



# **Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time (European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism)**

*François Hartog*

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## **Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time (European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism) François Hartog**

François Hartog explores crucial moments of change in society's "regimes of historicity," or its ways of relating to the past, present, and future. Inspired by Hannah Arendt, Reinhart Koselleck, and Paul Ricoeur, Hartog analyzes a broad range of texts, positioning *The Odyssey* as a work on the threshold of historical consciousness and contrasting it with an investigation of the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins's concept of "heroic history." He tracks changing perspectives on time in Chateaubriand's *Historical Essay* and *Travels in America* and sets them alongside other writings from the French Revolution. He revisits the insights of the French Annales School and situates Pierre Nora's *Realms of Memory* within a history of heritage and today's presentism, from which he addresses Jonas's notion of our responsibility for the future.

Our presentist present is by no means uniform or clear-cut, and it is experienced very differently depending on the position we occupy in society. We are caught up in global movement and accelerated flows, or else condemned to the life of casual workers, living from hand to mouth in a stagnant present, with no recognized past, and no real future either (since the temporality of plans and projects is inaccessible). The present is therefore experienced as emancipation or enclosure, and the perspective of the future is no longer reassuring, since it is perceived not as a promise, but as a threat. Hartog's resonant readings show us how the motor of history(-writing) has stalled and help us understand the contradictory qualities of our contemporary presentist relation to time.

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