



Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, Vol. 1 - Conflicts and Divisions

By Pierre Nora

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Archives, monuments, celebrations: there are not merely the recollections of memory but also the foundations of history. Symbols, the third and final volume in Pierre Nora's monumental *Realms of Memory*, includes groundbreaking discussions of the emblems of France's past by some of the nation's most distinguished intellectuals. The seventeen essays in this book consider such diverse "sites" of memory as the figures of Joan D'Arc and Decartes, the national motto of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity", the tricolor flag and the French language itself. Pierre Nora's closing essay on commemoration provides a culminating overview of the series. Offering a new approach on history, culture, French studies and the studies of symbols, *Realms of Memory* reveals how the myriad meanings we attach to places and events constitute our sense of history.

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Editorial Review

Review

This is an indispensable guide to understanding France and the French. As usual, Arthur Goldhammer's translation is superb.

(Foreign Affairs)

This unusual book deals fascinatingly with everything from the creation of the rousing anthem "La Marseillaise" to the changing role of Joan of Arc in France's collective memory. Even the Eiffel Tower shines forth in surprising new facets.

(Chicago Tribune)

Provides arresting genealogies of a number of the major cleavages in French history, with chapters on the embattled relationship of Jews to the French republic, the peculiar affinities of Gaulism and Communism, and... Paris' haughty condescension toward la province.... Without resorting to polemics, the volume reminds us that the image of the French past is confected as much out of amnesia as out of memory.

(Lingua Franca)

A magisterial attempt to define what it is to be French.

(Times Literary Supplement)

A magnificent achievement.... [The essays included] are the high-carat jewels of the project.

(The New Republic)

Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

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From the Back Cover

Realms of Memory is a monumental collective endeavor by France's leading intellectuals, exploring the cathedrals and palaces, the rituals, legends, and episodes that form the landscape of French consciousness. The first volume, Conflicts and Divisions, reflects on symbols of political, religious, regional, and generational difference that structure France's self-definition. The book begins with the political clashes that have carved a path through French history and memory, between Franks and Gauls, French and foreigners, Vichy and all other regimes. Contributors explore shifting conceptions of political meaning over centuries, from the often irreverent portrayals of Gauls in such popular media as the Asterix comics to nostalgic reimaginings of pre-revolutionary France by modern ultranationalists. A second section analyzes sites and

events of the religious conflicts that underlie French identity. The authors chronicle the manufacture of remembrance, as seen in the Protestant festivals held each September to commemorate the persecution of Huguenots in the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion; and of the processes of forgetting, witnessed in the assimilative tradition among French Jews that has hindered, if not prevented, rediscovery of a distinctively Jewish past and acknowledgements of the French legacy of anti-Semitism. *Conflicts and Divisions* concludes with a section on issues of time and place, and analysis of the cleavages that separate Paris and province, north and south, and human generations as demarcated by such transformative years as 1789 and 1968.

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