

**'ON LIGHT AND SOUND'**

**Johan Huizinga and nineteenth-century linguistics<sup>1</sup>**

From: Jan Noordegraaf, *The Dutch Pendulum. Linguistics in the Netherlands 1740-1900*. Münster: Nodus Publikationen 1996, 130-158. ISBN 3-89323-264-8

**0. Introductory remarks**

In 1899, the reader of the *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde* ('Journal for Dutch Language and Literature') could find a brief note on two west Frisian proper names in volume eighteen of this prestigious linguistic periodical. This note had been written by Willem van Helten (1849-1917), professor of Dutch language and literature at the University of Groningen. In his squib, as we would say nowadays, van Helten discussed a remark made by one of his former students, a certain Johan Huizinga, who when attending van Helten's lectures on Old Frisian in the academic year 1894-1895, had made an astute observation concerning the etymology of a certain Frisian proper name. I think we can readily accept van Helten's positive assessment of his student's remark, for van Helten had done important work in the field of Germanic languages, especially in Old Frisian, which had procured him great authority abroad, in especially in Germany (but no so much in the Netherlands).<sup>2</sup>

Note that a few years earlier, in 1897, van Helten's talented student had already used his observation for one of the *stellingen* (propositions or points to be defended), which, in accordance with Dutch academic regulations, had been added to his doctoral dissertation (cf. Huizinga 1897: 142, XII). However, Johan Huizinga was not to become a linguist or an expert on Frisian.

Huizinga, whose works include the celebrated *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919), did not feel particularly attracted to history when he was a student at Groningen; he intended to follow a career in oriental studies and comparative linguistics. As it happened, he turned away from linguistics, and became a distinguished historian. In this article I would like to make some remarks on Huizinga the linguist. I am fully aware of the fact that the role he played in the history of linguistics was actually a minor one, but I think it might be worthwhile to view the end-of-the-century linguistic scene once through the eyes of a young and ambitious Dutch scholar. First, I will discuss Huizinga's unsuccessful efforts in the field of

---

1. Originally published in *'Wat oars as mei in echte taal'*. *Fryske Stúdzjes ta gelegenheid fan it ôfskie fan prof.dr. A. Feitsma as beechlearaar Fryske Taal en Letterkunde*. Under redaksje fan Ph. Breuker, H.D. Meijering & J. Noordegraaf. Ljouwert: Fryske Akademy 1994, 163-185. This article is a revised and enlarged version of a paper given at the seventh Internationales Kolloquium des Studienkreises 'Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft', 7-8 October 1993 in Trento, Italy. Earlier papers on this subject were read at the Ninth Colloquium of the Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas, 4-7 September 1992 in Cambridge (UK), and at the 'Taalkunde-in-Nederland-dag' in Utrecht, 18 January 1993. The book on Huizinga by Krul (1990) appeared to be an indispensable foundation (cf. Van der Lem 1993: xiv). I would like to thank Dr Rolf Bremmer Jr (Leiden) and Professor Stefano Gensini (Cagliari) for some valuable suggestions.

2. Colleagues such as Eelco Verwijs (1830-1880) and Jacob Verdam (1845-1919) made fun of van Helten's study *Über die Wurzel lu im Germanischen* (1873) and called him the "wortelman", the 'root man'. Karsten (1949: 176) concluded that van Helten had indulged too much in 'root mania', "a fanciful idea of a bygone generation, which was of the opinion that primitive man had only spoken in roots".

contemporary linguistics. Subsequently, I will draw a profile of his attitude towards contemporary trends in linguistics, a profile based in part on his unfinished linguistic dissertation from 1896.

Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) was born in Groningen, where his father was a professor of physiology. One of the younger pupils at the Groningen 'Gymnasium' he attended was Etsko Kruisinga (1875-1944), later to become a well-known Dutch Anglicist and one of Huizinga's fervent opponents, including in the Dutch spelling war which reached its climax in the 1930s. Following grammar school, Huizinga studied Dutch language and literature at Groningen University, spent a term at Leipzig, and received a Groningen doctorate in 1897 for a dissertation on the jester in Sanskrit drama, *De Vidúshaka in het Indisch tooneel*. From 1897 to 1905, he was a history teacher at Haarlem, but he did not feel himself to be a very successful one. In 1903, he was admitted as a 'privaat-docent' (unpaid external lecturer) at the University of Amsterdam, and began lecturing on the Antiquity and Literature of India. Two years later, he was appointed to the chair of history at Groningen University. In 1915, he moved on to Leiden, remaining there until the University was closed in 1941 by order of the German authorities. For some months Huizinga was held hostage. Later he was exiled to the eastern part of the country, where he died in 1945.

Two more preliminary remarks. First, Huizinga's 'historical turn' did not take place overnight. The literature on Huizinga (cf. the important study by Krul 1990) shows a continuity in this process, a continuity which has to do, among other things, with his reading the works of the renowned Oxford professor Max Müller. Second, in his student days, Huizinga was something of a romantic type, an "incorrigible day dreamer", as he once put it himself. One should imagine the young Huizinga, walking just outside the small town of Groningen, his head full of poems and music, instead of dutifully attending the academic lectures - maybe he was just a bit wild at heart at the time. In the early 1890s he fell under the spell of the Dutch Movement of the Eighties, the literary school which put so much new life into Dutch literature, and dominated it for a number of decades. The poetry of this Movement in particular was characterized by strong Romantic traits. I will come back to this point later.

## 2. Huizinga, linguistics, and beyond

Having learned some Hebrew and Arabic at grammar school, Huizinga intended to study Arabic in Leiden. However, his father did not approve of this idea for financial reasons, and therefore the young Huizinga enrolled as a student of Dutch at Groningen University. The syllabus for the Dutch degree programme in which Huizinga registered in September 1891, reflected the developments which had occurred in linguistics from the early decades of the nineteenth century, especially due to German scholarship. Beginning the latter half of the nineteenth century, historical linguistics had gained a firm foothold in the linguistic curricula at the Dutch universities. This development was formally laid down in the new Higher Education Act of 1876. The doctorate in Dutch language and literature was instituted and new chairs in linguistics were created to meet the examination requirements. Because of this, Germanic linguistics became fully established as an important subject, and with it the historical-comparative method. The period between 1876-1900, during which Huizinga's linguistic activities occurred, has been called "The Age of Brugmann" (Koerner 1978: 204), after the leading German linguist Karl Brugmann (1849-1919), professor at Leipzig and a prominent member of the so-called 'Junggrammatiker' (cf. Einhauser 1989).

As a consequence of its historical-comparative orientation the Dutch syllabus stipulated that those preparing for their doctorate in Dutch language and literature had to sit first for the *doctoraal* examination (approximately M.A.), and were obliged to prove that they were familiar with "the principles of Sanskrit". So Huizinga received his doctorate, *cum laude*, with a dissertation on an Indological subject. In fact, he had intended to write a dissertation on a completely different subject, namely in the field of comparative linguistics. It had been with that in mind that he had left for Germany in October 1895, to spend - "according to his own wish and desire" - the winter semester at Leipzig University, "the centre of the school, which then was called the 'Junggrammatiker'" (Huizinga 1947: 21). There he registered on 29 October 1895, but since the *Kaiser* came to Leipzig on 31 October to lay the foundation stone of the *Reichskammergericht*, courses did not start until November (van der Lem 1993: 44).

In Leipzig it soon became clear to Huizinga that contemporary German *Sprachwissenschaft* as practised by the Neogrammarians could not provide him with the answers to the questions that fascinated him, namely problems in the field of semantics. He did not feel satisfied with the primarily formal approach of the Neogrammarians. For his doctoral dissertation, he chose a theme which called for an entirely different approach, as can be seen from the draft he wrote when back at Groningen. The thirty-eight page "Inleiding en Opzet voor Studie over Licht en Geluid" ('Introduction and Plan of a Study on Light and Sound') gives a good indication of his intention to demonstrate the meaning of the lyrical-associative factor in the development of language. He wanted to study the expression of the perceptions of light and sound in Indo-Germanic languages. "The question which occupied me first and foremost", Huizinga noted many years later in his memoirs,

can be formulated as follows: On the basis of what fundamental reason do the various languages, in the process of naming sensory perceptions, leap over in a completely identical manner from one field of perception to another? Why can notions of feeling and weight such as heavy, light, sharp, blunt also be used to make a distinction between sounds and colours or the intensity of light? (Huizinga 1947: 27)

Having returned by Dresden and Berlin to Groningen in March 1896,<sup>3</sup> Huizinga started his quest for the expressions of the perceptions of light and sound in the lexicons of various languages. A few months later, he submitted a preliminary draft to his supervisor, Barend Sijmons (1853-1935), professor of German at Groningen, a remarkable and energetic person. At the age of 24, Sijmons had taken his doctor's degree at Leipzig, where he had read Germanic *Philologie* and where his fellow students included Wilhelm Braune (1850-1926), Hermann Paul (1846-1921) and Eduard Sievers (1850-1932). "[I]t was the scholarly principles and methods acquired at Leipzig that Sijmons had brought to Groningen and that he was to remain faithful to all his life, following the guiding principles of Neogrammarian research" (van Essen 1983: 44). Thus, having read Huizinga's draft, Sijmons promptly rejected this plan: to his mind, it was without any importance to linguistics, only of some interest perhaps to the psychologist. So, Huizinga was forced to turn to a different subject for his doctoral dissertation, and it was his teacher of Sanskrit, the classical scholar professor Jacob Samuel Speyer (1849-1913), who suggested to him what new subject to tackle - the jester in Sanskrit drama. Huizinga had become somewhat more careful now. "Bei der Bearbeitung des Stoffes denke ich fortwährend unter unmittelbarer Leitung von prof. Speijer zu bleiben; den ich fürchte ein Échec wie bei meiner vorigen Arbeit", he wrote to the Sanskrit scholar Ernst Windisch (1844-1918), whose lectures he had attended when in Leipzig (Huizinga 1991: 464). The original problem, however, kept him under its spell for the rest of his life. Even in his autobiography of 1943, two years before his death, he wrote that he would like to try the same subject matter again. Note that two of Huizinga's eighteen *stellingen*, the propositions which were added to his 1897 dissertation, are based on the material of his original dissertation. *Stelling VII* reads as follows: "An investigation into the origin and development of the meaning of words expressing sensory perceptions should be independent of etymologies obtained by comparison of their form". And in *stelling IX* Huizinga claimed: "We should suppose a trend in the Indo-Germanic languages towards the use of reduplicated formations for indicating round, curled and turning objects".

Thus, what the angry young scholar still sought to do after finishing his doctoral dissertation, was to point out very clearly what he deemed to be the essential flaw in the Neogrammarian approach. To that end, Huizinga put forward an elaborate discussion of both the propositions just mentioned. First, he submitted a paper to *Indogermanische Forschungen* in October 1898; it was entitled "Über die Vernachlässigung der Wortbedeutung in der vergleichenden Sprachwissenschaft". In his letter to the

---

3. On 3 March 1896 Huizinga received his "Abgangszeugnis": "Grammatik der litauischen Sprache, Syntax der slawischen Sprache, Prof.Dr. Leskien. Lateinische Grammatik I. Tl. Prof.Dr. Brugmann. Alte Irische Grammatik mit Übungen - Veda, Çakuntula, Prof. Dr. Windisch. Urheimat und Urzeit der Indogermanen Dr. Hirt. Lektüre ausgewählter Stücke der Avesta, Prof.Dr. Lindner" (Van der Lem 1993: 47).

editor, Karl Brugmann, Huizinga reminded him of the lectures he had attended ("ich [...] hatte das Vergnügen einen Theil Ihrer Vorlesungen über Lateinische Grammatik zu hören"), and announced that this paper would be followed by "mehrere semasiologische Einzelstudien". "Hoffentlich wird der etwas revolutionäre Charakter meiner kleinen Schrift an sich kein Grund zur Abweisung sein", he added. What was "der etwas revolutionäre Charakter" of his rather essay-like article? To give an impression of his style and ideas I would like to quote the first page of Huizinga's paper.

Wenn einer Geschichte studierte, und nur dasjenige glaubte, was er durch eine ununterbrochene Kette archäologischer und philologischer Beweise erwiesen fände, so würde ihm seine Arbeit vielleicht fiebrhafte Spannung bieten während den Anstrengungen seines Scharfsinns und auch stolze Befriedigung wegen des Gelingens seiner Beweisführung. Aber leben würde ihm sein Wissen erst, wenn ihm ausserdem der Geist früherer Zeiten von selbst bewusst wäre, und das unmittelbare Mitleben in der Vergangenheit in ihm regen würde, das, einmal empfunden, ein Heimweh nach anderen Zeiten zurücklässt, von keiner bloss philologischen Thätigkeit befriedigt. Die Geschichte ist keine exacte Wissenschaft, und soll es auch nicht werden. Schon mehr ist dies der Fall mit der Sprachwissenschaft. Hier ist zuweilen der Beweis mit ganz mathematischer Sicherheit zu führen, und bei strenger Durchführung der Methode steht vielleicht in der Zukunft der Abschluss des grossen Systems als ein vollendetes und ganzes zu erwarten. Ist darum aber in der Sprachwissenschaft ein von der logischen Argumentation unabhängiges Gefühl zur Erkenntnis der Wahrheit entbehrlich? Wenn die Wahrheit der entwickelten Theorien nur während der Beweisführung oder in dem Zusammenhang des zu überblickenden Systems klar vor Augen liegt, weil man keinen logischen Fehler dabei entdeckt, wenn aber die bewusste Überzeugung schwindet sobald man den ganzen Verlauf des Beweises oder den Zusammensetzung des Systems nicht mehr vor sich sieht, so erfolgt daraus, dass die Wissenschaft, welche dergleichen Resultate ermittelt, keinen fortwährenden Anhalt hat an dem inhärenten Sprachbewusstsein. Die Sprachwissenschaft, welche ihre Systeme baut ganz ausserhalb des lebendigen Sprachgefühls, weil ihre Methode, auf einer Reihe formlicher Gleichungen beruhend, den Anschluss an dieses Gefühl verloren hat, kann wertvolles leisten, aber solange sie sich dem dichterischen Gefühl, (denn die Sprache ist doch jedenfalls eine dichterische Schöpfung,) ferne hält, kann ihre Befriedigung keine tiefere sein als die bloss archäologische des Historikers. Die Sprachwissenschaft sollte der Dichtkunst am nächsten stehen, in der That steht sie meilenweit davon ab.

Let me focus now on some of the sweeping statements advanced in Huizinga's paper (cf. Noordegraaf 1992b).

Like history, Huizinga maintained, linguistics is in need of "ein von der logischen Argumentation unabhängiges Gefühl zur Erkenntnis der Wahrheit". Linguistics should again strive at a *rapprochement* with poetry, Huizinga argued in rather polemical tones, stressing the poetical, non-logical origin of language. The young Dutch scholar blamed contemporary linguistics for limiting itself merely to "archeology", focused as it was on the "Sammeln und Ordnen von Einzelwahrheiten" (1896: 3). "Das Haus der heutigen Sprachwissenschaft [...] ist nicht bewohnbar" (1896: 2), a grand comprehensive theory was lacking. The present approach to linguistics neglected "Probleme der Bedeutung und sprachlichen Begriffsbildung" (1896: 3), and did not bring us any nearer to solving the deeper problems of language. Thus, Huizinga argued, we should detach ourselves from current research into sound and form, and direct our attention towards "Untersuchungen über Bedeutung und Begriffsbildung [...] unabhängig von der formellen Sprachvergleichung" (1896: 5). Huizinga pleaded for "die Anwendung einer grundverschiedenen Methode", viz. a semasiological method.

All in all, Huizinga deemed the etymological and formal approach useless for his purposes, and he reproached the leading linguists for not addressing problems "von hohem Interesse" (1896: 3). Be this as it may, Brugmann seemed not to have been impressed by the views of his former auditor, for in a letter he curtly replied: "Sie müssen erst noch mehr lernen, bevor Sie zu lehren anfangen". Probably he was

right in many respects, but it was not a very kind remark, Huizinga (1947: 30) noted in his memoirs more than forty years later.

Huizinga did not give up that easily. In January 1899, he finished a second paper, entitled "Lautwiderholende Wortbildung", in which he tried to corroborate his thesis with the help of data on reduplication. Having thanked Brugmann for his comments on the earlier paper ("meinen besten Dank für Ihren ausführlichen Brief"), he wrote: "Die Richtigkeit Ihrer Bemerkung, ich sollte mal erst etwas von meinem Programm ausführen, um klarer zu machen, was ich meine, hat mich veranlasst, einen Teil des Materials, das ich gesammelt habe, zu verarbeiten zu einem Aufsatz, den ich Ihnen beizugehend sende" (Huizinga 1898: 33).<sup>4</sup> To his great disappointment, this paper was also rejected by Brugmann.

As Krul (1990: 143) has already pointed out, in March 1899 Huizinga ventilated his views once more on the thesis he had put forward in his first paper, in a review of the first volume of the *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch der altindischen Sprache* (1898) composed by C.C. Uhlenbeck (1866-1951), professor of Sanskrit at the time in the Municipal University of Amsterdam. This review appeared in *Museum*, a periodical devoted to philology and history, published in Groningen and edited by Huizinga's teachers P.J. Blok (1855-1929), J.S. Speyer and B. Symons. Evidently, the Haarlem history teacher was regarded in academic circles as an expert on Sanskrit.<sup>5</sup> Referring to the expressions of the perceptions of light and sound, Huizinga (1899b: 14) once again concluded on the basis of his own previous investigations that comparative etymology was not an appropriate basis for semasiological research. As his memoirs show, he was still of the opinion that his ideas had not been completely unfounded more than forty years later.

In short, Huizinga felt disappointed during the late nineties with the Neogrammarian approach to linguistics. For his doctoral dissertation he chose a theme which called for a different approach; his teacher at Groningen, steeped in Neogrammarian linguistics, rejected his ideas. As can be concluded from the original dissertation scheme, it was on behalf of the classification of his data that Huizinga sought to introduce notions which can hardly, if at all, be put into words: feelings, moods etc. He himself had to admit that the criteria of such a classification were rather instable. Small wonder then that his *Doktorvater*, a genuine Neogrammarian, considered his approach to be non-linguistic. All the same, Huizinga did persist in his initial plan, and it was not until Brugmann had rejected both the papers submitted that Huizinga felt forced to turn his attention to other questions definitively. He went over to Indian cultural history, and from there to cultural history in general.

It is interesting to note that Brugmann, who, at the end of his linguistic career became more and more interested in semantic matters, had published a study as early as 1894 on "Die Ausdrücke für den Begriff der Totalität in den indogermanischen Sprachen", which he characterized as "[e]ine semasiologisch-etymologische Untersuchung". He claimed that a "systematische Bearbeitung der Bedeutungslehre, bei der die ganze Masse der zum Ausdruck kommenden Vorstellungen nach irgend welchen Prinzipien geordnet wird und nun die einzelnen Begriffe oder Begriffsgruppe nach ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung durch möglichst viel Sprachen hindurch untersucht werden" was important for lexicography and etymology (cf. Nerlich 1992: 269). In 1895, Brugmann's article was announced in the *IF Anzeiger* 5: 17-19. So, it is probable that Huizinga was familiar with the contents of this paper, and submitted his own semasiological article to Brugmann for this reason (cf. Krul 1990: 142). Whatever the case may be, he did not refer to Brugmann's contribution in his letters and papers.

---

4. Unfortunately, this paper has not survived; in 1905, a friend of Huizinga's, André Jolles (1874-1946), who stayed at Freiburg at the time wrote that Rudolf Thurneysen (1857-1940), professor of comparative linguistics at Freiburg, was familiar with Huizinga's article. The latter's opinion appears not to have been very negative, but we do not know any further details (Huizinga 1989: 66).

5. In 1902, Huizinga was indeed recommended for a university post, as a lecturer in Sanskrit at Utrecht University, but he was passed over in favour of W. Caland (1859-1932), who was appointed in February 1903.

### 3. Huizinga's doctoral dissertation 'On Light and Sound'

Among the numerous papers and notes that are kept in the Huizinga files at the University Library of Leiden we find a manuscript of 38 pages entitled "Inleiding en Opzet voor Studie over Licht en Geluid". It is the draft of a dissertation submitted by Huizinga to his supervisor a few months after returning from Leipzig in the spring of 1896. The introductory part comprises the first nineteen pages; the second part, nineteen pages as well, is a scheme in which the author proposes a classification of the words representing an "aesthet[ische] indruk" according to the character of the mood on which they are based and the phenomena causing this mood (1896: 20).

As I just remarked, the second part of this dissertation in the making consisted of an arrangement of words conveying an impression. For a couple of months, Huizinga had been searching for the expression of the perceptions of light and sound in dictionaries of various languages. He took his examples mainly from Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and Old-Germanic, focusing on the impressions of light and sound because these were among the most developed and because they could be discussed in a most accurate way (1896: 20). Firstly, Huizinga treats "stemmingswoorden" ('mood words'); secondly, words for certain impressions ("indrukswoorden", 'impression words'); and finally, words for concrete ideas, used for impressions of light and sound. Two sections were in an appendix.

A discussion of the details of Huizinga's scheme and its subdivisions is beyond the scope of this article. As Huizinga himself admitted, the examples given were not complete. The classification was concise and improvised, and the norms on which it was based were somewhat vaguely defined. The whole draft was, after all, just a first attempt. What I would like to do now is to concentrate on a few salient remarks in the introductory part, attempting to determine Huizinga's position in the broad spectrum of late nineteenth-century linguistics.

I would like to start off with a general remark. As I pointed out earlier, Huizinga had a predilection for a semasiological approach. The term 'semasiological' was coined in 1839 by the German classical scholar Christian Karl Reisig (1792-1829) "pour désigner la science des significations, moins usité aujourd'hui que son concurrent sémantique" as Marouzeau put it (1933: 165). Note, however, that references to literature on semantics are hard to find in Huizinga's work. Reisig's *Lateinische Semasiologie oder Bedeutungslehre*, the second volume of the *Vorlesungen über lateinische Sprachwissenschaft* was reprinted in 1890, but for instance neither this book nor the well-known 1897 *Essai de sémantique* by Michel Bréal (1832-1915) were mentioned by Huizinga.

Yet it is highly improbable that during his student years Huizinga had not been confronted with questions in the field of semantics. In 1894, his teacher Willem van Helten had delivered an address entitled *Over de factoren van de begripswijzigingen der woorden* ('On the factors of the conceptual changes of words'). In this address he not only set forth some critical remarks on the well-known book *La vie de mots, étudiée dans leur significations* by the Frenchman Arsène Darmesteter (1846-1888), which included "a programme for French semantics" (Nerlich 1992: 138), but he also discussed chapter four ("Wandel der Wortbedeutung") of Hermann Paul's (1846-1921) famous *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte* (1880<sup>1</sup>, 1886<sup>2</sup>, 1898<sup>3</sup>; cf. Nerlich 1992: 87 sqq.). That Huizinga was familiar with Paul's work, "the bible of the junggrammatiker school" (Malmberg), may be evident, among other things, from the use of the Paulian terms 'useel' (German: "usuel") and 'occasioneel' (German: "okkasionel") in the introduction (1896: 9; cf. Nerlich 1992: 89). As a matter of fact, van Helten (1907: 4) did not use the German term 'Semasiologie', but he employed the word 'semantiek', the Dutch equivalent of 'sémantique', a term coined by the French linguist Michel Bréal<sup>6</sup> as early as 1883. The question of what role van Helten's semantic considerations may have played in Huizinga's work, or even what place they have in the history of semantics in the Netherlands, is beyond the scope of this article.

---

6. Actually, Van Helten referred to Bréal's paper "L'histoire des mots" as published in the *Revue des deux mondes* 82 (1887), 187-212. In fact, during the same year this article also appeared in the *Mémoires et documents scolaires publiés par le Musée pédagogique* 44. "L'histoire des mots" was reprinted as an appendix to the *Essai de sémantique* (1897<sup>1</sup>), omitting a number of illustrative passages. An English translation of the full text can be found in Bréal 1991: 152-175.

Huizinga began the introductory part of his study by praising Jacob Grimm (1785-1863), who in various works, such as in his paper "Über die fünf Sinne" (1848) had made some fine remarks concerning the relation between the expressions of the perceptions of the various senses. It was the best thing that had ever been written on the subject, Huizinga felt. Grimm once observed that it was the gift of poetry, "geheime bezüge der dinge plötzlich zu ahnen". The Neogrammarians Hermann Osthoff (1847-1909) and Karl Brugmann, however, had dissociated themselves from such a romantically coloured attitude towards language as early as 1878, namely in their notorious programmatic "Vorwort" to the *Morphologische Untersuchungen I* (note: not 'syntactic' or 'semantic investigations'), a piece of text which constituted "eine Art Abrechnung mit der Romantik, nicht zuletzt mit Jacob Grimm" (Christmann 1977: 207). Huizinga situated Grimm's activities in the period "des Emporkommens der vergleichenden Sprachwissenschaft", i.e. "in der unbesorgt idealistischen, altdeutsch poetischen Periode ihres Studiums" (1898: 2). The approving references to Grimm will not have been made by chance.

Next, in a note, we find a reference to Ludwig Tobler (1827-1895), who in 1860 gave some "useful hints" (Huizinga) in Lazarus's and Steinthal's *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*. Tobler sought to develop a classification of types of semantic changes, providing "Grundsätze" for "Begriffsübergänge", so as to establish a 'science' of etymology (Nerlich 1992: 41-42). Among other things, he stated: "Die Verwandtschaft zwischen Gesicht und Gehör ist bekannt und schon vielfach ausgeführt, weil sie eine Fülle poetischer Schönheiten und Psychologischer Bemerkungen gewährt" (Tobler 1860: 364). To my mind, this was the type of observations that Huizinga liked very much.<sup>7</sup>

In 1879, Fritz, or Friedrich, Bechtel's (1855-1924) *Über die Bezeichnungen der sinnlichen Wahrnehmungen in den indogermanischen Sprachen. Ein Beitrag zur Bedeutungsgeschichte* appeared in print. When Huizinga was looking for studies on the subject of the dissertation he intended to write, his teachers in Leipzig advised him to consult this book that dealt with semantic change in the field of "sinnliche Wahrnehmungen". Bechtel, later to become a professor of comparative linguistics at Halle (Saale), sought to determine the history of the words for "die Bezeichnungen der sinnlichen Wahrnehmungen" by way of comparative etymology. In a certain sense this study can be regarded as "ein Vorläufer der Wort- oder Begriffsfeldstudien etwa Jost Triers - durch die Berücksichtigung des Inhalts neben der Form des Wortes bildet Bechtels Werk einen Meilenstein der Wortforschung - und eine etymologische Untersuchung der Bezeichnungen für 'tasten, schmecken, riechen, hören, sehen'" (Schmitt 1979: 130). The main result of this book appears to have been "das sogenannte 'Bechtelsche semasiologische Gesetz', dass nämlich die Ausdrücke für die Empfindungen durch die fünf Sinne in der Regel von diesen Empfindungen als solchen absehen und vielmehr die Tätigkeiten zum Ausdruck bringen, auf die hin die Empfindungen erfolgen oder die Gegenstände der Empfindungen sind" (Schmitt 1979: 130). Although this book was regarded to be a standard work,<sup>8</sup> as Huizinga had to admit - he referred to Bechtel in his official dissertation (1897: 88n) - he did not appreciate it very much. I will paraphrase Huizinga's critical comments.

First, Huizinga did not agree with the etymological method followed by Bechtel. It was one-sided, focusing on the formal side of language, and what was more, the basis of his research, the etymology of his days, was unreliable, not sound enough.

Second, and perhaps more revealing, is the question: What did Bechtel think about the origin of language? Of the language creator from prehistoric times Bechtel (1879: 66) said:

---

7. In this connection, it is interesting to note that in 1881 Tobler published a critical review of Paul's *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte* (1880), to which Paul felt obliged to reply in the subsequent edition of his book (1886). Tobler, a "philosopher" (Jordan) criticized the neogrammarian conception of sound-laws in a paper published in 1879 (cf. Jordan 1937: 34n).

8. Jos. Schrijnen (1869-1938), *Inleiding tot de vergelijkende Indogermaansche taalwetenschap* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff 1905, 77) mentions Bechtel 1879 in his discussion of "comparative semantics". He deems his 1879 study of great interest.

indem er die erscheinungen in der welt benannte, hielt er es nicht für unbescheiden, sich selbst *manus* - denker zu heissen [...] er dachte entweder an das, was den ton hervorruft: und nannte den ton mit der tonursache. oder aber er gedachte des eindrucks, den der ton auf seine seele gemacht hatte: und nannte den ton nach seinem hervorstechenden merkmale.

This was a major flaw, Huizinga argued: it was the standpoint of August Fick (1833-1916) and Max Müller (1823-1900), which represented the origin of words as though Indo-European man had given names to the things surrounding him with the help of an "idyllic logic".

Let us look at Huizinga's critical remarks more closely by focusing on the standpoint he ascribed to the celebrated Oxford professor of comparative philology, Friedrich Max Müller. I do not believe that one can discuss nineteenth-century linguistics adequately without paying some attention to this Sanskrit scholar, who was "the recipient of more academic honors, orders, titles, royal and imperial favors, perhaps, than any other scholar since Humboldt" (Jankowsky 1979: 341). Born and educated in Germany, Müller took British citizenship after his engagement by the East India Company as editor of the *Rigveda*. His *Lectures on the Science of Language* (1861-1864), from the fifteenth revised edition on (1891) reprinted under the title *The Science of Language*, also had a tremendous impact on the general public. As Karl Brugmann once remarked: "Sein Buch trug ihm beim grossen Publicum den Ruf ein, er zähle zu den grössten Sprachforschern unseres Jahrhunderts" (Jankowsky 1972: 178).

In the Netherlands the *Lectures* were hailed in 1865 by the Groningen professor of Dutch, Henri Ernest Moltzer (1836-1895), the predecessor of Huizinga's teacher van Helten. And in 1872, Moltzer characterized Müller as a writer who was respected, honoured, and admired in the Netherlands. Each of his contributions, each of his essays was eagerly read by the experts, he said. It can safely be concluded that Max Müller's writings were most popular in the Netherlands (Noordegraaf 1985: 420-421). I would like to emphasize that Müller's range of interest was astonishingly broad: he wrote on Sanskrit, comparative mythology, non-European languages, and a great variety of other subjects of scholarly interest. Admittedly, in the field of linguistic science Müller could not keep up with the pace of development. For that he was severely censured by Brugmann in 1893.

Undoubtedly, Johan Huizinga was one of the voracious readers of Müller's works. When still at grammar school, he studied Müller's *Biographies of words and the home of the Aryas* from 1888. Although later on he got deeply impressed by Edward Tylor's (1823-1917) *Primitive Culture* (1871), he was not quick to abandon Müller's ideas. Quite to the contrary; as it happened, in 1896, studying the words for light and sound, Huizinga fell back on his ideas. The extract of *Biographies of words*, written in a school boy's handwriting, can still be found among the notes of the linguistic dissertation (Krul 1990: 136). Huizinga felt attracted to Müller, I think, because Müller "approached language with a frame of mind that places particular emphasis on the relationship of language to other activities of man. Restricting himself to any merely technical aspect was outside his approach to any subject" (Jankowsky 1979: 346). In Müller's work, the "life of words" was described in a way that Huizinga had sought in vain in the studies by the Junggrammatiker.

Nevertheless, in his dissertation Huizinga took Müller to task for his views on linguistic roots. The wrong conception of the process of naming I just mentioned could only come into being by virtue of a method that attributed "its own logic" to the "creators of language". Huizinga focused on the category of the words for sensations. The etymological method entailed "that the words are reduced to roots with a verbal meaning" (Huizinga 1896: 5). Starting in the case of impression words from *verbal* concepts such as 'to shine' and 'to sound' for instance, meant opting for the belief in "the logical origin of language". Huizinga was of the opinion that the genesis of a word for a sense perception must have been purely lyrical. "For a logical genesis, in other words a genesis, in which a verbal concept precedes the impression word, is not conceivable" (1896: 6).

What then was Müller's opinion about roots? In *The Science of Language* he put it as follows:

In the science of language we must accept roots simply as ultimate facts, leaving to the physiologist and the psychologist the question as to the possible sympathetic or reflective action of the five organs of sensuous perception upon the motory nerves of the organs of speech. It was for that reason that I chose a negative rather than a positive definition of

roots, stating that, for my own immediate purposes, I called root or radical whatever, in the words of any language or family of languages, cannot be reduced to a simpler or more original form (Müller 1913,2: 375).

Note by the way that Müller left the research into the possible role of the "five organs of sensuous perception" to other scholars.

And what becomes clear at closer inspection? "We arrive in the end at roots, and every one of the expresses a general, not a particular idea. Every name, if we analyse it, contains a predicate by which the object to which the name is applied was known" (Müller 1913,1: 512). In his *Biographies of Words and The Home of the Aryas* (1888) he maintained the same standpoint as in the days of the *Lectures*, the 1860s. In the "Introduction" he wrote: "It is known that every word [...] is found to be derived from a root. It is equally well known that *every* root is predicative, that it predicates something of something, and that what it thus predicates is in reality an abstract or general concept" (1888: x). And at another page: "[E]very word is derived from a predicative root" (1888: xv), i.e. a verbal root. As we have seen, Huizinga deemed this to be a "logical" conception of language, not compatible with his own ideas concerning the lyrical formation of language. To Müller, language and thought were unseparable, as he had advanced in various publications most clearly.<sup>9</sup>

The names Müller jocosely gave to two theories on roots have become rather notorious in the history of linguistics. According to the first theory, roots were imitations of certain sounds; this Müller denominated the 'bow-wow theory'; according to the second one, roots were "involuntary interjections"; this was called the 'pooh-pooh theory'. The idea behind the first opinion is that man heard the sounds of birds, dogs and cows, the thunder, the sea and so on, and that he intended to imitate these sounds. The imitation of a certain sound was based on the characteristic of an object (for instance the barking of a dog: "bow-wow"). But Müller was rather sceptical: "We cannot deny the possibility that *a* language might have been formed on the principle of imitation; all we say is, that as yet no language has been discovered that was so formed" (Müller 1913,1: 497).

The second opinion disputed by Müller was the pooh-pooh theory or the interjectional theory. Thinkers such as the French philosopher Etienne de Condillac (1714-1780), said Müller, protested against the imitation theory which would place men even below the animal. Why should man be supposed to have taken a lesson from birds and beasts? For example, man himself was very well capable to produce a cry or a shout "according as he is affected by fear, pain or joy". The objections raised by Müller against the bow-wow theory can also be applied to the pooh-pooh theory. We speak of the word 'to laugh' says Müller, and not of the word 'haha'. True, in language we find interjections, and some of them are incorporated in words. "But these interjections are only the outskirts of real language [...] Language begins where interjections end" (Müller 1913,1: 507).

Back to Huizinga now. In the first place, Huizinga did not trust the results of contemporary research methods. But aside from that, he had in particular certain doubts as to the validity of the claims concerning roots which were only based on a comparison of forms. That applied in general, but in particular to "the words with which I am concerned" (1896: 4). He pointed at the problematic of the spontaneous association, taking place apart from rules for the development of meaning. Moreover, a logical conception of language cannot account for "direct lyrical formations" and "lyrical metaphors" (1896: 5-7). As I have already pointed out, Huizinga was of the opinion that "the way a word for a sensuous impression comes into being, must have been purely lyrical. A logical genesis, which implies that a verbal concept precedes the impression word, is inconceivable (1896: 6).

---

9. For a point of view similar to that of Müller's see the introduction by Willem Gerard Brill (1811-1896) in his *Hollandsche Spraakleer*, Leiden 1846. Brill locates the origin of language in man as a thinking being, and referred, like Bechtel, to the Sanskrit word 'manu' (the thinking person), which is related to the word 'man' (1846: 1). The first sound "already comprised [...] a full, although not yet completely developed sentence; originally, it was the germ of what we call a *verb*" (1846: 5). See on the relation Brill - Müller also Noordegraaf 1992a: 283. On ideas how human thought was linguistically expressed in the very early beginnings see Land 1974: 75 sqq., Noordegraaf 1985: 94-97.

It appears to me that Huizinga was claiming a general validity for his findings in the field of impression words ("indruksworden"). He did not work out this claim, but confined himself to an exposition in the field the "words for sensations". Primarily, impressions appeared important to him, and undoubtedly this orientation had to do with his ideas on the origin of language, which were not compatible with those of the man from Oxford.

The closing paragraph of the first part of Huizinga's dissertation runs as follows:

This introduction is no abstract speculation, pretending to solve a question concerning the problem of the origin of language. It was no speculation; only by studying the material available I was led to this conclusion. And my intention was just to make the question very clear, and promote expressly a semasiological method which should be completely independent from comparative etymology (Huizinga 1896: 19).

It is this phrase which provides a key: the problems Huizinga had with Max Müller and those who followed his line of thought is to be found in their respective ideas on the origin of language. For that matter, I believe that many controversies in linguistics at least in part can be clarified by taking into consideration the statements of the opponents concerning the origin of language; quite often they give away indeed a great deal of the various opponents' real view of what the essence of language is. So, we might say that it was among other things against Müller's slogan "No Reason Without Language: No Language Without Reason" that Huizinga advanced a version of the pooh-pooh theory, the expressive theory of language origin - "denn die Sprache ist doch jedenfalls eine dichterische Schöpfung", Huizinga (1898: 2) asserted. This is reminiscent of the traditional anti-rationalist opinion that our early forefathers were "by nature sublime poets" (Abrams 1974:80, cf. Anbeek 1990: 14). As has been pointed out in literature, such views achieved international currency in the course of the eighteenth century (Condillac, Rousseau). They were also rather common property among Romantic poets in the early nineteenth century as has been explicated by Meyer H. Abrams in his *The Mirror and the Lamp*.

It is interesting to see that in his book Abrams also paid attention to the views of the Italian professor of rhetoric Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), who in his *Scienze Nuova* (1725) maintained that language first arose from emotion rather than from reason and that the first languages were necessarily poetic rather than prosaic, passionate rather than intellectual. It is this discovery that forms the key to this new science ("la chiave maestra di auestra Scienza"). As Vico is also known as the founder of modern philosophy of history it might be interesting to give a better look at possible parallels between his views and those of Huizinga's, but for reasons of time and space I will not go into this intriguing matter. What I would like to do is to seek a connection closer to home.

It is probable that as regards language origin Huizinga had come under the spell of certain expositions of contemporary Dutch poets who proposed an ad-hoc linguistic theory of their own, partly based on ideas which can be found in the works of Romantic authors such as the English poets William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Percy Shelley (1792-1822). It has been established that these ideas had been taken over by the Dutch poets of the Movement of the Eighties whose fan Huizinga was.

#### 4. 'Tachtig' on language

In his dissertation Krul has pointed out that all his life Huizinga was influenced by 'Tachtig', the Dutch literary 'Movement of the Eighties'. From autumn 1891, Huizinga had been reading as many of the publications from the sphere of 'Tachtig' as he could lay his hands on" (Krul 1990: 75; cf. also Kamerbeek 1954). It is a well-known fact that 'Tachtigers' such as the poet Willem Kloos (1859-1938) and the writer Frederik van Eeden (1860-1932) occasionally formulated and propagated a language theory of their own. Here I will focus on Kloos's ideas as they came to the fore in his 1891 review of *Verzen*, a now classic collection of poems by the Dutch poet Herman Gorter (1864-1927), which appeared in 1890. Note that in March 1891 this collection of poems had also been reviewed in a laudatory way in the Dutch student periodical *Minerva*, which was edited among others by Huizinga's brother Jakob (cf. Krul 1990: 72). The review by Willem Kloos in the leading literary periodical *De Nieuwe Gids* should be seen as an attempt to justify the highly idiosyncratic language used by Gorter. "Truly, one should not blame the good people for

not understanding Gorter's poems", said Kloos. Seeking to make *Verzen* accessible for the common reader Kloos, a former Amsterdam student of classical languages, propounded a language theory of his own, giving much attention to the question of the origin of language - "For how to explain the genesis of Language?". To Gorter, he argued, language had remained, though in part, "what all conceivable language is in its very-very-first-being-born". In a letter to Gorter dated 23 September 1890 Kloos had already informed him about his review article: "I am bringing up the question from before Adam. Then I chatter most sagely of the common ancestors of man and ape, and I compare you to a barking dog. This last thing is somewhat different, but on the whole it is very formal" (Endt 1964: 239). The reader who knows his Müller is inclined to believe that Kloos would subsequently show himself a proponent of the bow-wow theory; however, he did not. In *De Nieuwe Gids* of 1891 he wrote the following:

As almost all species of mammals have a [...] way of expressing what goes on inside of them, so the unknown beings, who were the transition from man to animal kingdom, had also a language of their own at all times. This language - consisting of a relatively small number of sounds, each of them representing a relatively large number of different emotions and things, just as it still seems to be the case in the animal kingdom. But as the brains became refined, as they became susceptible to smaller differences between the individual objects and sensations, to that extent language grew richer and richer and more individual too. Until, finally and at last, each thing observed and each sensation which was experienced and was repeating itself, had received its own name, and human language had been constituted.

Completely having forgotten where words came from, all men named the same things by the same words, and they did not realize any longer that each word, which was a general word now, had originally been - albeit now altered as to the form - the lyrical and spontaneous sound of an individual, at the moment that he suddenly observed a hitherto unknown detail. For one man must be the first to say the word, and language has grown by virtue of the ever spreading acceptance of the abrupt sounds, sympathically uttered by the individuals, having discovered something new in reality (Kloos 1891: 1139).

It is obvious that here Kloos put down in writing an opinion which Max Müller would undoubtedly have classified as a specimen of the pooh-pooh theory, viz. the expressive, emotive, account he rejected so eloquently (IJzerman 1980: 24; cf. Anbeek 1990: 12-14).

Continuing with his argument Kloos linked his ideas about language origins to a certain poetical practice. "The lyrical poet [...] comes close to primitive man, who bellowed his amazement, his ecstasy or his sadness, or smothered it into a sound that was spontaneously aroused by reality" (1891: 142). However, in doing so the poet was not yet like primitive man, bound as he was to the abstractions of words and grammatical rules. As Gorter ventured to go further than any other poet, Kloos had to conclude: "he neglects the laws of prosody and grammar, and his metaphors are so peculiar that one remains blind to them". Starting from the thesis that "art should be the most individual expression of the most individual emotion" Kloos posited: "Therefore, each newly articulated sound, uttered by primitive man when he was struck by something, must have been the purest literary art, and this primitive man was also the very first artist".

Kloos's contemplations on the origin of language are not very original. He borrowed them from English Romantic poets such as Percy Bysshe Shelley; in fact, similar ideas had also been circulating elsewhere for a long time (cf. Land 1974: 58). We need not concern ourselves here with the attempt by the "oude geluidgod" ('the old sound god', *sc.* Kloos) to shield the poems of his friend Gorter with the help of an ancient view on the origin of language. What matters in this context is that Huizinga took the side of the Romantic poets favoring the expressive theory of language origin. As he put it himself: "Die Sprachwissenschaft sollte der Dichtkunst am nächsten stehen, in der That steht sie meilen weit davon ab" (Huizinga 1898: 2).

It was not without some self-insight that many years later Huizinga (1947: 23) concluded that the draft of his doctoral dissertation had been based rather on his widely reading works of literature than on his scientific experiences. Only when writing his 1897 dissertation on the *Vidūsbaka* he discovered how to see

beyond lyricism, "and to escape from the blind alley into which an undiluted Impressionism seemed to him to lead him" (Kolff 1989: 152).

## 5. Huizinga and linguistics around 1900

In 1915, the Dutch linguist and anthropologist Jan P.B. de Josselin de Jong (1886-1964), a student of the Leiden professor Christianus Cornelius Uhlenbeck (1866-1951), remarked that the firm belief in the correctness of the principles of the Neogrammarian school, which had until recently governed the method of Indo-Germanic linguistics, had been shaken in a rather worrying way. He pointed out that two factors had been of major importance: first, the understanding that in order to solve several problems one should also take into consideration material from other than Indo-European languages. Secondly, modern language psychology had also made an important contribution toward a more distanced and critical attitude regarding the Neogrammarian framework. In this respect de Josselin de Jong pointed to the work of Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) and the Dutch scholar Jacques van Ginneken (1877-1945). A few years later Uhlenbeck himself made mention of the "vanity" of the theory "that was founded in merely one language family [...]", the "one-sided and soulless theory of the Neogrammarians", who tried to solve the whole world of language with the help of sound laws and analogies. Where they had reached major results, it had been "in spite of, not by virtue of their methodology" (Uhlenbeck 1918: 36).

Some ten years later the gist of their statements was repeated by Uhlenbeck's student, Gerlach Royen (1880-1955), later to become professor of general linguistics at Utrecht University. As Royen argued:

Es beginnt sich immer mehr die Erkenntnis durchzusetzen, daß ein Studium des Sprachlichen, die sich auf ein kleineres Sprachgebiet einengt, nicht nur im Stoff beschränkter bleibt, sondern auch außerstande sein wird, in die tieferen Fragen nach Warum und Woher der sprachlichen Tatsachen entdeckend einzudringen. Die Ansicht, daß die Indogermanistik dadurch, *daß sie lauter Fragen rein formalistischer Art nachgeht, sich in eine Sackgasse verrant hat*, wird ohne Rückhalt von jenen Sprachwissenschaftlern vertreten, die ihren Gesichtskreis etwas weiter erstreckten als bloß auf indogermanisches Sprachgebiet (Gerlach Royen 1929: III; emphasis added).

We have seen that the same "Ansicht" had also been advocated by Huizinga in his unpublished 1898 paper. Yet it is clear from Huizinga's dissertation draft that he had not reached this conclusion by taking the road of the exotic languages so to speak. Although he was acquainted with Arabic, Hebrew and Russian, he appears to have preferred to stick to other languages; his material mainly stemmed from Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Old Saxon, Old High German etc., and he did not go for the riches of variegated facts and world-wide horizons as Uhlenbeck did, and with him his students van Ginneken and Gerlach Royen. As a matter of fact, I would venture to characterize these scholars as having a certain 'adhésion humboldtienne' (cf. Koerner 1977), but here it is not the place to elaborate on this theme.

To determine Huizinga's place in nineteenth-century linguistics more clearly I would like to point to the views put forward by the notorious Dutch linguist Jac. van Ginneken. As early as 1907, van Ginneken had argued in his Leiden doctoral dissertation, *Principes de linguistique psychologique*, the Dutch version whereof had been published in the years 1904-1906, that the official study of Indo-European had been reduced to a "one-sided positivism". Therefore, van Ginneken sought to break away from the Neogrammarian "yoke". In an extensive paper of 1910-1911 on "The feeling in language and wordcraft" he put forward by way of introduction:

Those who have closely followed the course etymological studies have taken in recent years, are aware of the fact that certain types of studies have really become outdated nowadays, such as the investigation of a series of words in which a certain type of sounds appears, for instance, the Indogermanic series of gutturals. This inevitable preliminary work has for the greater part been brought to a happy end now. What is more, gradually it has become clear that semasiology either had been completely neglected or crumbled up due to the capriciousness of a *dilettante*. Osthoff and Brugmann have participated in this

change; these scholars who in earlier days were solely occupied with sound laws, are in more recent times permanently or exclusively discussing only word groups with related meaning (van Ginneken 1910-11: 266).

Subsequently, van Ginneken pointed to several semasiological studies by Osthoff and Brugmann, concluding that the results of these studies were much more important than the enrichment of the study of sounds during the recent years. Thus, sound laws were not to be neglected, but they would not constitute the principle of the classification any longer. In the future, the guide to etymological investigations was to be the "material" or the "psychological" relation of meaning. Following this line van Ginneken proposed a comparative study into the words for various nuances of feeling. A number of scholars were to collect, each for one language, the words which expressed or meant a nuance of feeling, and arrange them according to a fixed scheme.

His research proposal did not come as a surprise. In his 1907 *Principes* van Ginneken declared that he was engaged in "la recherche des causes plus profondes de tous les phénomènes linguistique dans leur *devenir* intime". He criticized "la grammaire comparée, telle qu'elle est à la mode de nos jours". Comparative grammar had "un champ de travail plus vaste il est vrai, mais elle restreint de part pris sa méthode: elle ne s'occupe que de lois phonétiques ou d'actions analogiques ou d'emprunts" (van Ginneken 1907: I). van Ginneken considered mental activities such as 'adhésion', 'sentiments' and 'appréciation' to be the deepest essence of all linguistic phenomena. For that reason the American linguist Edward Sapir (1884-1939) took "the brilliant Dutch writer" van Ginneken to task in his book *Language* (1921), since the latter denied the "prevailing cognitive character of language". Certain scholars, Sapir said, "attempt to demonstrate the origin of linguistic elements within the domain of feeling. I confess that I am utterly unable to follow them" (Sapir 1921: 39). I would like to add here that it was rumored that in his early days van Ginneken had written exuberant, romantic poems. Only when his Jesuit superiors had told him to concentrate on linguistics, he became the "most brilliant student of the brilliant Uhlenbeck" (Heeroma).

I hasten to say that Huizinga's approach is quite different from van Ginneken's "linguistique psychologique". But pending a more exhaustive investigation I would only like to point out that there might be some affiliation and some interesting parallels.

Recently, it has been claimed that Huizinga's linguistic efforts, if succesful, had meant nothing less than a scientific revolution (Krul 1990: 130). However, if we accept van Ginneken's observations on the development of the Brugmann type of linguistics, we may conclude that also without Huizinga's "revolutionäre" 1898 essay linguistics was to make its 'semantic turn' quite autonomously so to speak. I myself am of the opinion that in the 1890s it had already become clear that linguists in several West European countries were becoming more and more aware of the limitations of historical-comparative language research as it had been undertaken especially in Germany. Huizinga's linguistic activities should be seen within this framework.

In this connection it is worth noting that in 1929 Huizinga remarked that more than ever linguistic science had become an integral part of the cultural sciences since it had turned from the *Junggrammatiker* "external morphology" to semantic questions, in other words to the "internal morphology of the expression of thoughts" (Huizinga 1929: 82). One may have every reason to believe that Huizinga was satisfied with the course he felt linguistic science had taken.<sup>10</sup>

---

10. Krul (1990: 143n1) strongly doubts that Huizinga was right when observing such a development. Certainly, Huizinga could have expressed himself in a more balanced way in this matter, but I do not feel he was completely mistaken. I will leave this question for another occasion.

By the way, on behalf of the interested reader I would like to note here that in 1920 Huizinga, together with other linguists such as the Sanskrit scholar Barend Faddegon (1874-1955) and the ethnopsychologist C.C. Uhlenbeck, was invited to participate in the work of the 'Internationaal Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte' of the Dutch signficians (Van Ginneken e.a.). It was only Faddegon who accepted the invitation (cf. H. Walter Schmitz, *De Hollandse significa. Een reconstructie van de geschiedenis van 1892 tot 1926*. (Assen & Maastricht: Van Gorcum 1990, p. 266).

## 6. Encore

In the mid-1930s, the fifty years' Dutch spelling war reached its climax, and national celebrities such as professor Huizinga, "the most famous man in Holland" (cf. van der Lem 1993: 238) became inescapably involved. Its previous history is well-known. As it happened, it was in 1891 that Dr Roeland A. Kollewijn (1857-1942), an Amsterdam teacher, published his paper "Our difficult spelling: a proposal for simplification". His message was clear: primary school teachers, in particular, stood to gain a great deal of time for real language education if the written language was made to correspond with the spoken language, thereby eliminating a lot of dead weight from traditional orthography. Kollewijn, whose interest in linguistics had been aroused by his reading William Dwight Whitney's (1827-1894) well-known *Language and the Study of Language* (1867), studied Dutch at Groningen University, and after receiving his secondary school teaching certificate he continued his studies at Leipzig University, where he received his doctorate in 1880. Among his teachers we find Friedrich Zarncke (1825-1891), and Rudolf Hildebrand (1824-1894).

The year 1891 also saw the publication of the first issue of the journal *Taal en Letteren* ('Language and Letters'). Kollewijn had joined the editors on the understanding that this new journal would enable him to propagate his views on spelling. Although *Taal and Letteren* was the mouthpiece of a largely indigenous reform movement, the editors of the journal sought to base their ideas on contemporary Neogrammarian linguistics. Among the theses put forward by the men of the *Taal en Letteren* movement, we find the slogan: "language is sound, not a written or printed symbol". However trivial this may seem, at a time when natural speech was primarily regarded as a degenerate form of written language, it was inevitable to proclaim forcefully that language is essentially everyday speech. In other words, *Taal en Letteren* stressed the priority of spoken language to written language. And when spoken language is given the priority, then the written language has to be led by it, and spelling reform should be carried out. But it was to take more than half a century: it was as late as in 1947 that the Dutch spelling system was officially changed.

How was Huizinga's stance in these matters? At the climax of the debate for and against, in the 1930s, Huizinga took a stand against those who proposed to change the written language. As he saw it, spelling simplification would mean "vulgarize and lower the standards" of the Dutch language. A review by Huizinga from 1927 clearly shows that he disliked the Kollewijn movement. Evidently, Huizinga had become annoyed when writing this review. The present author, he said, was not aware of the fact that the written language had become the proper instrument of thought, and that the spoken language has become a matter of secondary importance. In the course of the nineteenth century all civilized languages in Western Europe had reached their "final orthographical stage", Huizinga (1927: 525) argued.

However, when an anti-Kollewijn society was founded in 1934, he refused to become its chairman. As president of the Royal Dutch Academy for Arts and Sciences, he felt he had better refrain from becoming a member of the new society, although he was sympathetic to its goal. At any rate, he was willing to publish an open letter to its secretary in one of the dailies. Due to Huizinga's status in Dutch society the minister of Education, Mr. Hendrik Pieter Marchant (1869-1956), felt obliged to reply to Huizinga in public. In a broadcasted speech Marchant said that the deep impression Huizinga's letter had made in certain circles was, in fact, due to his position, not to his arguments. Marchant argued that Huizinga, as an historian, should stay out of the debate. Now Huizinga got angry: "I would like to point out that in my time I have also studied Dutch linguistics, and for many years I maintained an active interest in matters linguistic. Well, that was a long time ago; but I do not believe that I have forgotten all of it" (Huizinga 1934c: 554). I think Huizinga was right. Many linguistically trained opponents of spelling reform were - rightly - of the opinion that the 'Kollewijn movement' was inspired by linguistic ideas from the late nineteenth century, mainly Neogrammarian ones, and Huizinga shared their opinion. One can assume that Huizinga, too, had recognized the Neogrammarian foundations of Dutch spelling reform. Thus, leaving aside all other issues, however important they may be, my claim is that for the second time in his life Huizinga saw himself confronted with the consequences of the Neogrammarian approach and he did not like them any more than he had before. And for the second time he lost his battle "gegen die Junggrammatiker" (Schuchardt).

## 7. Concluding remarks

What then was the position of Huizinga vis-à-vis nineteenth-century linguistics? It is obvious that he cannot be considered as a follower of contemporary main stream linguistics, the junggrammatiker school; that was something he made very clear himself.

Further, when still in Leipzig Huizinga managed to see "the great Wilhelm Wundt", the noted psychologist, asking him for advice on the subject matter to be treated in his dissertation. However, as Wundt only referred to his own publications, Huizinga was disappointed, because those writings did not tell him anything he could use (Huizinga 1947: 23). No more can we say that he belonged to the Humboldtian trend in linguistics, for he confined sticking to the field of Indo-European languages.

Focusing on the opposition Huizinga - Müller it came to light what importance Huizinga attached to a non-logical conception of language. Although Huizinga's contemplations appear to be somewhat outdated at the time, I would like to emphasize that these *Betrachtungen* were not completely *unzeitgemäß*. To some extent they are reminiscent of what Huizinga's contemporary, the distinguished Danish scholar Otto Jespersen (1860-1943), had put forward in his 1894 *Progress in Language*, namely that the genesis of language is not to be sought in the prosaic, but in the poetic side of life" (Jespersen 1894: 357). I am inclined to see Huizinga as a Romanticist, who stressed the importance of the feelings of the individual in the case of language creation and language production.

To Huizinga it was a great disappointment that his papers were rejected by Brugmann, and it appears that he has always considered these rejections as a real defeat. Subsequently, he turned definitively to Indian cultural history, and from that subject one can draw a straight line to his famous *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. Maybe we should be thankful to Karl Brugmann.

## References

- Aarsleff, Hans  
1982 *From Locke to Saussure. Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History*. London: Athlone.
- Abraham, Meyer H.  
1974 *The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic theory and the critical tradition*. London etc.: Oxford University Press.
- Anbeek van der Meijden, A.G.H.  
1990 "Dichter bij de oertaal". *Traditie en progressie. Handelingen van het 40ste Nederlands Filologencongres*. 's-Gravenhage: SDU Uitgeverij, 11-21.
- Bechtel, Fritz  
1879 *Über die Bezeichnung der sinnlichen Wahrnehmungen in den indogermanischen Sprachen*. Weimar: H. Böhlau.
- Bréal, Michel  
1991 *The Beginnings of Semantics. Essays, lectures and reviews*. Ed. and transl. by George Wolf. London: Duckworth.
- Christmann, Hans Helmut, ed.  
1977 *Sprachwissenschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Einhauser, Eveline  
1989 *Die Junggrammatiker. Ein Problem für die Sprachwissenschaftsgeschichtsschreibung*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier.
- Endt, Enno  
1964 *Herman Gorter documentatie over de jaren 1864 tot en met 1897*. Amsterdam: Polak & Van Gennep.

- van Essen, Arthur J.  
 1983 *E. Kruisinga. A Chapter in the History of Linguistics in the Netherlands*. Leiden: Nijhoff.  
 1993 "The Study of Modern Foreign Languages at Groningen, 1876-1914".  
 Noordegraaf & Vonk 1993, 63-78.
- van Ginneken, Jac.  
 1907 *Principes de linguistique psychologique. Essai synthétique*. Amsterdam: E. van der Vecht.  
 1911 "Het gevoel in taal en woordkunst". *Leuvense Bijdragen*. 9 (1910-1911): 265-356.
- Grimm, Jacob  
 1848 "Die fünf Sinne". *Zeitschrift für deutsches althertum*. 6: 1-15.
- Helten, Willem Lodewijk van  
 1899 "De Westfriesche eiggennamen *Jouke* en *Sjouke*". *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche taal- en letterkunde*. 18: 192.  
 1907 *Over de factoren van de begripswijzigingen der woorden*. 2nd ed. Groningen: J.B. Wolters. (1st ed. 1894).
- Hugenholtz, F.W.N.  
 1979 "Huizinga, Johan". *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*. Vol.I. 's-Gravenhage: Nijhoff 1979, 259-262.
- Huizinga, Johan  
 1896 "Inleiding en opzet voor studie over licht en geluid". Ms., Huizinga Archief, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden, # 33.  
 1897 *De Vidúsaaka in bet Indisch toneel*. Huizinga 1948: 45-143. Originally Groningen: P. Noordhoff.  
 1898 "Über die Vernachlässigung der Wortbedeutung in der vergleichenden Sprachwissenschaft". Ms, Huizinga Archief, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden, # 33. First printed in Noordegraaf 1992b: 205-211.  
 1899a "Lautwiederholende Wortbildung". Unpubl. ms., not preserved.  
 1899b Review of C.C. Uhlenbeck, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch der altindischen Sprache*. Erster Band. Amsterdam 1898. *Museum*. 7 (1 March 1899): col. 12-14.  
 1900 Review of C.C. Uhlenbeck, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch der altindischen Sprache*. Zweiter Band. Amsterdam 1899. *Museum*. 7 (12 Febr. 1900): col. 353-354.  
 1927 "De nieuwe uitgave van Vondel". Huizinga 1951, 522-527. Originally in *De Gids*. 91,2: 268-274.  
 1929 "De taak der cultuurgeschiedenis". Huizinga 1950, 35-94. Originally in *Cultuurhistorische verkenningen*. Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon 1929, 1-85.  
 1934a "Open brief aan H.A. Höweler". Huizinga 1951, 546-548. Originally in *De Telegraaf*, 19 October 1934.  
 1934b "Antwoord aan J.A. Daman". Huizinga 1951, 552-553. Originally in *De Telegraaf*, 27 oktober 1934, Avondblad.  
 1934c "Laatste spellingronde?". Huizinga 1951, 553-559. Originally in *De Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 7 November 1934.  
 1947 *Mijn weg tot de historie*. Huizinga 1948, 11-42. Originally Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon, 1947.  
 1948 *Verzamelde Werken*, I. Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon.  
 1950 *Verzamelde Werken*, VII. Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon.  
 1951 *Verzamelde Werken*, VIII. Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon.  
 1989 *Briefwisseling*, I. 1894-1924. Utrecht: Veen.  
 1991 *Briefwisseling*, III. 1934-1945. Utrecht/Antwerpen: Veen/Tjeenk Willink.
- Iordan, Iorgu  
 1937 *An Introduction to Romance Linguistics*. London: Methuen & Co.
- Jankowsky, Kurt R.  
 1972 *The Neogrammarians. A re-evaluation of their place in the development of linguistic science*. The Hague & Paris: Mouton.  
 1979 "F. Max Müller and the development of linguistic science". *Historiographia Linguistica*. 6: 339-359.
- Josselin de Jong, Jan P.B. de  
 1915 "Geschiedenis der taalwetenschap". *Geschiedenis der wetenschappen*. Baarn: Hollandia-drukkerij, 61-92.

- Kamerbeek, J.  
1954 "Huizinga en de Beweging van Tachtig". *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis*. 67: 145-164.
- Karsten, G.  
1949 *Honderd jaar Nederlandse philologie. M. de Vries en zijn school*. Leiden: Nederlandsche Uitgeversmaatschappij.
- Kloos, Willem  
1891 Review of *Verzen* by Herman Gorter (Amsterdam 1890). *De Nieuwe Gids*. 6,1: 139-149.
- Koerner, E.F. Konrad  
1977 "The Humboldtian trend in Linguistics". *Studies in Descriptive and Historical Linguistics. Festschrift for Winfred P. Lehmann*. Ed. by Paul J. Hopper. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 145-158.  
1978 "1876 as a Turning Point in the History of Linguistics". *Toward a Historiography of Linguistics. Selected Essays* by E.F. Konrad Koerner. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 189-209 (Originally in *The Journal of Indo-European Studies*. 4 [1976]: 333-353.  
1989 *Practicing Linguistic Historiography. Selected Essays*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Kolff, D.H.A.  
1989 "Huizinga's dissertation and the 'stemmingen' of the literary movement of the Eighties". *Leiden Oriental Connections 1850-1940*. Ed. by Willem Otterspeer. Leiden etc.: E.J. Brill, 141-152.
- Krul, Wessel E.  
1990 *Historicus tegen de tijd. Opstellen over leven en werk van J. Huizinga*, Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij.
- Land, Stephen K.  
1974 *From Signs to Propositions. The concept of form in eighteenth-century semantic theory*. London: Longman.
- Lem, Anton van der  
1993 *Johan Huizinga. Leven en werk in beelden & documenten*. Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek.
- Marouzeau, J.  
1933 *Lexique de la terminologie linguistique*. Paris: Geuthner.
- Müller, [Friedrich] Max  
1913 *The Science of Language*. Two vols. London: Longman, Green & Co.
- Nehrlich, Brigitte  
1992 *Semantic Theories in Europe 1830-1930. From etymology to contextuality*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Noordegraaf, Jan  
1985 *Norm, geest en geschiedenis. Nederlandse taalkunde in de negentiende eeuw*. Dordrecht & Cinnaminson: Foris Publications. (Geschiedenis van de taalkunde. 3.).  
1988 "Hoogvliet versus van Ginneken. Dutch Linguistics Around the Turn of the Century". *Historiographia Linguistica* 15: 207-238. (Repr. in Noordegraaf, Versteegh & Koerner 1992, 273-304).  
1989 "Kollewijn, Roeland Anthonie". *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland* 3. 's-Gravenhage: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 351-352.  
1991 "Taal en Letteren honderd jaar later. Een tijdschrift tegen de schrijftaalcultuur". *Forum der Letteren*. 32: 269-280.  
1992a "Dutch Linguists and the Origin of Language: Some Nineteenth-Century Views". *Diversions of Galway. Papers on the History of Linguistics*. Ed. by Anders Ahlqvist. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins, 279-289.  
1992b "Uit het verleden van een historicus. De taalkundige ambities van de jonge Huizinga". *Voortgang, Jaarboek voor de Neerlandistiek*. 13: 197-215.  
1992c "Johan Huizinga 1872-1945 on Spelling and Linguistics". *Henry Sweet Society Newsletter*. 19: 14-15.
- Noordegraaf, Jan, Kees Versteegh & Konrad Koerner, eds.  
1992 *The History of Linguistics in the Low Countries*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins.

- Noordegraaf, Jan & Vonk, eds.  
 1993 *Five Hundred Years of Foreign Language Teaching in the Netherlands, 1450-1950*. Amsterdam: Stichting Neerlandistiek VU / Münster: Nodus Publikationen.
- Royen, Gerlach [=Nicolaus Jacobus Hubertus]  
 1929 *Die nominalen Klassifikations-Systeme in den Sprachen der Erde. Historisch-kritische Studie, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Indogermanischen*. Mödling bei Wien: Anthropos.
- Sapir, Edward  
 1921 *Language*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. (References are to a later paperback reprint).
- de Saussure, Ferdinand  
 1916 *Cours de linguistique générale*. Éd. critique préparé par Tullio de Mauro. Paris: Payot, 1974. (1st ed. Lausanne & Paris, 1916.).
- Schmitt, Rüdiger  
 1979 "Friedrich Bechtel (1855-1924)". *Historiographia Linguistica*. 6: 129-135.
- Tobler, Ludwig  
 1860 "Versuch eines Systems der Etymologie mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Völkerpsychologie". *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*. 1,5: 349-387.
- Thys, Walter  
 1956 "Huizinga en De Kroniek". *De Kroniek van P.L. Tak, brandpunt van Nederlandse cultuur in de jaren negentig van de vorige eeuw* by Walter Thys. Amsterdam & Antwerpen: Wereldbibliotheek, 193-203.
- Uhlenbeck, Christianus Cornelis  
 1918 "Johan Hendrik Caspar Kern, 6 april 1833 - 4 juli 1917". *Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen 1917*: 15-47.
- Ijzerman, Arie  
 1980 *De opvattingen van Willem Kloos over taal*. Unpubl. paper, Dept. of Dutch, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

## Summary

Not many of his admirers are aware of the fact that the great Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1872-1945), whose works include *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, was originally a linguist. As a student, he wanted to follow a career in oriental studies and comparative linguistics. In 1896, he sought to write a doctoral dissertation on a linguistic theme.

Johan Huizinga was born in Groningen, in the northern part of the Netherlands, where his father was a professor of physiology. He attended the Groningen Gymnasium. One of the younger pupils at that school then was Etsko Kruisinga (1875-1944), later to become a well-known Dutch Anglicist and one of Huizinga's dedicated opponents in the 1930's. Following grammar school, Huizinga studied Dutch at Groningen University, spent a term at Leipzig, and received a Groningen doctorate in 1897 with a dissertation on the jester in Sanskrit drama. In the years 1897-1905 he was a history teacher, but he did not feel himself to be a very successful one. In 1903, he was admitted as a 'privaat-docent' (unsalaried lecturer) at the University of Amsterdam, and began lecturing on the Antiquity and Literature of India. Two years later, he was appointed to the chair of history at Groningen University. In 1915, he moved on to Leiden, remaining there until the University was closed in 1941 at the command of the German authorities. For some months Huizinga was held hostage. Later he was exiled to the eastern part of the country, where he died in 1945.

Huizinga's 'historical turn' did not take place overnight. The literature on Huizinga (cf. the important study by Krul 1990) shows a continuity in this process, a continuity which has to do, among other things, with his reading the

works of the renowned Oxford professor Max Müller. In his student days, Huizinga was something of a romantic type, an "incorrigible day dreamer", as he once put it himself. In the early 1890s he fell under the spell of the Dutch Movement of the Eighties, the literary school which put so much new life into Dutch literature, and dominated it for a number of decades. The poetry of this Movement in particular was characterized by strong Romantic traits.

Having learned some Hebrew and Arabic at grammar school, Huizinga intended to study Arabic in Leiden, but his father did not approve of this idea for financial reasons. So, the young Huizinga enrolled as a student of Dutch at Groningen University in September 1891. In those days, the syllabus of Dutch also contained "the principles of Sanskrit", and six years later Huizinga received his doctorate with a dissertation on an Indological subject. Actually, however, Huizinga had intended to write a dissertation on a completely different subject, namely in the field of comparative linguistics. It had been with that end that he had left for Germany in October 1895, spending the full winter semester at Leipzig University. There it soon became clear to him that contemporary German Sprachwissenschaft as practised by the Junggrammatiker could not provide him with the answers to the questions that fascinated him, namely problems in the field of semantics. He did not feel satisfied with the primarily formal approach of the neogrammarians. For his doctoral dissertation he chose a theme which called for an entirely different approach, as can be seen from the draft he wrote when back at Groningen. The 38 pages "Introduction and Plan of a Study on Light and Sound", which is published here for the very first time, gives a good indication of his intention to demonstrate the meaning of the lyrical-associative factor in the development of language. He wanted to study the expression of the perceptions of light and sound in Indo-Germanic languages. As he put it himself: "The question which occupied me first and foremost, can be formulated as follows: On the basis of what fundamental reason do the various languages, in the process of naming sensory perceptions, leap over in a completely identical manner from one field of perception to another one? Why can notions of feeling and weight such as heavy, light, sharp, blunt also be used to make a distinction between sounds and colours or the intensity of light?". Huizinga's sources include authors such as Jacob Grimm (1785-1863), Friedrich Bechtel (1855-1924), and Max Müller (1823-1900).

Having read Huizinga's draft his supervisor, Barend Sijmons (1853-1935), who himself had been trained at Leipzig, promptly rejected this plan: it was without any importance to linguistics, only of some interest perhaps for the psychologist. Later on, Huizinga admitted that his idea to write such a dissertation might have had more to do with his literary preoccupations than with his scholarly interests. At any rate, in 1896 Huizinga was forced to switch to a different subject. The original problem, however, kept him under its spell for the rest of his life; he even returned to it in his autobiography of 1943, a few years before his death, writing that he would like to try the same subject matter again. Note that two of Huizinga's 18 "stellingen", propositions which were added to his 1897 dissertation, are based upon the material of his original dissertation.

What the young Dutchman still sought to do after finishing his doctoral dissertation, namely to point out very clearly what he deemed to be the essential flaw in the neogrammarian approach. To that end, Huizinga put forward a thorough discussion of both the propositions just mentioned. First, he submitted a paper to *Indogermanische Forschungen* in October 1898; it was entitled "Über die Vernachlässigung der Wortbedeutung in der vergleichenden Sprachwissenschaft". In his letter to the editor, the leading German linguist Karl Brugmann (1849-1919), professor at Leipzig and a prominent member of the so-called 'Junggrammatiker', Huizinga announced that his paper would be followed by "mehrere semasiologische Einzelstudien". "Hoffentlich wird der etwas revolutionäre Charakter meiner kleinen Schrift an sich kein Grund zur Abweisung sein", he added. What was "der etwas revolutionäre Charakter" of his rather essay-like article? Like history, linguistics is in need of "ein von der logischen Argumentation unabhängiges Gefühl zur Erkenntnis der Wahrheit". Linguistics should again strive at a rapprochement with poetry, Huizinga argued in rather polemical tones, stressing the poetical, non-logical origin of language. For instance, roots are just impressions, not clear concepts of primitive man.

The young Dutch scholar blamed contemporary linguistics for limiting itself merely to "archeology", focused as it was on the "Sammeln und Ordnen von Einzelwahrheiten". "Das Haus der heutigen Sprachwissenschaft ... ist nicht bewohnbar", a grand comprehensive theory is lacking. The present way of doing linguistics, neglecting "Probleme der Bedeutung und sprachlichen Begriffsbildung", does not bring us any nearer to solving the deeper problems of language. Thus, Huizinga argued, we should detach ourselves from current research into sound and form, and direct

our attention towards "Untersuchungen über Bedeutung und Begriffsbildung ... unabhängig von der formellen Sprachvergleichung". Huizinga pleaded for "die Anwendung einer grundverschiedenen Methode".

As can be concluded from his original dissertation scheme (1896), it was on behalf of the classification of his data that Huizinga sought to introduce notions which can hardly, if at all, be put into words: feelings, moods etc. He himself had to admit that the criteria of such a classification were rather instable. Small wonder that his Groningen supervisor considered his approach as non-linguistic.

All in all, Huizinga found the etymological and formal approach useless for his purposes, and he reproached the leading linguists for not discussing problems "von hohem Interesse". Be this as it may, Karl Brugmann seemed not to have been impressed by the views of his former auditor, for in a letter dated the eleventh of October 1898 he curtly replied: "Sie müssen erst noch mehr lernen, bevor Sie zu lehren anfangen". That was not a very mildly phrased reply, Huizinga noted as late as 1943.

The young Huizinga, however, did not give up that easily. In January 1899, he finished a second paper, in which he tried to corroborate his thesis with the help of data on reduplication. It was entitled "Lautwiderholende Wortbildung". Having thanked Brugmann for his comments on the earlier paper, he wrote: "Die Richtigkeit Ihrer Bemerkung, ich sollte mal erst etwas von meinem Programm ausführen, um klarer zu machen, was ich meine, hat mich veranlasst, einen Teil des Materials, das ich gesammelt habe, zu verarbeiten zu einem Aufsatz, den ich Ihnen beigehend sende".

To Huizinga's great disappointment, this paper was also rejected, and it appears that Huizinga has always considered these two rejections as a real defeat. Subsequently, he turned definitively to Indian cultural history, and from that subject one can draw a straight line to his famous *The Waning of the Middle Ages*.