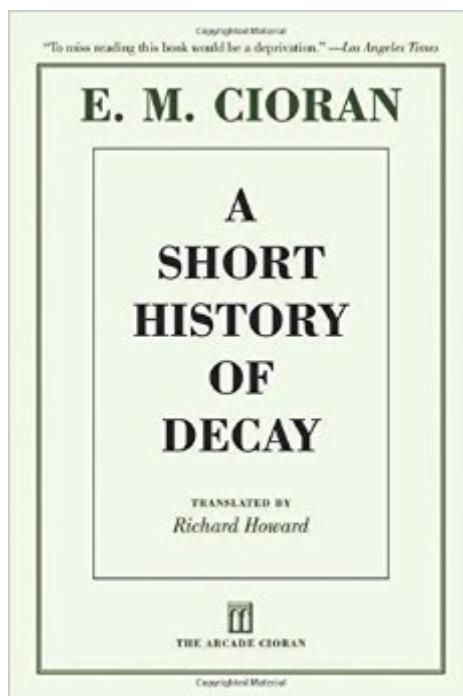


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# A Short History Of Decay



## Synopsis

E. M. Cioran confronts the place of today's world in the context of human history "focusing on such major issues of the twentieth century as human progress, fanaticism, and science" in this nihilistic and witty collection of aphoristic essays concerning the nature of civilization in mid-twentieth-century Europe. Touching upon Man's need to worship, the feebleness of God, the downfall of the Ancient Greeks and the melancholy baseness of all existence, Cioran's pieces are pessimistic in the extreme, but also display a beautiful certainty that renders them delicate, vivid, and memorable. Illuminating and brutally honest, *A Short History of Decay* dissects Man's decadence in a remarkable series of moving and beautiful pieces.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This collection of aphorisms marks the thinking of a true nihilist--Cioran valued the nothing over the absolute. He thought that history was the history of decay, that civilization was sickness. This text stings with acidic beauty--it is Nietzschean in its 'no' saying, but anti-Nietzschean in its absence of any 'yes' saying. Love, art, politics, truth, all are without meaning. The death of God is almost an afterthought in this ferociously bold, ferociously beautiful document of decline. Cioran made the existentialists look optimistic. Cioran wages war on all optimism, and all development--his text explodes formal convention and formal thought.

Cioran sat quietly at a coffee shop beside Sartre for nearly a decade before re-inventing himself in French, his second language, with arguably the finest French Prose since Paul Valery. This book

consists entirely of medium length essays which all seem to advance the same central theme: Nihilism and History. Its hard to consider Cioran among the philosophers. When I hear his name I think first of Poets, Novelists and Dramatists...yet he never wrote poetry, drama or novels. I consider him a character with the world as his stage...his entire existence seems like it dropped out of a poet's brain, a dramatists tact and a Novelist's irony. Never boring. Always engaging. Full of surprise, even when we've guessed the score. Highly Recommended!

An epidemic of denial seems to be sweeping through society today. I suppose the cause is a profound fear, even terror, of losing the good opinion that we have of ourselves. And one of the more obvious results of this fear is a positive hatred and rejection of any sort of criticism whatsoever. The illusion that we and our world are fine and dandy and will continue to be fine and dandy must be maintained at all costs. For those given to viewing the world through rose-colored spectacles Cioran provides a powerful antidote. His works serve to rip away those spectacles and smash them to bits. Rather than offering us a comforting vision of things as we like to think they are, or as we wish they were, he lashes us with a vision of things as they actually are and always have been in this "slaughterhouse" of a universe in which "each being feeds on the agonies of others." Cioran, in short, mercilessly strips away our most cherished illusions and confronts us with the stark truth of our predicament, a truth that is far from pleasant. The tender-minded are hereby warned: Cioran is a Gnostic and his thought is not for everyone. Depressives certainly and those with suicidal tendencies should give him a wide berth. As for the tough-minded, they should note that Cioran, besides being a thinker of dark and lacerating thoughts, is also a brilliant stylist with a way of expressing his disgust that can at times be hilariously funny; for example: "Sometimes I wish I was a cannibal - less for the pleasure of eating someone than for the pleasure of vomiting him." Just as the outrageous opinions of Cioran's great favorite, Diogenes (see 'Herakleitos and Diogenes' by Guy Davenport [ISBN-10: 0912516364]), may be said to have "set off a stink bomb in Plato's Academy," Cioran sets off a stink bomb in our own world of comforting lies and illusions since, one way or another, he seems determined to have all of us either shuddering in horror or screaming with laughter."

The title kind of gives away the plot (spoiler alert). If you're in a good mood and no longer want to be, this is the book for you. Extremely well written, but just, ya know, devastatingly hopeless.

Brilliant work that's both rewarding to read and worth sharing with everyone you know.

Eloquent aphoristic nihilism at its very best. And often times hilarious, too!

a monumental achievement

I received the book quickly, it's in excellent condition, and (as I expected) it's an amazing book.

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