and the Crowd in America*. Professor Herbert H. Rowen of Rutgers, whose fine translation has made the work accessible to those of us unable to read Dutch, calls it *Man and the Masses in America*.<sup>11</sup>

Call it what you will, the volume is interesting and important for many reasons. For example, it reversed the popular and *politique* image that Dutch and American history were remarkably similar. On January 18, 1912, Horace White, a prominent newspaperman and Republican politician, spoke at the annual dinner of the Holland Society of New York (held at the Waldorf-Astoria). In response to the toast "The Netherlands and the United States," White remarked that "the Netherlands and the United States have much in common, both in history and purpose. Each wrested independence from a powerful empire after a protracted struggle; each forged in the fires of that struggle a chain of inseparable parts; each in her time became a refuge for the oppressed, and the home of freedom, tolerance and good will. From her trials, and as the outcome of her heroism, each country reared a great man—soldier, statesman, ruler—William the Silent, and George Washington."<sup>12</sup>

Huizinga was much too shrewd, as well as too knowledgeable, to follow that route of reductivism. In comparing the American Revolution with the French and "the controversy over the Dutch Patriots" (of the 1770's and 1780's), he found it "at once apparent that the American Revolution was more conservative than either of these others. There was no towering political and social structure to be overthrown, as in France." Not only did Huizinga repeatedly anticipate the provocative thesis of Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955), but by comparing English, Dutch, and French colonies in the New World he also anticipated Hartz's pioneering volume, *The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada and Australia* (1964).<sup>13</sup>

Huizinga is equally fascinating in his treatment of democracy in

America. Repeated references to Tocqueville and Bryce indicate his thorough familiarity with their classic inquiries. But much had changed in the United States since Bryce published *The American Commonwealth* in 1889. Consequently Huizinga's observations are suitably fresh and acute. He emphasized the decline of democracy in American life, and was attracted to the Turner thesis because it helped him to explain the demise of "the old individualist pioneer democracy." Huizinga believed that Americans achieved efficiency at the expense of democracy; that powerful economic forces worked against egalitarianism; that governmental institutions were becoming less democratic in their actual operations; and that workers were not adequately represented on juries.<sup>14</sup>

He was ahead of his time, moreover, in commenting that "conservatism and democracy are not contradictory" in the United States. "Bourgeois democracy has an old and strong tradition in America . . . and when we see institutional processes such as initiative and referendum work in a conservative way, we have, from the American point of view, absolutely no right to call the result undemocratic for that reason." Huizinga believed that America's self-proclaimed mission had long been "to give the world the model of a wise, mighty, and prosperous democracy." He argued that American society had been "too thoroughly commercialized" and that "too many individuals are involved in keeping the machinery of production in operation, for a revolutionary doctrine to be able to get much of a grip there." He accurately regarded Woodrow Wilson as a conservative democrat.<sup>15</sup>

The compatibility of contradictory tendencies in American culture fascinated Huizinga. He repeatedly mentions the dominance of practical-idealism (see pp. 166, 176), and collective-individualism (see pp. 50, 165, and 173). As he concluded his lengthy first essay, "the twin concepts of Individualism and Association are felt as a contradiction in American history much less than one would expect on the basis of European history."<sup>16</sup> Although he echoed Tocqueville on the inevitability of conformism in the United States, he nonetheless found that individualism had been able to coexist, and even flourish, alongside the powerful pressures to conform. "While conservative piety and obedient imitation nourished traits of tame conventionality, the living and individual element of the national character grew in the struggle with nature."<sup>17</sup>

Again and again I am impressed by Huizinga's ability, despite limited library resources for Americana, and without having been to the United States (yet), to anticipate the shrewdest insights and inquiries of subsequent observers and scholars. His analysis of public opinion, and especially its changing role in politics, predated Walter Lippmann's now classic book *Public Opinion* (1922).<sup>18</sup> Huizinga

startles me by wondering, "How did the Yankee grow out of the seventeenth-century Puritan of New England?"—a question that Richard Bushman first began to answer, for one colony, in 1967.<sup>19</sup> Huizinga follows with a fascinating speculation that "notwithstanding what happened in Europe, the Enlightenment in America did not combat faith or at least make it impotent but only pushed it a little to one side." He then adds, in consequence, that the United States avoided "the great struggle of revenge against the Enlightenment."<sup>20</sup> Scholars have yet to develop the implications of that insight, or even test it as a hypothesis. Huizinga was equally shrewd in pointing out that "naïve ancestor worship" was "characteristic of America."<sup>21</sup> His acuity here is all the more impressive because the phenomenon in its most blatant form was of recent vintage (c. 1885-1915) and had not been discussed in works available to Huizinga. Finally, I am struck by Huizinga's recognition that great constitutional issues in the United States had a way of developing from relatively trivial quarrels, or what Huizinga would call "only a paltry affair."<sup>22</sup>

Did his American muse ever nod? Of course it did, though one often cannot tell whether the cause was insufficient information, misleading material, or sheer miscalculation. A few examples may suffice. When he wrote of the early colonists that "little or nothing is brought over of whatever is bound up with the history and legends of the mother country," had he not read Edward Eggleston's *The Transit of Civilization from England to America in the Seventeenth Century* (1900)?<sup>23</sup> Huizinga mistakenly regarded Jefferson as a shrewd and aggressive political organizer.<sup>24</sup> He seems to have misunderstood the nature and significance of Andrew Jackson's political career, failing to realize that Jackson himself was a frontier nabob and nascent capitalist.<sup>25</sup> I also believe that Huizinga seriously underestimated slavery as a social issue, and excessively emphasized tariff protectionism as a major precipitant of secession and Civil War.<sup>26</sup>

I am rather inclined to doubt whether "secrecy, violence, and corruption" were any more characteristic of political action groups in the United States than of their European counterparts. Similarly, Huizinga seems needlessly cynical in generalizing about the self-seeking proclivities of American politicians. Consequently he missed the intense degree of ideological commitment in Thaddeus Stevens and reduced that passionate man's motives in the Reconstruction era to little more than "unscrupulous party policy." Nor did Huizinga understand that the Ku Klux Klan enjoyed episodic bursts of intimidating power long past 1870.<sup>27</sup> And finally, to terminate this recital of shortcomings in the historical essays of 1918-20, Huizinga's assertions about American literary culture are often capricious. He could be quite canny about individual authors: especially Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorne. He

shrewdly redressed the historians' neglect of Walt Whitman. (Indeed, Huizinga's strong empathy for Whitman is one of the most engaging and surprising aspects of his book.) Nevertheless, Huizinga overlooked the imaginative implications of what Perry Miller labeled Nature's Nation (according to Huizinga, "The great and true spirit of America does not reveal itself in romanticism of any kind"), and was fairly wide of the mark in declaring that "the imaginative element in American literature is primarily defined by dependence on Europe and the European past."<sup>28</sup>

Far more interesting, though, is this twofold question: from whom did Huizinga learn his American history, and how did the addition of that "string to his bow" affect his overall performance as a virtuoso? The answer to the latter question is as curious as the response to the former is obvious. Charles A. Beard and Frederick Jackson Turner were his major mentors. Turner's essays on the frontier and his "Social Forces in American History" are cited quite frequently. As Huizinga wrote to Turner in 1919, "the notions I borrowed from your 'Significance of the Frontier' of 1893 have helped me more than most of my other reading to form a clear understanding of the main substance of American history."<sup>29</sup> Beard's *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* (1913), his *Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy* (1915), and a textbook called *Contemporary American History, 1877-1913* (1914) were equally important. Huizinga cited Beard more than any other historian, adopted his view of the Constitution as (in Huizinga's words) an "agreement of covetous speculators," and followed Beard's emphasis on the determinative role of economic forces in shaping American imperialism at the close of the nineteenth century. To paraphrase Samuel Eliot Morison, whose early work Huizinga also read, he literally viewed American history "through a Beard."<sup>30</sup>

Yet it does not seem to have affected Huizinga's work in European history—there's the great mystery. He wrote at the very beginning of *Man and the Masses in America* that he wished to use "the facts of American history" as a means of testing the "schematic forms through which we are accustomed to understand history" (p. 7). In his interesting letter to Turner, Huizinga declared that "it has been a great surprise to me to see how much we Europeans could learn from American history, not only as to the subject itself, but also with regard to historical interpretation in general."<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the same Johan Huizinga who ascribed such importance to economic factors in his book about America—at times he almost sounds like an economic determinist—has an altogether different tone in *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, a book on which he worked at the very same time, and published in 1919. As Pieter Geyl and S. Muller Fzn. have noted, Huizinga's treatment of French-Burgundian culture in the fifteenth



century is characterized by "systematic neglect of economic and political factors."<sup>32</sup>

What is one to conclude? Did Huizinga fail to do what he told Frederick Jackson Turner he would do: namely, expand his mode of historical interpretation? Did Huizinga take off one set of eyeglasses and put on another when he shifted back and forth from the Old World to the New? Yes, I suspect that he did, and for two reasons. First, because writing about the United States was not exactly writing *history* for Huizinga. Despite his insistence that his analysis would be that of a cultural historian (pp. 3-5), his approach more nearly approximated that of serious, high journalism: the analyst of contemporary affairs, the author of *In the Shadow of Tomorrow* (1936) and related essays. I find it very significant that Huizinga did not care for early American history, despite the fact that the Dutch had been important participants in that story and that the colonial period corresponded chronologically with a phase that he cared about very much in his own country's history. One of Huizinga's finest and longest essays is called "Dutch Civilisation in the Seventeenth Century." He dismissed the comparable period in American history, however, because he found it uninteresting and aesthetically unattractive.

The history of North America before the War of Independence shows all the features proper to colonial history in general; viz., a certain lack of unity, a certain disparity, a certain rusticity. . . . The general reader . . . will not be struck by particular beauty of line or color in the story of the thirteen separate colonies.<sup>33</sup>

The second reason, in my opinion, is that Huizinga seems to have believed in what we now call "American exceptionalism." If civilization in the United States was profoundly different, then an interpretive schema appropriate to the Western Hemisphere might easily be unsuitable elsewhere. Here is a pertinent passage from *Man and the Masses in America*:

At bottom, every political and cultural question in America is an economic one. On America's virgin soil, which is free of old, strongly rooted social growths, economic factors work with a freedom and directness unknown in European history. Political passions in America are deliberately directed to economic questions, and these are not subordinated to a system of intellectual convictions which become for the man who believes them the content of his culture, (p. 9)

E. H. Gombrich got to the heart of the matter in 1972 when he observed that Huizinga was attracted by the challenge of describing a culture which "could not be encompassed" by the traditional forms

applied to European history.<sup>34</sup> Huizinga may well have been misguided in believing that an economic interpretation was suitable for the United States but not for Europe. Many historians have assumed, after all, that the New World was colonized *when it was* precisely because new economic forces had been unleashed in Europe. Be that as it may, Huizinga seems to have believed otherwise. Hence his apparent proclivity for compartmentalization. Hence extraordinary differences in texture and tone between *Man and the Masses in America* (1918-20) and *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919). Huizinga would have said to his critics that different eras and contexts present divergent historical problems. Every *problematique* deserves its very own mode, or system, of explanation.

### III

During the years from 1920 until 1926, when Huizinga made his only visit to the United States, cultural relations between the two nations intensified in very positive ways. A primary reason seems to have been the abundance of historical anniversaries to commemorate. In 1920 committees were formed in Holland and the United States to plan the tercentenary, beginning August 29, 1921, of the Pilgrims' departure from Holland and their subsequent arrival at Plymouth. In 1923, a Huguenot-Walloon New Netherland Commission came into existence; and the following May a Huguenot-Walloon Tercentenary was celebrated on Staten Island. Meanwhile a professorial chair of Dutch history, ideals, and literature was established at Columbia University; organizations called the Netherland-America Affiliation were created at New York City and The Hague; in 1923 Edward Bok began to publish a series of volumes called "Great Hollanders" (Huizinga's *Erasmus* appeared in that series in 1924); and a Summer School for American Students opened at the University of Leiden in 1924. That same year Victor Hugo Paltsits, chief of the Manuscript Division at the New York Public Library, prepared a paper for the American Antiquarian Society, "The Founding of New Amsterdam in 1626." In 1925 he presented a revised version to the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society; and one year later various exhibitions and publications, popular as well as scholarly, marked the 300th birthday of New Amsterdam (which to many people really meant the genesis of New York as a whole).<sup>35</sup>

A number of the key individuals involved in these activities were either friends of Johan Huizinga or, at the very least, professional colleagues: Dr. Daniel Plooiij, archivist and officer of the Leiden Pilgrim Society; Dr. Cornelis van Vollenhoven, professor of international and colonial law at the University of Leiden; Dr. Albert Eekhof, professor

of church history at Leiden; and Dr. Adriaan J. Barnouw, Queen Wilhelmina Exchange Professor at Columbia. Nevertheless, Huizinga seems to have had little interest in the historical hoopla that culminated in 1926,<sup>36</sup> and his visit should be described as sociological and cultural rather than historical in orientation. It resulted in a slender book, *Life and Thought in America*, published in 1927.<sup>37</sup>

One immediately notices a radical shift in Huizinga's tone. In 1918, writing the preface to *Man and the Masses in America*, he explained that he found himself "stimulated and fascinated as seldom ever before. . . . Something of America's spiritual élan is transmitted to anyone who takes the trouble to understand the spirit of the country." Eight years later Huizinga found the United States to be a spiritual wasteland. The strongest leitmotif of his critique is summed up in an epithet that he repeated throughout the 1927 book: "This, Here, and Soon." It meant that the United States had become a "transitive" rather than a "transcendental" society, a culture that prized communication as a powerful means of influence, and one in which the American "builds himself a better abode in imagination, he creates a world that recognizes him."<sup>38</sup> In 1918 he had casually noticed the "perpetual tension in America between a passionate idealism and an unrestrainable energy directed to material things." By 1926, however, this gap between altruistic ethos and sordid reality had become a dark obsession in Huizinga's mind. He found a stark contrast between "the attitude of the nation in general and the tone of its literature."<sup>39</sup>

In 1918 he had called attention to efficiency: "what the American wants more than anything else." He returned to this point frequently, and concluded that "in the American mind efficiency and democracy are closely related concepts. The endeavor to democratize the idea of God goes hand in hand with pragmatism, and both arise out of the spirit of 'This, Here, and Soon.'" By 1927 Huizinga's tone had become considerably more shrill. He linked the ugly trends of conformity and standardization to the American penchant for efficiency. He condemned the American passion for "saving time," conserving human energy and not wasting opportunities.<sup>40</sup> "The notion that there could exist anything like over-organization does not torment them." The American expectation that technology and "technological organization" could solve any problem disturbed him deeply.<sup>41</sup>

Progress had become a pejorative concept for Huizinga. He selected as an epigram for the first page of Chapter 1 the observation by William James that "progress is a terrible thing" (even more ironic than Huizinga recognized?), and played variations on that theme throughout the book: that Americans had discarded faith because science had replaced religion, and that "the new materialism" had caused a "spiritual emptiness" in the United States.<sup>42</sup> There is a sense

in which our intellectuals have only recently begun to catch up with Huizinga: during the later 1970's, for example, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, undertook a major, multidisciplinary project "on the transformation of the idea of progress."<sup>43</sup>

In Huizinga's own time, however, a kindred spirit in the United States, Carl L. Becker, took a somewhat different view. In a slim volume called *Progress and Power*, comprising three lectures presented at Stanford in 1935, Becker opened with a point similar to Huizinga's: "Standing within the deep shadow of the Great War, it is difficult to recover the nineteenth-century faith either in the fact or the doctrine of progress." But Becker unfurled, as an open question, the great issue on which Huizinga had already passed judgment: "May we still, in whatever different fashion, believe in the progress of mankind?" Although his answer cannot be labeled as entirely positive, Becker remained more hopeful than Huizinga. Becker began with the assumption "that the multiplication of implements of power has at every stage in human history been as essential to the development of intelligence as the development of intelligence has been essential to the multiplication of implements of power." He concluded that machines are not inevitably beyond man's moral and social control. "The machines, not being on the side of the angels, remain impassive in the presence of indignation, wishful thinking, and the moral imperative, but respond without prejudice or comment or ethical reservation to relevant and accurate knowledge impersonally applied."<sup>44</sup> This was the major difference between Becker and Huizinga on the problem of progress.

Huizinga felt concerned about contemporary American scholarship because in the books that he read "one repeatedly meets a tone of mocking disdain for all faith." Carl Becker, whom he does not mention, would have been a prime example; but Huizinga does deride the "utterly naïve evolutionism" of James Harvey Robinson's *The Mind in the Making: The Relation of Intelligence to Social Reform* (1921), disliked Harry Elmer Barnes's *The New History and the Social Studies* (1925), and expressed particular distaste for current work in social psychology. What Huizinga had admired in Ralph Waldo Emerson, "the sense of the direct and constant presence of mystery in and behind everything," seemed to have disappeared in modern America.<sup>45</sup>

The litany of Huizinga's laments would scarcely provide a lift for sagging spirits. It worried him that "the ideal of education is in fact a religion."<sup>46</sup> The democratization of culture could only augment the "mediocrity which permeates American life." He sneered at the "overwhelming success" of his countryman Hendrik Willem van Loon, educated at Cornell and Harvard, who had chosen to remain in the United

States as a popularizer of Dutch, American, and world history. "His unpretentious scribblings, which the least-educated man can understand, meet the minimum commitment which a public of millions has left over for knowledge."<sup>47</sup> It troubled Huizinga that "America's mind is fundamentally antihistorical"; that "America, with its all-pervasive sense of the future, worships the young"; and that "movie romanticism" was merely the most banal manifestation of "hero-worship" in the United States.<sup>48</sup>

Huizinga seems to have encountered too many arrogant and nationalistic individuals during his 1926 tour, even among academics and intellectuals, who should have been, by definition, candid social critics. He considered American society "an extroverted culture," and regarded the press as an especially egregious example of all that was wrong in the United States. He disliked the "selective emphasis" of our newspapers, their unwillingness to moralize about the news, the banality of their political views, the vulgarity of their advertising, and their "trashiness" in general.<sup>49</sup>

One is obliged to respect Huizinga's honesty and intensity of feeling in *Life and Thought in America*, even if one does not concur in all of his judgments.<sup>50</sup> But the book is interesting and important as more than just another critique. It helps to illuminate the genesis of his well-known cultural pessimism of the 1930's and 1940's. *America* adds chronological precision and a certain causal impetus to our understanding of Huizinga's subsequent trajectory as a cultural critic. *In the Shadow of Tomorrow* (1936) does not mention the United States very often; but when it does, Huizinga simply compresses and reiterates what he had written so stridently a decade earlier. Once again he quotes William James's remark that "progress is a terrible thing" (p. 56). More to the point, just as Tocqueville had viewed democracy in America as a harbinger of Europe's destiny, so Huizinga confronted in the United States his anxieties about the potential degradation of a fading European culture that in many respects he idealized.<sup>51</sup>

Behind the democratic ideal rises up at once the reality of meclianization. . . . The mechanistic conception of social life, with its exclusion of morality and exhortation, seems to leave almost no means for intervention. If we are all just the nearly helpless followers of fashions, manners, and habits defined by our group, the poor slaves of our personal habits, which together determine our character . . . is there any way to bring about *change*, to change and to improve all that which *must* be changed? (pp. 281-82)

The European traveler finds it almost impossible to concentrate when he is in a big American city. The telephone becomes a curse. The variety of

personal assistance and technical devices causes as much diversion of attention and loss of time as it saves work. (p. 252)

The general leveling of culture also affects love life. Just as intellectual enjoyment becomes available for everyone in a thousand ways, and hence loses the quality of something conquered, something which represents success and to which one pays worship, so there also arises a form of sexual satisfaction which signifies the dissolution of old forms of civilization. (pp. 262-63)

Note well, however, that Huizinga made very few criticisms of the United States in 1927 that he did not subsequently make of the Netherlands in 1934-35 or of Europe generally in 1935-36. As he wrote in the foreword to *Life and Thought in America*: "Modern civilization is on trial in America in a simpler way than among us. Will Europe be next?"<sup>52</sup> In "The Spirit of the Netherlands," Huizinga's testy description of bourgeois life in Holland sounds remarkably like that in the United States. His "feeling of living in a world that hovers on the brink of annihilation," his laments about "mankind's astonishing cultural decline" and "the grim idols of technocracy and over-organisation" provide a coda to the 1927 book on America as well as an overture to *In the Shadow of Tomorrow*.<sup>53</sup>

In that profoundly pessimistic and controversial book, the word "puerilism" is so pejorative yet important that Huizinga devotes an entire chapter to it. Early in the chapter he hammers this devastating judgment: "The country where a national puerilism could be studied most thoroughly in all its aspects, from the innocent and even attractive to the criminal, is the United States." But then he blinks and softens the blow by adding that "one should be careful to approach it with an open mind. For America *is* younger and more youthful than Europe. Much that here would deserve to be qualified as childish is there merely naïve, and the truly naïve guards against any reproach of puerilism. Besides, the American himself is no longer blind to the excesses of his youthfulness. Did he not give himself Babbitt?"<sup>54</sup>

Despite his harsh strictures upon American civilization in 1927; and perhaps, as Huizinga had predicted, precisely because Western Europe all too swiftly caught up with the United States, he could not terminate his interest in 1927 or 1936, any more than he could have in 1920. As he explained to Frederick Jackson Turner in 1919, "I hope to revert to American history sometime more for when you have once been captivated by its enormous problems and its stirring tone, it will not let you go the rest of your scholarly life."<sup>55</sup> In the academic year 1940-41, Huizinga selected as one of the principal subjects for his lectures at Leiden the history of the United States, "a topic which ap-

peals to me again and again."<sup>56</sup> His perception of America at that time appears in a communication presented on January 15, 1941, at the Netherlands Academy of Sciences (Section of Letters). This *esquisse* (referred to in note 33 above) is as bizarre as it is fascinating. It adds a curious "postscript" to the impressions he formulated in 1917-18 and 1926-27.

More than ever, Huizinga in 1941 reminds one of Henry Adams: a similar disdain for the vulgarity of modern culture; a similar affection for the medieval age of faith (Huizinga and Adams both idealized twelfth-century France); and a similar bewilderment at technological complexity. How could one possibly hope to make any sense of it? Huizinga found American history from 1776 until 1865 attractive because its wholeness seemed comprehensible, "its general idea is available to all." The period had "a distinct form" because "its public life [was] conducted by an *élite*. The masses still remain in the background." Despite the conservative pitch of that last statement, Huizinga's criteria seem to have been more aesthetic than ideological. He preferred the period after 1789 because "the historical lines are relatively simple. The persons acting are of a marked type, and the conditions and the conflicts are easy to grasp. In short, the history of those years shows shape and color."<sup>57</sup>

Huizinga's notion of the historian as artist—hence his need for materials of high drama—almost seems to overbalance his sensitivity to human suffering. The American Civil War attracted him as a writer because "only a crisis which breaks the political unity itself can bring again to the fore the *story* quality of history." By contrast, in the period after the Civil War "the history of the United States not only loses dramatic pathos, but is also robbed of comprehensible and striking form. The general reader at least will find it more or less confused, perplexing, and without unity." I cannot tell whether this echo of Henry Adams is intentional or accidental; but Huizinga is explicit about his assessment of the central problem for historiography in 1941. Once again, as in 1926, he looked to the United States as much for its illustrative value as for its intrinsic substance.

As I speak of the gradual loss of form inherent in the material of modern history, particularly in the history of the United States since the Civil War, I should like to make it clear that I find this increasing shapelessness due not to an optical illusion nor to a deficiency in the forces or fashions of historical imagination, but to a change in the components of history itself.<sup>58</sup>

It irked Huizinga that "history has had to change its record of personal happenings to one of collective phenomena." Had he never

read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, or Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*? Of course he had; but he went on to add that "in a history dominated by the economic factor—as American history undoubtedly is, far more so than European—the human element recedes into the background."<sup>59</sup> Huizinga's incomprehension of the prime reality in American social history since 1870, the massive and heterogeneous migration from Europe, reinforced his idealization of the individual free to shape his own destiny as well as that of his society.

Several decades of increasing shapelessness in American history can be explained by the fact that a political unit covering the main part of a whole continent loses, by its very homogeneity, the most fertile of all themes for history: the conflict between independent powers, be they peaceful rivals or hostile opponents. Furthermore, the ever-increasing preponderance in such a continent-commonwealth of economic forces is likely to obscure the human being as an actor in history.<sup>60</sup>

Huizinga concluded this *esquisse* with an observation that distresses me because I believe it to be doubly perverse. It pained him that "the modern world is becoming more and more accustomed to thinking in numbers. America has hitherto been more addicted to this, perhaps, than Europe. . . . Only the number counts, only the number expresses thought." Huizinga here seems truly the intellectual prisoner of a certain type of anti-Americanism. We need look no farther than Matthew Arnold's *Civilization in the United States*, where he observed that "the great scale of things in America powerfully impresses Mr. [John] Bright's imagination always; he loves to count the prodigious number of acres of land there, the prodigious number of bushels of wheat raised," etc.<sup>61</sup> Americans did not invent the quantitative imagination, nor do we enjoy any monopoly over it.

Huizinga ended with a dismal prognosis for history as a discipline. "This shift in the mode of thinking is full of great dangers for civilization, and for that civilizing product of the mind called history. Once *numbers* reign suprême in our society, there will be no story left to tell, no images for history to evoke."<sup>62</sup> The application of quantitative methods to historical investigation has resulted in some dreary and even wrongheaded scholarship, to be sure. But Huizinga was unduly pessimistic about the inevitability of such consequences; for some of the finest works of American scholarship since 1969 have depended heavily upon "numbers," but without any loss of "story" or of "images to evoke." They do not always tell a story, or evoke images, that Huizinga would have found attractive. Yet they surely qualify as innovative, influential, and highly significant works of history.<sup>63</sup>



## IV

Like Johan Huizinga, Matthew Arnold wrote essays about American civilization both before *and* after he had visited the United States. Unlike Huizinga, however, Arnold's treatment became more favorable after his initial lecture tour during the winter of 1883-84. He envied the United States its innocence of those impossible problems that seemed to plague England: aristocratic domination of a rigid class structure, an excess of religious dissent, and the Irish question. More positively, he felt that American institutions, being new, were well suited to American needs. After returning to England, Arnold observed that "to write a book about America, on the strength of having made merely such a tour there as mine was, and with no fuller equipment of preparatory studies and of local observations than I possess, would seem to me an impertinence."<sup>64</sup>

One could be tempted to confront Huizinga's ghost with that modest concession, were it not for the fact that he *had* done his "homework," so to speak. Few foreign visitors have made more thorough "preparatory studies" than teaching a university course and doing extensive historical reading about American culture. Huizinga's negativism from 1926 until his death resulted from a special situation: the United States was not merely another country, an exotic culture to be examined. It represented the accelerating thrust of the present as well as an ominous portent for the future. Because Huizinga cared so strongly about the preservation of culture as he had known it, what seemed to be taking place across the Atlantic served as a distressing signal of impending catastrophe.

It is worth noting at least a brief comparison between Huizinga and James Bryce, for their temperaments were as similar as their motives for writing about the United States. In 1882 Bryce decided to follow in Tocqueville's footsteps "to try to give my countrymen some juster views than they have about the United States." He added that he often felt "vexed here at the want of comprehension of the true state of things in America."<sup>65</sup> As a Scottish Calvinist, Bryce's moralistic temperament prevented him from investigating the seamier aspects of American life. He could not, for example, comprehend the coarse pleasures of the working class in the United States. *Unlike* Huizinga, however, Bryce was intensely interested in governmental institutions and the political process. Like so many Britons of his generation, he admired the American Constitution as a remarkably stabilizing keel for our ship of state.

Huizinga has frequently been compared with Marc Bloch, because both were seminal historians who responded very differently to

the challenge of Fascism: one with militant activism, the other with quiet resignation. Because they differed so radically—in temperament as well as religious background—and because Bloch was fourteen years younger, I find it somewhat more instructive to compare Huizinga (1872-1945) with four historians who were his exact contemporaries.

Elie Halévy (1871-1937), whose ancestry was Calvinist *and* Jewish, shared Huizinga's austerity and disciplined commitment to scholarship. Like Huizinga, he drifted into history as a calling (Halévy from philosophy and sociology). Like Huizinga, who had ulterior motives, intellectually speaking, for studying the United States, Halévy explored modern British history as a laboratory for understanding liberalism and democracy. He believed that elites had an obligation to elevate republican public opinion, and saw a tension within democratic socialism between a desire to liberate the individual and the overwhelming impulse to organize and regulate him. After passionate involvement in the Dreyfus affair, Halévy withdrew from active participation in public life. In 1900 he wrote two sentences that Huizinga himself might well have written: "A man disposed to fulfil his civic duties, but resolved to keep intact the greatest part of his time for the accomplishment of tasks properly intellectual, must rigorously limit the practical part of his existence. I ignore the Dreyfus affair, I ignore politics." Like Huizinga, also, he was more of a Europeanist than a nationalist, and wished to preserve all that was best in European culture. Following World War I, Halévy fell into a mood of "moral disgust," and devoted the last decade of his life to investigations of contemporary history, particularly the meaning of progress in a democratic society. As a historian Halévy always rejected economic determinism. He regarded Communism and Fascism as equally tyrannical—a view that shocked many of his friends—because he dreaded any form of statism or organized, hierarchical oppression. Huizinga shared that perspective.<sup>66</sup>

Halvdan Koht (1873-1965), the Norwegian historian, decided to visit the United States in 1908-9 because "in America one could study the history of the future." He had very mixed reactions to what he saw. Although delighted by "the unconquerable spirit of progress" that he encountered throughout the country, he also perceived many "imperfections," especially the degree to which Americans seemed bound by social conventions, "outward forms," such as the stigma ascribed to women who smoked.

At Columbia University, however, he came under the influence of James T. Shotwell, William A. Dunning, and especially Edwin R. A. Seligman, whose *Economic Interpretation of History* (1907) impressed him greatly. In 1909 he met Frederick Jackson Turner and John R.

Commons, and then felt eager to introduc  the study of American history in Norway. He did so immediately, in 1909-10 at Kristiania (Oslo); and very soon the subject even became a requirement for the degree in history. Koht prepared a section on American culture for an eight-volume history of world culture (1912). In 1920, the same year that Huizinga's *Man and the Masses in America* was published in revised form, Koht brought out (in Norwegian) *The American Nation: Its Origins and Its Rise*. Unlike Huizinga, however, Koht emphasized class conflict, carried the economic emphasis from his American contacts to his work on Norwegian history, and became very active in public affairs.<sup>67</sup>

Arthur O. Lovejoy (1873-1962) shared Huizinga's personal austerity and passion for the history of ideas. Lovejoy differed significantly, however, in preferring to trac  ideas through time, in a linear fashion, whereas Huizinga loved to sketch, as a still life, the picture of a civilization at a pivotal moment in time. Lovejoy differed also in his political activism. He worked vigorously as a pamphleteer during both world wars, was a passionate defender of civil liberties, and perceived early in the 1930's that Nazi Germany posed a grave threat to the security of Europe and the United States. He spoke out repeatedly in opposition to Hitler, and after 1939 Lovejoy pushed vigorously for increased American aid to the Allies.<sup>68</sup>

Among this quartet of distinguished contemporaries, however, the most interesting comparison can be made with Carl L. Becker (1873-1945). Like Huizinga, Becker was more of an essayist than a narrative historian rooted in archival research. They shared an interest in significant eras of transition, and both liked to challenge the conventional wisdom of historical periodization. In 1920, just when Huizinga published his revised and expanded work on American history, Becker brought out *Our Great Experiment in Democracy: A History of the United States*, which was also influenced by Turner and Beard. In 1924 Becker made his only trip to Europe, a visit as superficial as Huizinga's to the United States seems to have been in 1926. Becker did the obligatory things, felt quite homesick, and wrote to his wife from Paris that "my foreign travel has come too late to be of any great benefit."<sup>69</sup>

During their final decade (1936-45), however, these two men, who were temperamentally so similar, followed divergent intellectual paths. Although Becker was in many respects socially conservative, he was less apprehensive about the development of technology and social organization (or regimentation) as inevitably oppressive evils. During the later 1930's his faith in democracy was rejuvenated, and he explicitly rejected the counsel of despair that was so much in the air among intellectuals of the day.



Thomas Hart Benton, "Wreck of the Ole '97"—lithograph in the New Britain Museum of American Art (William Brooks Fund), New Britain, Connecticut, U.S.A.

We still hold, therefore, to the belief that man can, by deliberate intention and rational direction, shape the world of social relations to humane ends. We hold to it, if not from assured conviction, then from necessity, seeing no alternative except cynicism or despair.<sup>70</sup>

While Becker was secure in Ithaca, New York, writing *How New Will the Better World Be? A Discussion of Post-War Reconstruction* (1944), Huizinga was under Nazi surveillance at De Steeg, near Arnhem on the Rhine, writing *The World in Ruins: A Consideration of the Chances for Restoring Our Civilization* (1945). It seems fair to say that their divergent circumstances help to explain their relative positions of pessimism and optimism. It may be equally fair to suggest, however, that their divergence can be dated back to the years 1936-39, when Becker recovered from the profound disillusionment with Wilsonian idealism that he underwent after World War I, whereas Huizinga's despair only deepened.

Ultimately, of course, Huizinga's apprehension was not so much political] as it was cultural. Therefore defeating Fascism could not provide a sufficient solution to the malaise, indeed crisis, that he perceived in contemporary civilization. Although Huizinga felt disaffected from American culture, his visual sensitivity would have caused him to appreciate a painting done by Thomas Hart Benton in 1943. Entitled "Wreck of the Ole '97," it depicts the crash in 1903 of a fast mail train, No. 97 of the Southern Railway. The train leaped from its tracks while speeding down a steep grade, and plunged into a ravine. Benton's picture suggests that a broken track rather than a reckless engineer was the cause of that catastrophe.<sup>71</sup> His interpretation of the story indicates Benton's belief that man's fate was being determined by a mechanized (and flawed) world, rather than his own will and actions. The tale of No. 97's fatal crash became the theme of a well-known ballad which sold more than a million records in 1939. To Johan Huizinga, who appreciated allegory as much as iconography, the ballad, the mass culture that paid for it, the painting and its lithographic copies for consumers, all would have seemed suitably symptomatic of a culture *and a world* too much in the clutches of "This, Here, and Soon."

#### N O T E S

- 1 I had intended to use "Huizinga's Vision of American Culture" as my subtitle; but then I saw that in writing about the nature of "historical understanding" Huizinga explicitly rejected the phrase "historical vision." In view of his particular sensitivity to matters of iconography and vision, it would have been cavalier, if not utterly mindless, to employ

- a word-concept that seemed to him so inappropriate. Cf. "The Task of Cultural History," in Johan Huizinga, *Men and Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance* (New York, 1959), p. 53.
- 2 For the portrait, see C. T. van Valkenburg, *J. Huizinga: Zijn Leven en Zijn Persoonlijkheid* (Amsterdam, 1946), plate facing p. 7; or Johan Huizinga, *Geschichte und Kultur: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, trans. and ed. Kurt Koster (Stuttgart, 1954), facing the title page.
  - 3 Gombrich, "Huizinga's *Homo ludens*," in W. R. H. Koops et al., eds., *Johan Huizinga, 1872-1972 . . .* (The Hague, 1973), pp. 144, 153.
  - 4 Anchor, "History and Play: Johan Huizinga and His Critics," *History and Theory*, XVII (1978), 85-86; R. L. Colie, "Johan Huizinga and the Task of Cultural History," *American Historical Review*, LXIX (April 1964), 618-19, 629; and Pieter Geyl, "Huizinga as Accuser of His Age," *History and Theory*, II (1963), 231-62. The italics are Professor Anchor's.
  - 5 F. W. N. Hugenholtz, "The Fame of a Masterwork," in Koops, ed., *Johan Huizinga, 1872-1972*, pp. 91-103; Reuel Denney, "Feast of Strangers: Varieties of Sociable Experience in America," in Herben J. Gans et al., eds., *On the Making of Americans: Essays in Honor of David Riesman* (Philadelphia, 1979), pp. 254, 268, where he appears as John Huizinga.
  - 6 Letters to the author from John M. Gates, November 2, 1981; Charles F. Howlett, November 12, 1981; Jeff LaLande, November 24, 1981.
  - 7 Holmes to Mrs. Charles Warren, Maren 22, 1931, Warren Papers, box 2, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. For an important example of the impact of *Homo Ludens*, see Allen Guttman, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York, 1978), pp. 4, 6-7, 13-14, 80.
  - 8 In 1936 Lewis Stiles Gannett, who wrote a regular column called "Books and Things" for the New York *Herald Tribune*, asked Huizinga what he was currently reading for pleasure. Huizinga replied with four titles: Gilbert Murray, *Then and Now: The Changes of the Last Fifty Years* (1935); Sir R. W. Livingstone, *Greek Ideals and Modern Life* (1935); Fernando del Pino, *La Gran Decisión* (1936); and Paul Hazard, *La Crise de la conscience européenne 1680-1715* (1935), 3 volumes. Six months earlier he had been reading George Sarton's massive *Introduction to the History of Science* (1927-31), 3 volumes at that time. See Huizinga to Sarton, April 9, 1936, and Huizinga to Gannett, October 1 and 20, 1936, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Huizinga had already written *In the Shadow of Tomorrow* before he read Murray and Livingstone. I am inclined to believe that Huizinga independently arrived at his pessimism about the present and the future, and therefore was more disposed to select books that eulogized earlier times and nobler cultures.
  - 9 Notestein to August C. Krey, April 14, 1933, Krey Papers, folder 173, University of Minnesota Archives, Minneapolis.
  - 10 Victor H. Paltsits to A. J. F. van Laer, October 20, 1927, Paltsits Papers, New-York Historical Society; Alfred Bagby, Jr., to Lyon G. Tyler, March

- 2, 1932, Tyler Papers, group V, box 7, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.; *New York Times*, June 27, 1974.
- 11 All quotations and citations will be to Herbert H. Rowen, trans, and ed., *America: A Dutch Historian's Vision, from Afar and Near* (New York, 1972). The first volume was noticed sympathetically in *The American Historical Review*, XXV (April and July 1920), 558-59, 742. For Geyl's warm praise of Huizinga's early essays on America, see Geyl, "Accuser of His Age," pp. 245-46. For Colie's translations of the titles of Huizinga's two books on the United States, see "Huizinga and the Task of Cultural History," pp. 612-13.
  - 12 Horace White, "Gifts of Two Nations to Civilization," *Speeches and Writings* (Syracuse, 1932), p. 237.
  - 13 Huizinga, *America*, pp. 8, 17, 18, 31.
  - 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 142-43, 147, 149, 151. See James Bryce to Max Farrand, October 6 and December 3, 1919, and February 20, 1920, Farrand Papers, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif. On October 6, Bryce told Farrand that "there were currents of American opinion 8: phases of constitutional development which have been changing so much during recent years that I may not fully understand them . . ."
  - 15 Huizinga, *America*, pp. 150, 157-59, 161. In fairness to Huizinga, who is frequently accused of elitism, it should be noted that in 1926 he remarked: "Modern culture must be democratic if it is to be at all." "The Task of Cultural History," p. 50.
  - 16 Huizinga, *America*, pp. 32-33, 57, 60, 173, 229. Huizinga did note similarities between the impulse to "join" in Europe and in the United States, but then relied upon a simplistic explanation that ever since the 1890's Europe had been "much more strongly Americanized than we ordinarily realize" (p. 33). E. J. Hobsbawm's current work on the extraordinary expansion of the middle class at that time is more persuasive. Hobsbawm views "joining" as a pan-Atlantic symptom, and as a means of validating one's membership in the middle class. Huizinga's close attention to "joining" anticipates the seminal essay by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., "Biography of a Nation of Joiners," *American Historical Review*, L (October 1944), 1-25.
  - 17 Huizinga, *America*, pp. 165, 172, 208. The quotation is from p. 177.
  - 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 137, 156, 159-60. Huizinga was acutely sensitive to nuances of language, anticipating Raymond Williams' *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York, 1976). He observed, for example, that "individualism" did not have the same connotations in the American context that it had in Europe (p. 31), and that the word "service" had undergone a process of degradation, with the result that it meant different things to different people (pp. 310-11). See also *America*, pp. 266-68, 275, and Huizinga, "The Spirit of the Netherlands" (1935) in *Dutch Civilisation in the Seventeenth Century and Other Essays* (New York, 1968), pp. 110-12, 127.
  - 19 Huizinga, *America*, p. 178. See Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).

- 20 Huizinga, *America*, pp. 179-80, 200.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 193.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 174. Cf. David Grayson Allen, *In English Ways: The Movement of Societies and the Transfer of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts Bay in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1980); T. H. Breen, *Puritans and Adventurers: Change and Persistence in Early America* (New York, 1980).
- 24 Huizinga, *America*, p. 50. Cf. Joseph Charles, *The Origins of the American Party System* (New York, 1961), pp. 80-90; and Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., *The Jeffersonian Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization, 1789-1801* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1957).
- 25 Huizinga, *America*, pp. 28, 30-31. Our understanding of Jackson has been reshaped by the work of Robert V. Remini, Charles G. Sellers, Richard Hofstadter, Michael P. Rogin, and Thomas P. Abernethy.
- 26 Huizinga, *America*, pp. 9, 11.
- 27 *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 137, 47.
- 28 *Ibid.*, pp. 193, 195, 218-19, 223. I find it odd that Huizinga seems not to have read the four classic volumes by Moses Coit Tyler, *A History of American Literature, 1607-1765* (2 vols.; New York, 1878) and *The Literary History of the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (2 vols.; New York, 1897).
- 29 Huizinga to Turner, March 10, 1919, Turner Papers, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.
- 30 See Huizinga, *America*, pp. 5, 9, 21, 57 n., 124, 134. In addition to printed sources and yearbooks, Huizinga also relied upon John Bach McMaster, Albert Bushnell Hart, Woodrow Wilson, James Ford Rhodes, Andrew C. McLaughlin, Frederick L. Paxson, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., and Walter Hines Page. Among the major American writers, he seems to have read extensively in Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Whitman, and Henry and William James. Huizinga's *America* often seems strongest when he does not have "authorities" like Turner and Beard to guide him. For those topics where there were "experts," Huizinga was likely to become derivative. In their absence he was much more inclined to be shrewdly speculative and comparative. Understandable, perhaps, but unfortunate nonetheless.
- 31 Huizinga to Turner, cited in note 29 above.
- 32 Geyl, "Huizinga as Accuser of His Age," pp. 244-45.
- 33 Huizinga, "History Changing Form," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, IV (April 1943), 219.
- 34 Gombrich, "Huizinga's *Homo ludens*," p. 141. It should be noted, however, that one finds clear-cut previews of *Homo Ludens* in *Man and the Masses in America*. See, e.g., pp. 53-54 of the latter.
- 35 See Arthur Lord to D. Plooi, November 29, 1920, Lord Papers, Pilgrim Society, Plymouth, Mass.; J. Franklin Jameson to Worthington C. Ford, March 8, 1920, Jameson Papers, box 84, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Victor H. Paltsits to Jameson, September 16, 1925, *ibid.*, box 117; Jameson to Victor H. Paltsits, February 2, 1920, Paltsits Papers,



- New-York Historical Society. On December 21, 1922, Albert Eekhof sent Paltsits a postcard message from Leiden: "I can not forget you. This afternoon I (have sent to you 'registered' a real Dutch Calendar. Every week a picture of Holland. It is a token of friendship and high appreciation for all what [*sic*] you have done for me in' so many ways." Paltsits Papers, N.-Y.H.S.
- 36 See Huizinga, *America*, p. 20, for the only reference in his two books to Holland as an inspiration for American independence.
  - 37 For extracts from the journal that Huizinga kept during his four-month trip, see Leonhard Huizinga, *Herinneringen aan Mijn Vader (Remembering My Father)* (The Hague, 1963), pp. 120-51. I am deeply grateful to Professor J. W. Schulte Nordholt of Leiden for calling this book to my attention, and to Eduard van de Bilt for supplying me with a content analysis. Huizinga's visit to the United States (with a diverse group of Europeans) was facilitated by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund. Although he enjoyed seeing a few historical sites, such as Mount Vernon, Independence Hall, and the Lincoln Memorial, most of his time was given over to prearranged contacts with professors of law, economics, and business (which did not please him) and to observing political institutions in action, such as the Supreme Court and Congress (which impressed him even less). Nevertheless, Leonhard Huizinga felt that his father's trip to the United States was one of the pivotal events of his life, and that JH gained considerably in self-confidence as a consequence of it.
  - 38 Huizinga, *America*, pp. 283, 314-15.
  - 39 *Ibid.*, pp. 166, 255-56. Cf. James Bryce to Max Farrand, February 20, 1920, Farrand Papers, Huntington Library: "On the whole the changes in America seem to me more beneficial than those I have seen here. I certainly feel a hopefulness about the U.S. which I cannot feel about any people in Europe. . . ."
  - 40 Compare Huizinga, *America*, pp. 94-96, 139, 142-43, 199, with pp. 237, 251, 297.
  - 41 *Ibid.*, pp. 296, 301, 307. For anticipations of these criticisms in 1918, however, see pp. 111, 117, 181.
  - 42 *Ibid.*, pp. 231, 234, 305, 310, 317, 321, 325.
  - 43 See Gabriel A. Almond, Marvin Chodorow, and Roy Harvey Pearce, "Progress and Its Discontents," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, XXXV (December 1981), pp. 4-23.
  - 44 Becker, *Progress and Power* (New York, 1949), pp. xlii, 7, 9, 107. The last quotation appears on p. 111.
  - 45 Huizinga, *America*, pp. 246, 282, 310, 317, 320, 325; Huizinga, "The Task of Cultural History," p. 33. Huizinga repeatedly used as his illustration from social psychology a book by H. A. Overstreet, *Influencing Human Behavior* (1925).
  - 46 This phase, that "education had become the religion of the United States," was very much in the air by the mid-1920's. When President James R. Angell of Yale University used it in a public lecture given at Chicago in 1924, Max Farrand (who previously had taught at Yale, but

- in 1924 was an administrator with the Commonwealth Fund) claimed that Angell had picked it up from him. Farrand to Henry L. Greer, October 6, 1924, Farrand Papers, Huntington Library.
- 47 Huizinga, *America*, pp. 181, 239, 245, 251, 281, 308. In 1924 van Loon was deeply hurt by Huizinga's tart review in *De Gids* of *The Story of Mankind*. As van Loon wrote, with customary self-pity, to a former teacher: "Now that some of my books have been translated into most modern languages, I usually find some sort of welcome in the countries through which I pass. But Holland takes it as almost a personal offense that I should, in some measure, have succeeded af ter I bade it farewell. I act upon the excellent burghers as a red rag before a steer." Quoted in Gerard Willem van Loon, *The Story of Hendrik Willem van Loon* (Philadelphia, 1972), pp. 151-52.
- 48 Huizinga, *America*, pp. 205-6, 251, 260-62, 319. See also Huizinga to Turner, March 10, 1919, Turner Papers, Huntington Library. Many in the United States, especially social and political conservatives, shared Huizinga's apprehension about the tendencies of American culture. See, e.g., Morton Keiler, *In Defense of Yesterday: James M. Beek and the Politics of Conservatism, 1861-1936* (New York, 1958), pp. 153-56, 158, 160, 197-98; Ralph Adams Cram, *Convictions and Controversies* (Boston, 1937).
- 49 Huizinga, *America*, pp. 232, 238, 242, 244, 246, 247, 252-53, 265. On p. 265 Huizinga simultaneously seems to echo Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1925) and to anticipate some of the well-known views of Marshall McLuhan.
- 50 He is responsible for occasional factual errors, especially on p. 295 where he presents incorrect dates for the founding of Harvard (it should be 1636) and the College of William and Mary (it should be 1693).
- 51 Huizinga, *America*, p. 316.
- 52 *Ibid.*, pp. 178, 230, 242-43, 314. On p. 305 he quips: "not all Americans think, any more than Europeans."
- 53 "The Spirit of the Netherlands" (1935) in Huizinga, *Dutch Civilisation in the Seventeenth Century and Other Essays*, pp. 113, 118-19, 122, 136. On p. 128 he defines "conservative" quite positively, "in the worthy sense of wishing to preserve what is good and refusing to kow-tow to the fashion of the day."
- 54 *In the Shadow of Tomorrow* (New York, 1936), pp. 172-73.
- 55 Huizinga to Turner, March 10, 1919, Turner Papers, Huntington Library.
- 56 Huizinga to Hendrik Willem van Loon, October 11, 1940, van Loon Papers, box 13, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. I do not know how or when Huizinga and van Loon commenced a cordial relationship. It is clear that van Loon offered during the summer of 1940 to arrange for Huizinga to come to the United States. Huizinga replied from Leiden on August 15, 1940, that "my place remains here: in my country and in my office, whatever the following times may bring." *Ibid.* I am indebted to Joke

- Kardux and Eduard van de Bilt for translations of these two letters from Dutch to English.
- 57 Gombrich, "Huizinga's *Homo ludens*," p. 148; Huizinga, "History Changing Form," pp. 219, 220.
- 58 *Ibid.*, pp. 219, 221. Cf. Max Farrand's slim interpretive volume written primarily for Europeans, *The Development of the United States from Colonies to a World Power* (1918), and Farrand's observation to Theodore Roosevelt that "the merit of the book probably lies in having the very definite purpose to explain the great change which came over the United States about 1890. . . ." (August 15, 1918, Farrand Papers, Huntington Library.) Farrand had sought to impose form where Huizinga would find only formlessness.
- 59 Huizinga, "History Changing Form," p. 222. Huizinga also sounds oddly like a scholar unfamiliar with Henri Pirenne's *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade* (1925) and Pirenne's *Economie and Social History of Medieval Europe* (1933). In fact, he had known Pirenne well since 1908—when Huizinga taught at Groningen and Pirenne at Ghent—and greatly admired his work. See Bryce Lyon, *Henri Pirenne: A Biographical and Intellectual Study* (Ghent, 1974), pp. 185-86, 203, 337, 364, 384.
- 60 Huizinga, "History Changing Form," p. 223.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 223; Arnold, *Civilization in the United States: First and Last Impressions of America* (Boston, 1888), pp. 82-83.
- 62 Huizinga, "History Changing Form," p. 223.
- 63 See, e.g., Sheldon Hackney, *Populism to Progressivism in Alabama* (Princeton, 1969); Leonard L. Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing": Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York, 1970); Joan W. Scott, *The Glassworkers of Carmaux: French Craftsmen and Political Action in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974); Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York, 1976); Douglas S. Greenberg, *Crime and Law Enforcement in the Colony of New York, 1691-1776* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1976); Stuart M. Blumin, *The Urban Threshold: Growth and Change in a Nineteenth-Century American Community* (Chicago, 1976); and Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), to mention just a few.
- 64 Arnold, *Civilization in the United States*, pp. 111, 118-19, 122, 125-27, 136, 152. It should be added that Arnold's *third* essay about the United States (written in 1887-88, shortly before his death) was much less favorable than his second. Arnold's eldest daughter, by the way, had married an American and settled in the United States. See *ibid.*, pp. 173-79, 181, 188-90.
- 65 Bryce to Mrs. Sarah Whitman, December 14, 1882, quoted in Edmund Ions, *James Bryce and American Democracy, 1870-1922* (London, 1968), pp. 120-21, 127-28. In 1883 Bryce taught a graduate seminar on Tocqueville and American history at Johns Hopkins University. *Ibid.*, pp. 101, 118-20. Bryce, "The Predictions of Hamilton and de Tocqueville," *Johns*

- Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*, 5th ser., Vol. IX (Baltimore, 1887). See also the Bryce letters cited in note 14 above.
- 66 See Myrna Chase, *Elie Halévy: An Intellectual Biography* (New York, 1980), esp. pp. 32, 38-39, 46, 172-73, 175-76, 181, 183-85, 189, 209, ai 1, 214, 220. Cf. Kurt Koster, ed., *Geschichte und Kultur: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Stuttgart, 1954), a collection of miscellaneous writings by Huizinga, pp. ix-xi, for an essay on "Huizinga the Historian" that stresses his fear of nationalism and his sympathy for the idea of a unified Europe.
- 67 Koht, *Education of an Historian* (Oslo, 1951; New York, 1957), pp. 164, 169, 176, 182, 196-97, 202, 205. In February 1910 he gave a lecture before the Academy of Sciences at Oslo on the American Revolution. Printed in English as "Genesis of American Independence," it was his first publication concerning the history of the United States. In 1910 he also published *Money Power and Labor in America*, and in 1949 *The American Spirit in Europe: A Survey of Transatlantic Influences*.
- 68 Daniel J. Wilson, *Arthur O. Lovejoy and the Quest for Intelligibility* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1980), pp. 186, 195-200.
- 69 See Michael Kammen, ed., *"What Is the Good of History?" Selected Letters of Carl L. Becker, 1900-1945* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1973), pp. 94, 97. Just when Huizinga first presented *In the Shadow of Tomorrow* as an address at Brussels in 1935, Becker lectured at Stanford on the difficulty, standing "in the shadow of the Great War," of achieving a judicious perspective on mankind's history and destiny. Becker, *Progress and Power* (1936; New York, 1949), p. 19.
- 70 Becker, *New Liberties for Old* (New Haven, Conn., 1941), p. 94; Becker, *Modern Democracy* (New Haven, Conn., 1941).
- 71 The lithograph is reproduced here by courtesy of the New Britain Museum of American Art (William Brooks Fund), New Britain, Conn. The original painting, oil and tempera on canvas, is owned by Marilyn Goodman of Great Neck, N.Y.

# *American Travelers in Holland*

## *Through Two Centuries*

HERBERT H. ROWEN

**T**RAVELERS have been coming to Holland from the United States since long before KLM carried them to Schiphol in jumbo jets, hundreds at a time, to explore a bit of Amsterdam and then journey on to other lands. Most were tourists, but some were people with business in the Netherlands—merchants and managers, diplomats, of course, and students, artists, and scholars. Some deeply admired what they saw, some held their noses, literally or figuratively, and most suffered some baffledom and boredom. Only a very few among them left a record of their impressions in print, but their number is still big enough so that we can venture to take what they wrote as characteristic of what the others, less literate and less articulate, felt and thought.<sup>1</sup>

Few, very few of these accounts have inherent literary merit. Herman Melville left only sketchy notes<sup>2</sup> and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow had a tortured stay, during which his letters discuss only professional matters and finally the death of his wife after miscarriage.<sup>3</sup> But we do have the letters of William Cullen Bryant, original not in what they say but in their prose style, precise but not precious.<sup>4</sup> Most of the visitors were just tourists, who went dutifully where the guidebooks told them to go. They were seldom adventurous. They are of interest to us not for the unexpected insight, the fresh understanding, the intense personalism and personality of a Huizinga in America, but for what they reveal about the travelers themselves as well as about Holland.

Let us not fool ourselves, however. The triteness of phrase that we meet so of ten in these accounts comes not just out of commitment to the obvious but also from recourse to guidebooks. Until the mid-nineteenth century these were the handbooks for travelers put out by John Murray of London; then they became the ubiquitous Baedekers. Yet we may assume that the tourists who set down reports of their