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Historical presence as a theoretical field: ontological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions after narrativism

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Historical presence as a theoretical field: ontological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions after narrativism[1]

Abstract
This article reconstructs the concept of historical presence in recent theory and philosophy of history by examining how the past can be experienced and represented as both present in remnants, things, traces, documents, and memorials, and absent because it is irretrievably gone. Focusing on post 2000 debates, it argues that historical presence can be clarified through two complementary definitions: an extensional definition that maps its principal philosophical lineages and branches, and an intensional definition that identifies its ontological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions. The study is organized into five sections: the periodization of the rise of presence; the methodological sample and classificatory framework; the classification of three major lineages—Heideggerian, non Heideggerian, and deconstructionist—through branches associated with Gumbrecht, Pereira and Araújo, Domańska, Froeyman, Runia, Ankersmit, Bevernage, Kleinberg, and Cunha; the comparative analysis of boundaries and mutual critiques among these lineages; and the placement of presence within the broader geography of contemporary theory of history and temporal studies. The study also benefits from bibliometric analysis and digital history resources, which strengthen its methodological scope. The article concludes that historical presence is not a unified doctrine but a contested theoretical field in which experience, representation, realism, spectrality, historical justice, and ethical responsibility are combined in distinct ways, thereby enriching contemporary historiographical reflection.

Keywords: presence; historical time; past; ontology; epistemology; ethics.

Presença histórica como campo teórico: dimensões ontológicas, epistemológicas e éticas após o narrativismo

Resumo
Este artigo reconstrói o conceito de presença histórica na teoria e filosofia da história recente, examinando como o passado pode ser experienciado e representado como simultaneamente presente em remanescentes, coisas, vestígios, documentos e memoriais, e ausente porque está irremediavelmente perdido. Com foco nos debates posteriores aos anos 2000, argumenta que a presença histórica pode ser esclarecida por meio de duas definições complementares: uma definição extensional, que mapeia suas principais linhagens e ramificações filosóficas, e uma definição intensional, que identifica suas dimensões ontológica, epistemológica e ética. O estudo organiza se em cinco seções: a periodização da emergência da presença; a amostra metodológica e o quadro classificatório; a classificação de três linhagens principais — heideggeriana, não heideggeriana e desconstrucionista — por meio das ramificações associadas a Gumbrecht, Pereira e Araújo, Domańska, Froeyman, Runia, Ankersmit, Bevernage, Kleinberg e Cunha; a análise comparativa das fronteiras e críticas mútuas entre essas linhagens; e a inserção da presença na geografia mais ampla da teoria da história contemporânea e dos estudos do tempo. O estudo também se beneficia da análise bibliométrica e de recursos da história digital, que ampliam seu escopo metodológico. O artigo conclui que a presença histórica não é

[1] A pesquisa que resultou na elaboração do presente artigo é apoiada pelos seguintes auxílios: FAPESP 2024/02391-1; CNPQ 317902/2025-3; CNPQ 403192/2024-2; CNPQ 404969/2023-2.

uma doutrina unificada, mas um campo teórico disputado no qual experiência, representação, realismo, espectralidade, justiça histórica e responsabilidade ética se combinam de maneiras distintas, enriquecendo a reflexão historiográfica contemporânea.

Palavras-chave: presença; tempo histórico; passado; ontologia; epistemologia; ética.

1 *Presence* in recent theory of history: periodization and thesis

The rise of presence coincides with the period in which temporal studies gained marked prominence within the broader field of theory of history. According to bibliometric data presented by Bevernage et al., "interest in time and temporality clearly peaks during the third period, reaching over 10% of the publications in 2000–2014" (Bevernage *et al.*, 2019, p. 430). Corroborating and detailing Bevernage et al.'s data, figure 1 presents the statistical distribution of the principal theorists of presence, based on the articles published in *History and Theory* between 1960 and 2020. The chart below shows that the concept of presence became statistically significant in the early 2000s, when leading theorists proposed influential accounts of the presence of the past (Ankersmit 2006; Bentley 2006; Bevernage 2008; Domańska 2008; Gumbrecht 2004; Runia 2006a). This moment marks the emergence and consolidation of presence theories as central components of contemporary historiographical and theoretical debates. As Runia suggests, presence may have become by then "the stowaway with whom no historian can refuse to travel" (Runia, 2006, p. 22a).

Figure 1 – Chart illustrating the statistical distribution of theorists of presence in *History and Theory* (1960–2020)



Fonte: Cardoso Jr. *et al.* (2026)

The concentration of publications between 2006 and 2008—and the subsequent years—provides the basis for delimiting the concept of presence within the recent landscape of the theory of history. As demonstrated later in the next section ("Methodological Approaches"), this delimitation rests on the pioneering, highly influential, and frequently cited authors who developed the most systematic formulations of presence: Frank Ankersmit, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Eelco Runia, Ewa Domańska, Ethan Kleinberg, and Berber Bevernage. After the clustered period of 2006–2008, as detailed in table 1, these authors continued to publish, and their work was followed by contributions from Anthon Froeyman, Mateus Pereira and Valdei Araújo, and Ana Laura C. Cunha.

Drawing on these authors, the central thesis of this article unfolds in two interconnected parts. First, it offers a stable account of the multifaceted concept of presence in recent theory of history by identifying, analyzing, and classifying its philosophical roots. In doing so, it provides an *extensional* definition of presence by mapping its varied sources. Second, it proposes an *intensional* definition of presence by examining the three dimensions most frequently discussed by theorists of history, that is, the ontological, epistemological, and ethical aspects of presence in history. Together, these extensional and intensional definitions make it possible to describe and classify the concept according to its current lineages and branches, which is the central objective of this article.

1.1 *extensional* definition of presence

Presence has become a key term for describing *historical experience* in post 2000 theoretical debates. However, presence is a fleeting and equivocal experience. The concept of presence seeks to explain how one experiences and represents the paradoxical condition of the past—a past that is simultaneously present through its material remains (objects, documents, memorials) and absent because it has irretrievably vanished. As Ankersmit wrote in his 1981 dissertation, presence manifests by imposing itself upon the present and, consequently, upon the historian's subjectivity, as "an [past] event dissociated from our experience of the world and then becomes the tantalizing object of historical understanding—tantalizing since we will never be able to reestablish contact with it" (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 358). It denotes a paradoxical reality: presence is perceived as a

derealization of the past, a condition that "paradoxically endows reality with a presence that is far more real than reality ever is" (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 337).

Presence became a central focus beginning in the 2006–2008 period, yet has since evolved in diverse directions that demand clearer conceptual delimitation. It helped reopen classical questions in the philosophy of history after the dominance of narrativism during the last quarter of the twentieth century (Bentley, 2006, p. 349–350; Runia, 2007, p. 229–230; Kleinberg, 2013, p. 8–9). For Gumbrecht, presence may even attain the status of a widespread "presence culture" (Gumbrecht, 2006, p. 318). With such credentials, some theorists have proposed presence as a theoretical and historiographical paradigm (Domańska, 2006, p. 337; Bevernage, 2008, p. 149; Kleinberg, 2013, p. 4).

Despite this ambitious self image, several scholars have noted the concept's loose definition and often excessive scope. Peters argues that the "modern champions of presence" (Peters, 2006, p. 363) must still demonstrate whether the concept possesses sufficient consistency. Do its proponents belong within the same conceptual framework, or does presence name only a loose constellation of ideas without real unity? Is it, as Ankersmit suggests, "a typically 'democratic' term," one that "anybody may do with it what he or she likes" (Ankersmit, 2006, p. 328)? Or is it an imprecise concept that cannot sustain any unifying ambition and may even, as Peters warns, revive "the practice of Fascist presence culture [that] was not a dialogue with the past, but a monologue in the present" (Peters, 2006, p. 373)?

Because the concept's extension remains unclear, this article clarifies presence by describing, discussing, and classifying its main versions according to their philosophical foundations. In addition to outlining the extensional contours of presence, it addresses a further question: what does the concept contribute to recent theory of history, and to which theoretical domains should it be assigned—*ontological, epistemological, or ethical?* Answering this question is necessary for developing an intensional concept of presence.

1.2 *intensional* definition of presence

Given the extension attributed to the concept, theorists of presence welcomed it as early as 2006 as "the necessary prolegomenon to a radical rethinking of historical *ontology*" that would flourish "by 2030" (Bentley, 2006, p. 360, emphasis added). According to Runia, narrativism refused to reflect on historical experience "out there," thereby "burying ontological questions under epistemological answers" (Runia, 2006, p. 306). Froeyman adds that presence also has an *epistemological* task, since it prevents historians from losing sight of the very object of historical knowledge (Froeyman, 2012, p. 393). Presence may function as an antidote to periods of epistemic and moral uncertainty (Kleinberg, 2013, p. 12).

Ontologically, presence draws on diverse conceptions of historicity—Heidegger's, Greimas's, Levinas's, Vico's, Huizinga's, and Derrida's. For this reason, presence cannot be reduced to a single historical ontology. It can, however, be linked to a broader ontology in which time—including historical time—becomes the very ground of metaphysics. As Whitehead famously stated, "the elucidation of the meaning involved in the [Heraclitean] sentence 'all things flow' is one chief task of metaphysics[2]" (Whitehead, 1978, p. 208).

The recent philosophy of history has shifted its focus from language to the ontological reality of the historical past. Presence thus moves historians away from the "mantras of this now so oppressive and suffocating lingualism [that threatens] the intellectual health of our discipline" (Ankersmit, 2006, p. 336). Theorists of presence have reopened classical questions—reality, directionality, temporal experience, and the relation between past and present—after the prominence of narrativism (Bentley, 2006, p. 349–350). The renewal of historical knowledge encouraged by presence therefore coexists with a dispute over the ontological status of the past. Can the past be represented by a presence that "does not outlaw the multiplicity of narrative construction" (Bentley, 2006, p. 359), presenting itself through its own absence? Or does the past impose a material

[2]For the purposes of this article, ontology and metaphysics can be treated as synonymous without introducing further definitions.

presence that conveys a "reality outside the text" (Runia, 2006a, p. 21) by "presenting absences" (Runia, 2006b, p. 309)?

This renewal of historical ontology also raises a dispute over whether language can represent the experience of the past. Because presence challenges narrativist understandings of representation, a central question emerges: does representing the presence of the past broaden the limits of historical representation? Framed in this way, the problem of representing presence reopens the epistemological dimension of the theory of history beyond the narrativist paradigm. Regarding the epistemological dimension of the concept of presence, postmodernist and poststructuralist theories of language and discourse are now criticized for having gone so far as to disregard temporal experience, the "past-in-itself" (Bentley, 2006, p. 439), the real past (Domańska, 2006, p. 348), and the sublime experience of the past (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 318).

Epistemologically, postmodernist and poststructuralist theories of language are now criticized for having disregarded temporal experience, the "past in itself" (Bentley, 2006, p. 439), the real past (Domańska, 2006, p. 348), and the sublime experience of the past (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 318). Presence responds to this displacement as a "postlinguistic or postdiscursive attempt to return to the real, to material objects and conditions" (Kleinberg, 2013, p. 7), carrying the experience of the past into the present. It raises the hope of overcoming exhausted forms of representationalism, offering "an alternative to meaning, representation, hermeneutics, and to postmodernism" (Peters, 2006, p. 362). Yet if the representation of presence is not to disregard the reality of the past, it must also confront the risk of returning to naïve historical realism and the illusory past in itself.

At this point, the ethical dimension of historical knowledge becomes central. More than twenty-five years ago, Hayden White drew attention to the realist dimension of historical knowledge beyond his own narrativist philosophy (White, 1999, p. 39), anticipating the problems to which theories of presence would later respond. According to La Greca, White's later writings revised his earlier view that the figurative dimension of narrative takes precedence over historiography. He came to recognize that historical narrative may ethically domesticate past

events (La Greca, 2014, p. 201–202). White sought alternatives capable of moving beyond narrative closure when representing traumatic events such as the Holocaust. Extending White's legacy, especially through the concept of the "practical past," requires weakening the dominance of figurative language and placing the ethical dimension of language at the center of historical narrative as a form of "figural realism" (La Greca, 2014, p. 204).

Finally, presence has oriented future research across several fields—from ontology, epistemology, and ethics to the central practices of historiographical inquiry and historical writing (Simon; Kuukkanen, 2015, p. 155). The debate on presence has generated significant studies on memorials, heritage, trauma, historical justice, reparation, and truth commissions, since "both the time of history and the time of jurisdiction are in fact engaged in one and the same logic of presence" (Bevernage, 2008, p. 164).

Based on these initial assumptions, this article offers a conceptual analysis of the imprecise extension of the notion of presence and evaluates the different shades of meaning that may either weaken its internal consistency or broaden its theoretical scope. To this end, it examines the varieties of presence in recent philosophy of history—especially after the 2000s—according to three intensional characteristics identified above: the ontological status attributed to presence as an experience of the past's absence; the epistemic operations involved in representing the past's presence in the present; and the ethical demand to repair the past in order to transform the present. Together, these characteristics define what this article calls historical presence.

2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

2.1 Sample significance

The classificatory framework proposed in this article is based on the most representative authors who have developed the concept of historical presence in recent theory of history. These include Frank Ankersmit, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Eelco Runia, Ewa Domańska, Ethan Kleinberg, Berber Bevernage, Anthon Froeyman, Mateus Pereira and Valdei Araújo, and Ana Laura C. Cunha. Their

contributions form the core of the sample from which the lineages and branches of historical presence are identified and analyzed.

Table 1 refines the information presented in figure 1 by detailing the publications of Ankersmit, Gumbrecht, Runia, Domańska, Kleinberg, Bevernage, and Froeyman in *History and Theory* between 1960 and 2020. The table lists the issues and years of publication, along with the titles of their articles. Only the titles in bold explicitly develop the concept of historical presence; accordingly, only these articles compose the sample of presence theories that this article describes, discusses, and classifies.

Table 1 – Publications of presence theorists in History and Theory (1960–2020), highlighting works on historical presence

AUTHOR	ISSUES/YEARS	ARTICLES' TITLES
Frank Ankersmit (XX)	1986, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1995, 1998	The Dilemma of Contemporary Anglo-Saxon Philosophy of History (1986); Historical Representation (1988a); Grundzüge einer Historik II Rekonstruktion der Vergangenheit (1988b); Historiography and Postmodernism (1989); Historiography and Postmodernism Reconsiderations] Reply to Professor Zagorin (1990); Historicism an Attempt at Synthesis (1995a); Reply to Professor Iggers (1995b); Danto on Representation, Identity, and Indiscernibles (1998a); Hayden White's Appeal to the Historians (1998b)
Frank Ankersmit (XXI)	2001, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2012	The Sublime Dissociation of the Past: Or How to Be(Come) What One Is No Longer. *History and Theory*, [*s. l.*], v. 40, n. 3, p. 295–323, 2001. DOI: 10.1111/0018-2656.00170; Danto, History, and the Tragedy of Human Existence (2003a); An Appeal from the New to the Old Historicists (2003b); The Ethics of History from the Double Binds of (Moral) Meaning to Experience (2004); *Sublime Historical Experience*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005. DOI: 10.1515/9781503624597; "Presence" and Myth. *History and Theory*, Middletown, v. 45, n. 3, p. 328–336, Oct. 2006. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2303.2006.00368.x; The Dialectics of Jameson's Dialectics (2012)
Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht	2001, 2006	On the Decent Uses of History [Review LACAPRA, Dominick. History and Memory after Auschwitz. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998]. *History and Theory*, [*s. l.*], v. 40, n. 1, p. 117–127, 2001. DOI: 10.1111/0018-2656.00156; Presence Achieved in Language (With Special Attention Given to the Presence of the Past). *History and Theory*, [s. l.], v. 45, n. 3, p. 317–327, 2006. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2303.2006.00367.x
Eelco Runia	2004, 2006, 2007, 2010	"Forget about It": "Parallel Processing" in the Srebrenica Report. *History and Theory*, [*s. l.*], v. 43, n. 3, p. 295–320, 2004. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2303.2004.00284.x; Presence. *History and Theory*, [*s. l.*], v. 45, n. 1, p. 1–29, 2006. DOI:

		10.1111/j.1468-2303.2006.00346.x; Spots of Time. *History and Theory*, [*s. l.*], v. 45, n. 3, p. 305–316, 2006. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2303.2006.00366.x; Burying the Dead, Creating the Past (2007); Into Cleanness Leaping the Vertiginous Urge to Commit History (2010)
Ewa Domańska	1998, 2006	Hayden White Beyond Irony (1998); The material presence of the past. *History and Theory*, v. 45, n. 3, p. 337–348, out. 2006. DOI:10.1111/j.1468-2303.2006.00369.x
Ethan Kleinberg	2007, 2012, 2015	Haunting history: deconstruction and the spirit of revision. *History and Theory*, v. 46, n. 4, p. 113–143, dez. 2007. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2303.2007.00431.x.; New Gods Swelling the Future Ocean (2007); Introduction the Trojan Horse of Tradition (2012); History and Theory in a Global Frame (2015)
Berber Bevernage	2008, 2019	Time, presence, and historical injustice. *History and Theory*, v. 47, n. 2, p. 149–167, maio 2008. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2303.2008.00444.x.; Philosophy of History After 1945 a Bibliometric Study (2019)
Anton Froeyman	2014, 2015	The Words of History (2014); Never the twain shall meet? How narrativism and experience can be reconciled by dialogical ethics. *History and Theory*, v. 54, n. 2, p. 162–177, maio 2015. DOI: 10.1111/hith.10751.

Fonte: Cardoso Jr. *et al*. (2026).

Figures 1 and table 1 together confirm that the most systematic and influential formulations of historical presence in *History and Theory* are concentrated in the key period from 2006 to 2008, with significant anticipations and later developments before and after this cluster. The years immediately preceding it already contain important precursors: by 2001, Gumbrecht and Ankersmit had published influential articles that introduced the notion of presence into twenty-first-century theoretical debates. At the other end of the timeline, Bevernage's 2019 bibliometric study, based on the INTH's (International Network for Theory of History) bibliography, shows that ethics, violence-genocide, and trauma—keywords frequently associated with historical presence—had become substantial fields of historiographical and philosophical reflection. For Bevernage, this constellation of presence was significant enough to be considered a successor to narrativism as the dominant paradigm in the theory of history (Bevernage *et al*., 2019, p. 434–436).

In addition to the authors who published in *History and Theory*, this article also includes theorists whose contributions to presence were developed in other venues. Table 2 presents the most relevant works of Mateus Pereira and Valdei

Araújo, and of Ana Laura C. Cunha. Although their publications appear later than the 2006–2008 peak, their work remains integral to the classificatory framework proposed here.

Table 2 – Key publications by theorists of presence outside *history and theory*

AUTHOR	TEXTS' TITLES/YEAR
Mateus Henrique de Faria Pereira and Valdei Lopes de Araújo	Reconfigurations of Historical Time: Presentism, Actualism, and Solitude in Digital Modernity (2016) Actualism 1.0: How the Idea of Updating Changed the Twenty First Century (2019) Actualism: Pandemic and Historicities in the Never Ending 2020 (2021)
Ana Laura C. Cunha	Historical time in recent theory of history: temporal multiplicity and spectral disjunctions (2025) Multiple 'Presences' in Absentia: a bibliometric study of recent trends in the theory and philosophy of history (2000-2022). (2025) "Seule la présence se maîtrise": spacing, layers of time, and historicity. (2026, manuscript in preparation)

Fonte: Cardoso Jr. *et al*. (2026).

Together, table 1 and 2 identify the pioneering, highly influential, and frequently cited authors whose theories of presence constitute the representative sample for this study. Their work provides a conceptual and historiographical basis for the classification of historical presence in the contemporary landscape of theory of history.

2.2 Classificatory framework

The debate on presence after the 2000s can be mapped as a diagram divided into *three lineages*, each gathering distinct theories of historical presence:

1. *Heideggerian presence* (section 3.1)
2. *Non Heideggerian presence* (section 3.2)
3. *Deconstructionist presence* (section 3.3)

In general, these lineages promote presence as a new paradigm or cultural shift, offering historians an alternative to the dominant narrativist framework. In developing theories of presence, historians and theorists of history confronted a central problem: the concept of *temporal* presence—whether derived from

Heideggerian, non Heideggerian, or deconstructionist sources—had not yet been sufficiently defined to provide the specifically historical form of presence required for disciplinary practice and theory. As a result, they adapted these philosophical sources to the theoretical and methodological demands of *historical* knowledge. This adaptation brought together diverse perspectives and gave rise to several *branches* of historical presence within the three main lineages.

For classificatory purposes, this article identifies these branches in two complementary ways:

- By *philosophical affiliation*, using an adjective that indicates the conceptual Leitmotiv of each lineage (e.g., Gumbrecht's *Heideggerian* historical presence).
- By *authorial attribution*, naming each branch after the theorist most associated with it (e.g., *Runia's* Vichian historical presence).

This dual approach allows the classificatory framework to capture both the philosophical foundations and the historiographical innovations that shape each branch of presence. It also shows how theorists have reworked inherited concepts of presence to address the specific demands of historical thought, producing the varieties of historical presence examined in the following sections, especially in their ontological, epistemic, and ethical dimensions.

3 Classification: lineages and branches of historical presence

3.1 Heideggerian presence

This section analyzes four branches of Heideggerian presence: Gumbrecht's Heideggerian historical presence (section 3.1.1), Pereira and Araújo's Heideggerian-Gumbrechtian historical presence (section 3.1.2), Domańska's Greimasian historical presence (section 3.1.3), and Froeyman's Levinasian historical presence (section 3.1.4). The Gumbrechtian, Greimasian, and Levinasian branches are placed within the Heideggerian *lineage* because they participate in a broader debate about the scope and meaning of presence in Heidegger's thought. These branches draw on two related aspects of Heidegger's philosophy that guide the following analysis of historical presence: first, the relation among being, presence, and

language, especially with regard to the ontological features of time; and second, the role of presence in the paradoxical relation between past and present, understood as the presence of what is absent.

Regarding the first aspect, Heidegger approaches presence in *Being and Time* and in his writings from the 1920s through two distinct claims. On the one hand, presence is linked to the temporal present, which, together with past and future, constitutes time and opens access to the understanding of being within a temporal horizon. Only through the interplay among these temporal dimensions can human beings grasp the significance of being as *Dasein*. In other words, being reveals itself to human perception only within the coordinates of temporality (Carman, 1995, p. 431; Blattner, 1999, p. 256-258). In this sense, presence is the necessary manifestation of being in time. On the other hand, Heidegger also treats presence as the central assumption of the metaphysical tradition he criticizes. This tradition privileges the present as the mediating point between past and future, so that the presentification of time diminishes being's temporal commitment and obstructs an authentic understanding of being, which depends on the future (Olafson, 1994, p. 333). In this second sense, presence becomes harmful as far as presentification blocks the future from the temporal meaning of being.

Regarding the second aspect, after *Being and Time*, from 1930 on, especially in *Letter on Humanism* (1940) and *Time and Being* (1962), Heidegger focuses on the truth of being that language conveys. Henceforth, presence is associated with the involvement between being and language. In fact, the formula being-as-presence-as-language splits the exegesis of Heidegger's oeuvre as to whether the new equation continues the search for the meaning of being that *Being and Time* started (Olafson, 1987, p. 191) or not (Hernández, 2011; Blattner, 1999, p. 289-291). The discussion around this issue arose every possible position, since the association of presence with being is valid for the early period, for the later period, for both and for none (Carman, 1995, p. 256-258).

In the shift from the first to the second aspect, it is also important to note that Heidegger gives presence a different emphasis in relation to time as it is *experienced*. Whereas *Being and Time* centers on the authentic temporal mode

of being those structures human existence, Heidegger's later writings stress the relative independence of being from human beings (Malpas, 2006, p. 13). This shift raises a series of questions: can being manifest its presence outside a human temporal horizon? If so, what kind of time exists beyond the ontological horizon projected by human beings? And is it still possible to speak of being as presence when human existence is no longer taken as the pivotal point of reference?

From the perspective of things, the presence of being cannot be reduced to a subject's representation. There is a form of presence that appears independently of the subject who represents it. In this sense, the subject presupposes being "understood as a presence that is prior to and independent of any 'subject'" (Olafson, 1987, p. 164). The presence of being no longer depends on the horizon projected by human existence, since being as presence—including the non-human being of things—offers itself to human apprehension on its own terms. This independence means that being also withdraws from human grasp: its presence remains open precisely by continually receding and coming forth again. This is the only way to understand time as constitutive of being, as "the presencing of what presences" (Hernández, 2011, p. 232). Thus, presence belongs to the dimensions of time while also marking the fleeting passage of time that cannot be fully contained by either past or present. Presence is therefore both present and non-present at once. Only through this dual character can being properly express the paradoxical relation between the present, which is present, and the past and future, which are absent.

The debate over the twofold role of presence in Heidegger's work opens the way to several moves through which recent theory of history has transformed Heideggerian presence into historical presence. When examining theorists of history who draw on Heidegger's notion of presence, it is therefore necessary to consider how they have reshaped the concept to meet the specific demands of historical thought. These different inflections produced at least four Heideggerian varieties, or branches, of historical presence, which can be arranged according to their increasing distance from Heidegger's original inspiration.

3.1.1 Gumbrecht's Heideggerian historical presence

The Gumbrechtian branch of presence is the one most connected to Heidegger's philosophical legacy. Hans U. Gumbrecht explicitly aligns himself with the Heideggerian "'critique of Western metaphysics'" (Gumbrecht, 2006, p. 318) and acknowledges his debt to Heidegger (Gumbrecht, 2004, p. xiv). Yet Gumbrecht (2004, p. 66-67) should not be labeled simply as a "Heideggerian," since he emphasizes the spatial rather than the temporal dimension of Heidegger's notion of presence. In Gumbrecht's version, Heideggerian presence becomes historical through the spatialization of historical time, because things located in space materially convey temporal presence.

First, Gumbrecht argues that the experience of the past depends on space because things *touch* human beings spatially. For him, presence is simply "the spatio-temporally located existence of physical objects and events" (Gumbrecht, 2006, p. 317), since "Being is not a meaning. Being belongs to [and becomes effective through] the dimension of things" (Gumbrecht, 2004, p. 68). Second, Gumbrecht links language to the spatialization of time: language conveys the past's presence by representing the sensations that past things produce in human perception, since "The something that is not language is what I have come to call 'presence'" (Gumbrecht, 2006, p. 317). Language therefore becomes a medium through which the experience of the past appears in the present, as a positive "presentification of the past" (Gumbrecht, 2006, p. 318) made tangible only by things in space. Without the sensory impact of spatial presence on language, historical time could not be felt.

The past produces "presence-effects" (Gumbrecht, 2004, p. xv) in the present, attuning human senses to historical experience before it becomes fully available to consciousness. This occurs in a way like the visual encounter with remaining objects and places, which can make the past appear immediately before one's eyes. Language then represents this sensory experience of history. From Heidegger, Gumbrecht retains the idea that presence, even when assigned to things in space, remains a tension between being and meaning. This tension depends on the movement through which the truth of being passes materially through time as the absence of the past (Gumbrecht, 2004). Thus, the reciprocity

between presence and language makes possible the historical representation of past things and events, because narrative must represent them through the very "presentification of the past" in space. Language could not represent time without the pressure exerted by things themselves on human beings

3.1.2 Pereira-Araújo's Heideggerian-gumbrechtian actualist historical presence

Pereira and Araújo develop the concept of *actualism*, or *updatism*, in a series of texts that revisit Heidegger's fundamental ontology. This framework makes it possible to relate updatism to an original conception of presence as the form of historical experience characteristic of the updatist, or presentist, regime. This relation can be inferred from Pereira and Araújo's discussion of updatism, even though "the demarche of concept of presence in Heidegger's thinking is not addressed [by them]. Nor do they deal with historical presence as a theory of time developed by theorists of history from the 2000s onwards" (Cardoso Jr, 2022, p. 159).

Actualism, or updatism, is presented as a contemporary regime of historicity in which the present absorbs and reorganizes both past and future, dissolving their autonomy. Pereira and Araújo argue that updatism produces a "temporalization of time" (Pereira and Araújo, 2019, p. 46), in which past and future become sources of novelty for the present, converted into updates that feed an ever-renewed "empty and self-centered present" (Pereira and Araújo, 2021, p. 3). In this configuration, historical experience is compressed into instantaneous presents, and temporality loses the horizon structure associated with modernity. This diagnosis leads the authors to adopt Gumbrecht's *broad present* that relies on a "one-dimensional present" without sufficient ontological depth. For Gumbrecht, the broad present—the chronotope characteristic of the early twenty-first century—"dictates the conditions under which human behavior finds its constitutive structures and experiences" (Gumbrecht, 2014, p. 73).

To avoid reducing historical experience to empirical immediacy, Pereira and Araújo turn to Heidegger's metaphysics of time, which restores the three-dimensional interplay among past, present. This Heideggerian safeguard is precisely where actualism intersects with historical presence. In post-narrativist

theory, presence names the paradoxical condition in which the past is absent and yet experientially present through its material or affective traces. Actualism, however, risks neutralizing that paradox by reducing presence to mere actuality: an inauthentic present that updates itself "almost exclusively in terms of the present itself" (Pereira and Araújo, 2016, p. 284). In other words, while presence seeks to preserve the past as an irreducible otherness that persists within the present, actualism tends to dissolve this alterity by assimilating past and future as functional extensions of the present. The *broad present* produces a temporal condition that anchors individuals and societies in an ever expanding now, pushing both future and past beyond their horizon of perception. As Gumbrecht observes, there is no longer "anything 'from the past' that we need to leave behind, nor anything 'from the future' that could not be made present by simulated anticipation" (Gumbrecht, 2014, p. 71).

Grounding actualism in Heidegger's notion of authentic temporality allows these authors to ensure that presence remains more than a surface effect of instantaneous updates. Instead, it retains its ontological force as a mode of historical experience that cannot be fully absorbed by the present and remains open to futurity. This move is central to the broader transformation through which recent theory of history has reworked Heideggerian presence into historical presence. By reframing presence as a temporal structure that exceeds the immediacy of the now, theorists of history position it as a dynamic relation between past, present, and future—one that resists reduction to mere contemporaneity and instead foregrounds the ways in which historical experience is constituted through temporal tension, deferral, and anticipation. In this sense, the debate over Heidegger's twofold conception of presence becomes a conceptual gateway for understanding how presence acquires historical significance and how temporality itself becomes a site of theoretical innovation within contemporary historiography.

3.1.3 Domańska's Heideggerian-greimasian historical presence

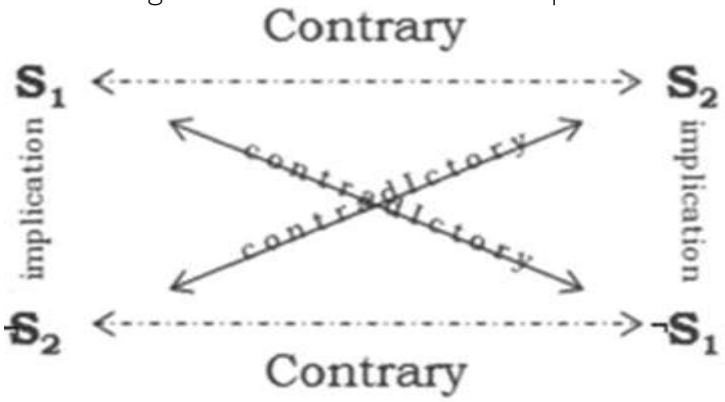
Ewa Domańska characterizes her contribution to the theory of historical presence as a "Heideggerian or contemplative archaeology" (Domańska, 2005, p. 396). For her, as for Gumbrecht, the recovery of the materiality and spatiality of

the past—made possible through historical presence—corresponds to "the recent call in the sciences for a 'return to things'" initiated by Heidegger (Domańska, 2006, p. 337). Accordingly, Domańska focuses on Heidegger's distinction between *thing* and *object* to translate Heideggerian temporal presence into a form of historical presence. Things relate to human needs, acquiring value through their immediate usefulness. Through this subject–object relation, a thing becomes an object. Objects thus signify "something present-at-hand, an object of neutral contemplation" that the subject may observe, manipulate, or discuss from a distance (Inwood, 1999, p. 33, 214).

If the experience of the past is not conceived as both present and absent in the thing that brings it into the present, the past becomes vulnerable to instrumental or objectifying uses that reduce historical knowledge to a deficient scientific truth. Scientific knowledge, in this sense, cannot grasp the truth of a past that is simultaneously present through the thing and absent as no longer existing. Historical knowledge should therefore avoid treating the past as an object. For Domańska, the manifestation of the non absent or non present past as a *thing*—rather than an object—finds conceptual reinforcement in Algirdas Julius Greimas's semiotic categories, which she mobilizes to refine Heidegger's notion of presence for contemporary historiographical purposes.

To this end, Domańska adapts the Greimasian semiotic-logic square – figure 2 - to conceptualize the paradoxical presence–absence structure of the past. Greimas's square maps the full range of meaning within any discourse through two fundamental relations: contradiction and contrariety. In its basic form, a semiotic system S1 stands in contradiction to ¬S1 (diagonal relation), while S1 and S2 form a contrary pair (horizontal relation). Each system has its own contradictory (¬S2), and the square closes through the mutual implications between S1 and S2: S1 implies ¬S2, and S2 implies ¬S1.

Figura 2 – Greimas' semiotic square



Fonte: Corso (2014, p.71).

Adapting this model to the binomial presence/absence of the past, Domańska assigns S1 to the present and S2 to the past. Present and absent form a contrary pair (S1 vs. S2), and their implications follow logically: being present entails being non absent (S1 → ¬S2), and being absent entails being non present (S2 → ¬S1). This ordinary contrary relation simply reproduces the everyday distinction between what is present now and what belongs to the past. However, the presence embodied in a thing is more complex: it is both a past that is no longer and a past that can still be experienced through what remains. Historical presence therefore involves "a past that is non absent [¬S2] (whose absence is manifest) or non present [¬S1] (whose presence is not manifest)" (Domańska, 2006, p. 345). In this formulation, the past is simultaneously present and absent in the present, summarized by the coexistence of the two implications (¬S1 + ¬S2).

From this perspective, historical narrative represents a past that exerts a spectral presence over the present—a "non absent past [...] a past that haunts like a ghost and therefore cannot be so easily controlled or subject to a finite interpretation" (Domańska, 2006, p. 346). Presence thus enables an immediate relation to the past through the mimetic capacities embedded in representational language, allowing the past to appear not merely as an object of knowledge but as a dynamic, affective, and materially grounded mode of historical experience.

3.1.4 Froeyman's Heideggerian-levinasian historical presence

According to Froeyman, Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) opens a conceptual horizon for theorizing historical presence. Levinas's phenomenology reconstructs Heidegger's *Entschlossenheit*—the authentic disclosure of being—by reframing presence as an experiential mode "strongly related to mysticism" (Froeyman, 2012, p. 400). Levinas's critique of Heidegger centers on the latter's treatment of intersubjectivity: Heidegger's ontology, Froeyman argues, dissolves the Other into the anonymous temporal unfolding of Being, thereby reducing alterity to sameness. To counter this, Levinas introduces the concept of the Other as the foundation of his "phenomenology of time" (Carr, 2014, p. 175).

Although Froeyman begins with Levinas, he notes that Levinas's notion of presence—like Heidegger's—retains a mystical dimension that risks engulfing historical otherness in the infinite temporality of the "Epiphany" (Froeyman, 2012, p. 400). Consequently, Froeyman must modify Levinas's temporal framework of the Other to construct a genuinely historical form of presence. Temporal presence alone does not suffice for historical presence.

For Levinasian presence to meet the requirements of contemporary philosophy of history, it must be compatible with both the ontological status of the past and its representation, since these are essential to historians' disciplinary practice. This requires considering temporal interactions not only among contemporaries but also between individuals living in separate times—those of the present and those of the past. Moreover, the past–present relation is mediated through historical narrative, which introduces a third party: the historian who writes the encounter (Froeyman, 2015, p. 173–174). Consequently, Froeyman (2012, p. 411–412) identifies Levinas's concepts of "trace" and "saying" as the key leverage points for converting temporal presence into historical presence, since together they can reconcile historical experience and representation in favor of a "more experiential way of writing history" (Froeyman, 2015, p. 173).

The notion of the trace refers to the partial, residual, or scattered remains of a thing or event whose meaning can be retrieved. In this sense, the past leaves traces in the present, and the otherness of past others can be approached through these traces. The trace marks the presence of the Other because it inscribes the

absence of past others into the material presence of the thing in which it resides. As such, the trace of the past Other precedes the thing of which it is a trace. In historical terms, traces are found in events and surviving objects that indicate what has happened and is now absent. Unlike the past referred to by a historical fact, the trace recalls the absolute otherness of the past. This raises the question: does the Other of the past—having always already passed—precede any historical time whatsoever, and is it historically tangible?

The temporal presence of the Other manifests its absence, since it is no longer present. Levinas's temporal framework thus acquires a historical dimension: the presence of the same (the historian) is deferred by the presence of the Other. The otherness of the past forces the present to confront the presence of past others and thereby to differ from its self centered temporal portrait. The presence of the past dislocates the present by making it encounter the present of the others through the otherness that the past imposes upon contemporary sameness. The past of the Other, as a trace of absence, catches up with the present and disrupts historical order, interrupting continuity and displacing sameness. In doing so, the otherness of the past "gives back people to people," since the disruption of the present becomes effective only through the temporal encounter with past others that forces the present to differentiate from itself. Historical experience is thus fundamentally an experience of the present as it is interrupted and displaced by the effective and *healing* presence of the absent past.

On this basis, Froeyman develops "a theory of the experience of the Other in history" (Froeyman, 2012, p. 410). Levinas's theory enables a genuine experience of the past as Other, telling a history of traces that radically unsettles the narratives shaping present identities. Because the Other postpones the here and now, it is always ahead of the present and can never be represented as such. The Other can never be fully "said," but is always "saying" its presence by leaving the trace of its absence. This raises a crucial question: how does the anti representational "saying" of the Other appear in history, and how can it be represented in historical narrative?

The otherness of the past splits the *saying* (present) from the *said* (past). Like traces, the saying of the Other interrupts the time of representation, defers the sameness of present discourse, and opens a shared reference for an indirect representation of the Other. The Other—and the "Third"—appears as a "spectral other" who disrupts ordinary representational schemes and opens a non utilitarian experience of the past through historical narrative (Froeyman, 2015, p. 174–175). The "otherness of the Other" forces language to represent the past in a non representationalist way by infusing the saying of the past into the present as a "presence effect" of the Other, enabling an encounter with a past that is not ours and evoking "the experience of a genuine encounter with a fellow human being from another time" (Froeyman, 2015, p. 176). Reciprocally, the saying of the Other cannot manifest itself without the said of historical discourse, since there is no pure saying.

Overall, Froeyman's historical presence intensifies the Heideggerian influence. This raises a further question: is it possible to dispense with Heidegger's overwhelming influence on the concept of historical presence and thereby open space for new varieties of presence? The next sections examine branches of presence that allow such an assessment. First, non Heideggerian forms of historical presence (3.2) that break with Heidegger's legacy. Second, deconstructive approaches to historical presence (3.3), which—although not Heideggerian—still respond to the challenges Heidegger posed regarding presence.

3. 2 Non-Heideggerian presence

The non Heideggerian lineage of historical presence comprises two major branches: Runia's Vichian presence (section 3.2.1) and Ankersmit's Huizingan presence (section 3.2.2). This lineage differs markedly from both the Heideggerian (section 3.1) and the deconstructionist (section 3.3) strands. Whereas the latter two draw primarily on philosophers for whom history was a secondary concern—Heidegger's ontology, Greimas's structural linguistics, Levinas's philosophy of the Other, and Derrida's deconstruction—the non Heideggerian branches take inspiration from thinkers who were themselves historians: Giambattista Vico and

Johan Huizinga. This grounding in historical scholarship gives the non Heideggerian lineage a distinctive orientation toward historical practice and historical reality.

3.2.1 Runia's vichian historical presence

For Eelco Runia, the presence of the absent past is real and experientially accessible. His conception of historical presence emphasizes the *here and now* reality of the past and aligns it with Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) and other "wayward geniuses" (Runia, 2006a, p. 10)—writers and thinkers often unfamiliar to historians and philosophers of history.

Presence, Runia argues, functions as a "fistula" that transfers the present of the past into the present, connecting two contiguous temporal layers in the same location, as in photographs or historical monuments (Runia, 2006a, p. 16–17). The realist ontological status of the past rests on the spatialization of time: following Vico, historical presence sediments itself in places that "can be 'visited' on the plane of the present" (Runia, 2006a, p. 1). The past can thus be sensorially encountered—not as a ghostly apparition but as a historical force that disrupts the present and generates discontinuity.

Discontinuity is the defining temporal force of history. Runia's realism rejects both the search for deep, continuous meaning and the metaphysical mechanisms that produce continuity. "Accounting for discontinuity," he writes, "requires addressing not primarily the question of how continuity is created, but how discontinuity is brought about" (Runia, 2006a, p. 10). Discontinuity produces the "ontological drift" of historical transformation (Runia, 2006a, p. 26), conveying the temporal weight the past exerts on the present.

Because presence is realistically anchored in place, it resists full representation. Discontinuity opens representation to the reality of the past outside the historical narrative, connecting text and historical reality. Yet the reality of presence remains "barely representable" because of the disruption it imposes on historical time. Historical presence is "the unrepresented way the past is present in the here and now" (Runia, 2006a, p. 1). It manifests itself not in the historian's intended story or metaphorical content, but in what the text *conveys in spite* of those intentions (Runia, 2006a, p. 21). Presence "presents absences"

(Runia, 2006b, p. 309): it is "incomparably more absent" than historical realism admits and "incomparably more present" than other theories of presence recognize (Runia, 2006b, p. 306).

Vico's work shows how the real presence of the past compels people to rewrite their stories, thereby weakening the representationalist bias of historiography. Historical reality, Runia argues, is unconscious and irrepresentable (Froeyman, 2012, p. 402–403). Historical narrative can only obliquely represent the irrepresentable self creation of humankind (Runia, 2007, p. 316–317). Presence resembles olfactory, tactile, or synesthetic experiences—immediate, sensory, and resistant to conceptual capture. Hence, historical presence aligns with antirepresentationalism, establishing a new "trade off between language and presence" (Froeyman, 2015, p. 166). The less representational schemes succeed in grasping past presence; the better historical reality can be narrated.

To represent "the unrepresented way the past is present," Runia argues that historiography must acknowledge the endurance of historical reality beyond Whitean representationalism and narrativist metaphor (Runia, 2006a, p. 4). Metonymy becomes central: it is "not only the primary, but also the most historical trope" (Runia, 2006a, p. 15). Metonymy is a "presence in absence" (Runia, 2006a, p. 1), a sensory temporal event connecting a place in the past with a place in the present. Through contiguity, an event is transposed from a past place to disrupt the present, and this metonymical operation is "part and parcel of historical method" (Runia, 2006a, p. 24).

Metonymical presence produces an "out of place ness" (Runia, 2006a, p. 16) through which the past discontinues the present. Historical narrative describes this displacement, enabling historians to "transcend themselves and suggest that what they describe has a reality independent of them" (Runia, 2006a, p. 20). Presence thus returns historical reality to the historian's agenda, for "historical reality itself is 'absently present'" (Runia, 2006a, p. 26).

3.2.2 Ankersmit's huizingan historical presence

Although Ankersmit does not explicitly treat presence as a central category, he is widely recognized as a theorist of presence because he links it to his concept

of representation. Like Runia, Ankersmit distances himself from the Heideggerian, neo Heideggerian, and deconstructionist approaches. Ankersmit situates the recent debate on the relation to the past within a broader cultural shift that renewed the connection between experience and representation, weakening the dominance of meaning promoted by "the lingualism of the philosophy of language, of hermeneutics, of deconstructivism, of tropology, of semiotics" (Ankersmit, 2006, p. 336). Representation, he argues, is the act of showing again a historical experience that is now absent; thus, "the notion of 'presence' is part of the meaning of the word 'representation'" (Ankersmit, 2006, p. 328). Historical experience and representation are therefore linked: the past is an absent experience that becomes accessible only through representation.

Representing historical events differs fundamentally from the objective representation required in the natural sciences. Historical knowledge does not rely on true/false statements grounded in stable referential meaning. Yet, unlike narrativism, Ankersmit insists that the lack of reference does not prevent historical representation from conveying historical experience. The past imposes on language a realism that does not depend on referential truth (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 8–9). Historical experience exceeds the subject, producing experiences of the past "without there being any subjects of experience around" (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 9).

If historical representation is non referential, the represented object is not ordinary reality but historical presence—an overwhelming experience whose "sublimity" surpasses ordinary representational schemes and confronts the historian with the contradictory sensation of being drawn toward what is undeniably gone (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 9). To articulate this sublime historical experience, Ankersmit turns to Huizinga, who offered—despite its "deplorably sketchy" nature—"the best account of historical experience" (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 119–120). For Huizinga, historical experience has no tangible object; it is a vague yet powerful sensation that occurs between historian and past, displacing the historian from his or her present self. It "happens to the historian (or not, of course) rather than something the historian could deliberately provoke" (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 128).

Ankersmit elaborates how representation should capture this sensation. Unlike ordinary representation, which refers to mind independent facts, representing the absent past requires representation to acquire an ontological status as historical experience as such. Without representation, no past can be experienced (Ankersmit, 2006, p. 328–329). This inversion—representation receding experience—yields significant consequences for historical writing. A genuine historical representation conveys the temporal disruption characteristic of sublime historical experience, momentarily uniting past and present in a manner akin to *déjà vu* (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 132). Huizinga's *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* exemplifies this presential style: its literary and poetic syntax expresses the disruption of ordinary temporal continuity (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 133).

For Ankersmit, the more sublime and real the historical experience of presence becomes, the more it eludes ordinary referential representation and demands a poetic mode of historical writing.

The discussion of representation and historical experience continues in the next section, which examines three branches of historical presence within the deconstructionist lineage.

3. 3 Deconstructionist presence

Although deconstructionist approaches to presence do not belong to the Heideggerian lineage, they nonetheless still engage with the central questions Heidegger raised about presence. They therefore offer another way to consider the scope and limits of historical presence beyond Heidegger's influence, especially through Jacques Derrida's (1930–2004) philosophy.

Associating historical presence with Derrida may seem counterintuitive. *A presence-culture* —seeking to reconcile historical knowledge with experience in the ebbtide of narrativism—often appears as a reaction against deconstruction, postmodernism, poststructuralism, narrativism, and representationalism (Kleinberg, 2017, p. 11–12). Despite this tension, several theorists of historical presence draw on Derrida's deconstructive approach to develop new varieties of presence. Their aim is also to challenge the widespread assumption among historians that deconstruction is anti historical because it reduces historical

experience and representation to an endless reiteration of interpretations (Bevernage, 2011, p. 131). The deconstructionist lineage must therefore confront this controversy to extract from Derrida a viable form of historical presence.

Although not Heideggerian in the same sense as Gumbrecht's, Pereira Araújo's, Domańska's, or Froeyman's theories (sections 3.1.1–3.1.4), the deconstructionist lineage participates in the same debate concerning the relation between presence and being in Heidegger's work. The central question remains whether presence reveals itself in temporality or in language. For deconstructionists, the "gift" of being as presence cannot coincide with a single point of view—not even that of being itself. Deconstruction frees being from the presential prerogative that, in Heidegger, tends to dominate the temporal horizon.

Moreover, Derridean deconstruction is deeply skeptical about language's capacity to represent events. Presence, in Derrida's view, is more fleeting and elusive than in Heidegger or in the Heideggerian branches of historical presence. Deconstructionist historical presence thus radicalizes Heidegger's critique of hermeneutics and representationalism, intensifying the debate over the equation of being, presence, and language. The truth of being that language reveals is that no single meaning can prevail within the metaphysics of presence that has shaped Western philosophy.

Three theorists exemplify the deconstructionist lineage: Bevernage (3.3.1), Kleinberg (3.3.2), and Cunha (3.3.3). Bevernage proposes a reparational historical presence that unsettles all truth about the past, making the purging and repair of traumatic pasts ethically possible. Kleinberg and Cunha develop a more radical deconstruction of all metaphysics of presence—Heideggerian or otherwise—arguing that historical reality has no fixed form to be represented, sensed, or narrated. For them, historical presence is fundamentally *différance*.

3.3.1 Bevernage's deconstructionist-reparational presence

Berber Bevernage's theory of presence, grounded in Derrida's deconstruction, challenges the traditional metaphysics of presence to which Heidegger still belonged. Derrida, Bevernage argues, develops Heideggerian criticism to temporality to the point of eliminating the residual metaphysics of

presence that sustained a realist experience of the past embodied in things and places (Bevernage, 2011, p. 139–140, 160–161). The Derridean lesson is that non metaphysical presence is spectral: it resists any sharp distinction between present and past. Presence becomes a haunting, non realistic, and non spatial historical experience (Bevernage, 2011, p. 4). The presence of things and events is not present in itself; it makes itself present through the elusiveness and absence of what is irrevocably gone.

Spectral presence haunts the present by making the past contemporaneous with it, thereby rendering the present non successive and non contemporaneous with itself. Deconstruction thus undermines the privilege of the temporal present over the absent past that the metaphysics of presence had long endorsed: "The whole history of Western philosophy, according to Derrida, has been influenced by a certain conception of time that puts too much emphasis on the present and the actual to the disadvantage of the absent (non present) and the inactual" (Bevernage, 2008, p. 160). This perspective enables Bevernage—and, as will be seen, Kleinberg—to criticize the residual realism of other branches of presence, whether Heideggerian or non Heideggerian, and to reject any form of representationalism.

Both Bevernage and Kleinberg derive their historical presence from Derrida's notion of *différance*. Différance is neither a word nor a concept (Derrida, 1982, p. 3), but a movement that produces the differences on which all signification depends. It destabilizes the metaphysics of presence by showing that every sign refers to another sign, never arriving at a final, self present meaning. Meaning is continually deferred, displaced, and constituted through traces, making identity and signification intrinsically unstable. *Différance* also has decisive temporal significance: time is defined "as that which is no longer and as that which is not yet" (Derrida, 1982, p. 39). Time becomes temporal only by "becoming temporal"—that is, by ceasing to be, passing into nothingness as being past or being future (Derrida, 1982, p. 39). *Différance* thus grounds historical time as a "specter" that exceeds "all possible presence absence, all possible production or disappearance of beings [truth] in general" (Derrida, 1982, p. 63). It empties all

traces of presence understood as the essential truth of historical time (Derrida, 1982, p. 54–55).

For Bevernage (2008, p. 166), différance challenges the assumption that the past has an "inferior ontology" compared to the present. This assumption underlies discourses on justice and historical injustice that restrict themselves to present oriented values, actions, and legal procedures, relegating past violence to oblivion. Bevernage's emphasis is not on the past in general, as in Kleinberg's account, but on the spectral persistence of unresolved past problems. By unsettling the presumed irreversibility of historical time, these problems continue to haunt later presents, contaminating their autonomy and identity—their full presence (Cunha, 2025a, p. 83).

3.3.2 Kleinberg's deconstructionist-*différanciel* presence

Kleinberg (2007, p. 113–114) argues that Derrida offers historiography and presence studies a theoretical contribution largely ignored by historians due to their superficial familiarity with deconstruction. On one hand, Kleinberg seeks to counter historians' fear that deconstruction leads to relativism. On the other, he recognizes that Derrida viewed historical practice through a Heideggerian lens, as dependent on the fundamental ontological historicity of being—a perspective often at odds with historians' scientific ambitions (Kleinberg, 2017, p. 5–7). Kleinberg must therefore make Derrida responsive to historians by converting deconstructive presence into a form of historical deconstructionism capable of addressing contemporary challenges in historical practice and writing.

Kleinberg's historical presence enables historians to understand remnants and documents of the past not as objects determined by an image projected from the present—an image that treats them as realistically complete—but as entities that haunt the present through their absent yet present indeterminacy. The presence of the past as *différance* stands alongside the present, disturbing its presentness and opening it toward the future. Presence forces the past to exceed itself, becoming different not only because it is differently narrated but because it is *différanciel* in relation to the past as it is known. For Kleinberg, the reality of the past never is; it is always a barred is (Kleinberg, 2017, p. 144–145). The past is

there, and the present experiences its force, but it cannot be touched, for *différance* renders it spectral.

Presence thus appears as an infinite manifold of aspects across time space. Although language plays a referential role in ordinary life, the past can reveal its significance only because language is first a manifold of significance before signifying any particular entity. The *différanciel* approach challenges both Heidegger and the theorists of presence who remain committed to metaphysical notions of being and to the ultimate significance language might convey. Therefore, *différanciel* presence becomes the condition for all ontological truths instantiated by language, yet this condition is itself void: every instantiation of presence reveals the emptiness of the truth of being and the unconditionality of its countless interpretations. The ontological condition of presence as time being is impossible, since being past is merely the play of *différance*, stripped of any stable being.

The key epistemic lesson Kleinberg draws is that whenever historians return to realism—whenever the past is alleged to be fully present in the here and now, overriding *différance*—presence collapses back into the metaphysical concept of history that Derrida sought to dismantle. According to Kleinberg, realist variants of historical presence, whether Heideggerian or non Heideggerian, emerged at the turn of the century as a reaction against the relativism associated with poststructuralism, postmodernism, the linguistic turn, and narrativism. This reaction led historians to reembrace the material past and to misinterpret deconstruction as a promoter of postmodern relativism. The result is that realist historical presence, by emphasizing the here and now and projecting the present's image onto the past, suppresses the absence of the past. Kleinberg argues that this overreaction against postmodernism and poststructuralism disrupts the paradoxical, *différanciel* coexistence of presence and absence, reinstating metaphysical—both realist and narrativist—concepts of historical time (Kleinberg, 2007, p. 142–143).

3.3.3 Cunha's derridean-kleinbergian presence

Within this broader deconstructionist movement and drawing on a recent bibliometric study on presence in contemporary theory of history (Cunha, 2025a), Cunha's MA thesis (2025b) identifies two distinct strands in recent temporal studies. The first concerns multiple temporalities, grounded in Reinhart Koselleck's theory of historical times and further developed by Helge Jordheim and Stefan Helgesson. The second is the strand of presence, articulated by Berber Bevernage and, more centrally, by Kleinberg, both of whom engage extensively with Jacques Derrida's reflections on temporality and the metaphysics of presence. By juxtaposing these two approaches, the thesis examines how Koselleck inspired models of plural temporal layers intersect—and diverge—from Derrida inspired accounts of spectrality, presence, and *différance*, thereby illuminating the conceptual tensions that shape contemporary debates on historical time.

Cunha's study focuses on Helgesson's notion of "heterochronic time" and Jordheim's "practices of synchronization", alongside Bevernage's and Kleinberg's concept of "spectral time", which draws on Derrida's *Ousia and Grammé, Différance*. (Cunha, 2025b, p. 8-9) The study demonstrated that there are major differences in the background of each of the concepts of historical time under analysis, namely, Koselleckian and Derridean writings. These differences stem from the distinct ways in which Koselleck and Derrida respond to the horizon opened by *Heidegger's Being and Time*, particularly regarding the relation between temporality and the question of being.

The deconstructionist lineage further clarifies its departure from realist and pluralist conceptions of historical temporality through Cunha's critique of Koselleck. According to Cunha, Koselleck's model of plural temporal layers implicitly reiterates the Aristotelian "vulgar concept of time," which Derrida describes as a "continuous succession of nows." Despite its apparent complexity, Koselleck's pluralization of temporal structures remains anchored in a metaphysics of presence, as far as it presupposes a stable present from which temporal layers are organized and interpreted. Derrida's intervention shows that even foundational texts in the history of metaphysics contain elements that resist

this allegiance to presence, revealing temporal dynamics that exceed succession, continuity, and the primacy of the now (Cunha, 2025b, p. 11–12).

Bevernage's and Kleinberg's notion of spectral time emerges directly from this Derridean critique. By destabilizing the binary of presence and absence, spectral temporality challenges the assumption of a past understood as simply "already elapsed." Instead, the past persists as a haunting force that contaminates the autonomy of the present, undermining the metaphysical privilege traditionally granted to presentness. Spectral time thus reframes historical temporality as a structure of deferral and non closure, where the past remains operative precisely through its non presence.

In contrast, Helgesson and Jordheim extend Koselleck's plural temporalities by emphasizing "linearity, synchronicity, asynchronicity, and teleology" (Cunha, 2025b, p. 11). Yet, as Cunha notes, these features remain vulnerable to Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence. Even when multiplied, such temporal structures continue to rely on forms of succession, simultaneity, and purposiveness that bend toward the "presence dominance" characteristic of Western metaphysical conceptions of time (Cunha, 2025b, p. 162–165). Their pluralization does not escape the underlying presential logic; rather, it reproduces it in more elaborate configurations.

The dissertation concludes that the relationship between these two strands cannot be reduced to simple similarity or opposition. As the author writes, "both the determination of a proximity [...] and the determination of their differences do not do justice to the complexity of the relation between the themes in question," because any possible relation is marked by "a difference prior to the determination of their differences," a Derridean *différance* that "unites and splits, at the same time, any possibility of union, reunion, and differentiation" (Cunha, 2025b, p. 4). Ultimately, even Bevernage's deconstructionist notion of presence—aimed at historical reparation—remains, despite its differences from Derrida inspired spectral time (Bevernage) and Koselleck inspired multiple temporalities (Jordheim, Helgesson), entangled in deeper metaphysical assumptions about time inherited from Heidegger, Aristotle, and Derrida (Cunha, 2025b p. 159–160). In this sense, the dissertation aligns with Kleinberg's understanding of deconstructionist

presence as *différance*, which opens onto a further Derridean critique of the metaphysics of historical presence.

Taken together, these debates illuminate the internal fault line between pluralized models of historical temporality and the deconstructionist critique of presence. Whereas Koselleck and his interpreters seek to expand the temporal repertoire available to historical analysis, Derrida—and those who follow him, such as Bevernage, Kleinberg, and Cunha—expose the metaphysical commitments that continue to anchor these models in the primacy of the present. Spectral time thereby marks a decisive shift: it dislodges the present from its foundational role and redefines historical temporality as a field of haunting, deferral, and *différance*.

4 Discussing lineages and branches' boundaries

For Kleinberg, "the past is polysemic and contradictory," a chaotic admixture of remains and representations that resists any attempt at ontological stabilization (Kleinberg, 2017, p. 136). Historical presence cannot be ontologized as something that simply "took place" in a determinate time and location, because presence continually eludes and destabilizes the displacement of meaning produced by *différance*. This raises a central question that the deconstructionist lineage addresses to the Heideggerian and non-Heideggerian lineages of historical presence: how can the past be experienced and represented when no duality between present and absent remains available as a conceptual anchor? If deconstruction exposes the ultimate illusion of historical presence—the mitigated realism that underwrites the other lineages—might it also serve as an antidote to the relativism associated with poststructuralism, postmodernism, representationalism, and narrativism?

This section of this article addresses this question by examining how the lineages of historical presence cast critical views upon one another. Indeed, the deconstructive task reopens the debate over the compatibility of deconstruction with historical practice and writing—a debate in which all branches of historical presence are implicated (Kleinberg, 2017, p. 4, 16, 34).

Within the Heideggerian lineage, Gumbrecht, Pereira and Araújo, Domańska, and Froeyman increasingly distance themselves from Heidegger's original

framework. Gumbrecht locates historical presence in the spatialization of historical time; Pereira and Araújo equate presence with the actualist regime of historicity, updating Heidegger's ontology of time and reinforcing Gumbrecht's diagnosis of the broad present in digital societies; Domańska derives presence from the Heideggerian distinction between thing and object; Froeyman, by contrast, rejects the Heideggerian distinction between thing and object, arguing that the Other renders both dependent on an equivocal temporality that continually relates and disrelates the sameness of the present under the pressure of the otherness of the past.

As Kramer notes, Gumbrecht—more explicitly than Domańska or Froeyman—rejects any association with deconstruction or poststructuralism (Kramer, 2009, p. 90). He disputes with deconstruction the meaning of Heidegger's concept of presence, claiming that deconstructionists submerged the history of being in the quicksand of endless interpretation, whereas historical presence should restore the "substantiality of Being" (Gumbrecht, 2004, p. 55). For Gumbrecht, presence belongs to a "presence culture" that replaces the earlier "meaning culture" (Gumbrecht, 2006, p. 318), which had encouraged the linguistic overrepresentation characteristic of deconstruction. Domańska similarly argues that the material presence of the past and the recent "return to things" signals a rejection of constructivism and textualism as means of re establishing contact with reality (Domańska, 2006, p. 337).

Rather than introducing his own version of historical presence by focusing on the dangers of overinterpretation, Froeyman warns about the gap implied by all forms of presence, especially those proposed by Runia and Ankersmit, which tend to privilege historical identity at the expense of otherness. Both Runia and Ankersmit encouraged, according to Froeyman, acknowledging not only the continuity with the past, but also the collective identity of national recognized groups, despite the odd individuals' stories or the radical otherness of minorities' experiences of the past (Froeyman, 2012, 405-406). Pereira and Araújo extend the Heideggerian foundations further by aligning with Gumbrecht's broad present to conceive the actualist regime of historicity, adapting presence to the temporal dynamics of digital societies.

The non Heideggerian presences of Runia and Ankersmit are more difficult to disentangle. Despite their distinct affiliations, both offer "a return to the real" that rehabilitates belief in meaning by "literally bringing the past into the present" (Kleinberg, 2013, p. 13). Yet their approaches diverge in important ways. Both assume that direct contact with the past does not depend on language or meaning, but Ankersmit holds that presence is entirely unconscious and dispenses with selves, whereas Runia insists that presence requires subjective agency (Froeyman, 2012, p. 394). As Menezes explains, Ankersmit reconciles historical experience and language through a realism of representation that renews historicism: although historical experience may precede representation in a "mystical" sense, it nonetheless requires representation to become conscious (Menezes, 2018, p. 59). Runia rejects this precedence of representation, arguing that historical sense depends not on a poetic act by historians but on the realistic force of the past itself, which rewrites stories and moves the present (Telles, 2019, p. 366–367). Presence embodies this force in the here and now. Unlike Ankersmit's renewed realism, Runia's realism admits a special kind of representationalism grounded in the consciousness that presence sustains.

From the deconstructionist perspective, however, these realist variants of presence regress into a metaphysical concept of history that Derrida rigorously criticized. Kleinberg not only highlights the advantages that a Derridean concept of presence offers to historical theory and practice (Kleinberg, 2017, p. 54–55) but also applies deconstruction to dismantle the realism embraced by Gumbrecht, DomańskaDomańska, Ankersmit, and Runia. The idea that presence conveys an objective truth dismisses "the ambivalence and multiplicity of recollection, interpretation, and narration embodied in the shape shifting past" (Kleinberg, 2017, p. 55). For this shared fault—dispensing with the interpretive layers through which the past becomes present—Kleinberg classifies these theorists as proponents of a "weaker variant" of ontological realism (Kleinberg, 2017, p. 49–50, 56–57).

Gumbrecht and Domańska respond that narrativism and deconstruction have "dematerialized" things by treating them as texts (Domańska, 2006, p. 339). For them, returning to the material past does not revive naïve realism. Gumbrecht's presence is grounded in things and language through which the past

becomes experienceable; Domańska's presence lies in spatiotemporally determined things but still involves representation; Ankersmit's presence depends on the fleeting, non realist sublimity of the past. All refuse to treat presence as indifferently experienced or represented according to naïve realist tenets.

Although deconstructionist presence appears closer to Froeyman's Levinasian presence—given Bevernage's and Kleinberg's acknowledgment of the proximity between Derrida and Levinas (Bevernage, 2008, p. 153; Kleinberg, 2007; Kleinberg, 2013, p. 1–7, 23–24; Kleinberg, 2017, p. 146–147)—Poleshchuk warns that this alignment may be a hindsight effect of Derrida's portrayal of Levinas as an ally *malgré lui* of deconstruction (Poleshchuk, 2010, p. 9–10).

Runia's presence, the only fully realistic version, represents a new realism rather than a weaker variant of the old one. It builds historical realism on Vico's philosophy of history and rejects naïve realism (Runia, 2006a, p. 23). Runia acknowledges that the past contains overlapping layers, though not as mere multiplicity of interpretations; the past is a "matter of different levels" (Runia, 2006a, p. 8), simultaneous and discontinuous with the present. Renewing historical realism requires a new narrativism grounded in antirepresentationalism, challenging representationalism, narrativism, and even "the adverse, sulking, counterdependent narrativism of Derrida" (Runia, 2006b, p. 310).

The lineages opposing deconstructionist presence argue that time has no ultimate meaning, only the many interpretations accumulated by metaphysical tradition. The search for the meaning of time leads to infinite regression: each interpretation is a signifier that brings another signifier, ad infinitum. There is no signified beneath the concept of time. Consequently, deconstruction may struggle to find rest in history, since the being of the past as a barred is remains a simulacrum of past times. No being remains in presence except as iterative simulacrum.

If presence is only a simulacrum of the past rather than an experienced reality, how can disciplinary history examine and narrate a simulacrum of historical time?

To address this, Bevernage and Kleinberg turn to a later, affirmative Derrida to temper the corrosive force of early deconstruction. Bevernage acknowledges that deconstruction does not allow the survival of metaphysical categories of historical time, even realist ones. Although spectral presence lacks its own reality, it reveals that the absent past is historically present through its practical and ethical effects. He argues that the later Derrida retracts the negative task of early deconstruction (Bevernage, 2011, p. 136, 142–143)[3]. Thus, "Derrida's lifelong project of deconstruction also includes something affirmative" (Bevernage, 2008, p. 160). Therefore, Bevernage explicitly confronts Runia's non Heideggerian presence: "The spectral survival of dimensions of the past that I have defended here would possess properties quite opposite to those that Runia describes" (Bevernage, 2008, p. 166).

Kleinberg likewise identifies an affirmative dimension in deconstruction. Ghostly presence reveals that the past—so often ontologized in remnants and documents—contains untold or forgotten "possible pasts" that return to haunt the present and become "past possibles" narrated by historians (Kleinberg, 2017, p. 8, 137–138, 143–144). Historical writing thus portrays possible pasts in ways that allow historical presence to iterate itself in historiographical practice, opening space for alternative, repressed, or forgotten pasts capable of altering history.

Consequently, Bevernage–Kleinberg's historical presence does not fall prey to the multiple representations of history that remain confined to language. Instead, it temporalizes historical writing as the representation of alternative possible pasts that can reshape the present without claiming to be the most accurate version of the past. Kleinberg argues that deconstruction builds the temporal frame of historical presence, whereas other branches—especially Runia's—privilege spatially actualized temporal experience and thereby downplay the role of time (Kleinberg, 2017, p. 68). By privileging spatial contiguity, they favor presence over absence.

Taken together, Bevernage, Kleinberg, and Cunha articulate a deconstructionist presence that is fundamentally non metaphysical, non realist,

[3] See also (Bevernage, 2008).

and non representational. Their work shifts the focus of historical presence away from experiential immediacy (Runia, Ankersmit) or ontological force (Heideggerian lineage) toward the structural instability that defines historical time, meaning, and identity. In this lineage, presence is not sensed, represented, or embodied; it is the spectral condition that makes history possible as a field of ethical responsibility, epistemic uncertainty, and temporal deferral.

Although all three rely on Derridean deconstruction, they assign distinct roles to presence based on distinct interpretations of *différance*. Cunha (2025a, p. 83) explains that Bevernage's early work (2008) approached spectrality and *différance* through the persistence of ethical unresolved past problems. In his later work (Bevernage, 2011), however, Bevernage rejected *différance* as an ahistorical notion while retaining the analogy between the return of the past and the specter. Kleinberg, by contrast, shows how deconstruction, "by revealing the play of *différance*," detaches the past as a "revenant" from the notion of the past "as it really happened" and restores it to "the realm of possibilities" (Kleinberg, 2017, p. 66). Cunha distinguishes these uses of *différance* and extends Derrida's framework to critique Koselleckian multitemporalities, which offer a competing approach to presence in recent temporal studies within theory of history.

5 Final remarks: presence in the geography of theory of history

This article has traced the diverse paths through which recent theorists of history have transformed inherited philosophical, historiographical, and literary notions of presence into distinct varieties of *historical* presence. Across these lineages, presence theories undeniably require a reconceptualization of historical time, since they seek to overcome the prevailing "chronotype" (Bentley, 2006, p. 354) that renders the past imperceptible by neglecting the embodied dimension of historical experience.

The comparative analysis of the branches examined in this article reveals a complex interplay among different forms of *presence*, which together shape both the extensional and intensional dimensions of historical presence in contemporary theory of history. These theories seek to connect historical experience with the representation of the past while also restoring the ethical

dimension of historical knowledge beyond the limits of narrativism. The *Heideggerian* lineage proposes different degrees of reconciliation between historical reality and language, thereby advancing a renewed, realistically conceived representationalism. The *non Heideggerian* lineage, by contrast, insists on a non representationalist presence—though this stance requires an oblique form of representation and a specific realism, since representing the past becomes inseparable from experiencing it. In both cases, presence is understood as a mode through which the past materially coexists with the present, whether through reenactment, presentification, or the spatial embodiment of the past in things and places. Ultimately, the Heideggerian and non Heideggerian lineages diverge in the fine-grained realism each promotes.

Within recent philosophy and theory of history, the dispute over the renewal of historical realism (Ohara, 2026)—central to both lineages—has generated an important debate about the representational strategies required to reconcile presence with realism. These debates create openings for the *deconstructionist* lineage, which challenges the realist assumptions of the other branches. In short, deconstructionist historical presence attempts to condense the Heideggerian and non Heideggerian approaches into what Kleinberg calls a “weaker realism,” exposing the metaphysical commitments that underlie their respective claims regarding the ontological and epistemic dimension of historical knowledge.

Moreover, this article observed that all three lineages seek to restore the ethical dimension of historical knowledge beyond narrativism, but they do so differently. The *Heideggerian* lineage emphasizes ethical contact with the past through materiality, presence-effects, things, traces, and the Other. The *non-Heideggerian* lineage emphasizes the ethical disruption caused by historical reality or sublime experience when the past resists narrative closure. The *deconstructionist* lineage emphasizes historical responsibility toward unresolved injustices, spectral pasts, and alternative possibilities that prevent the past from being closed or mastered. The main contrast is that *Heideggerian* and *non-Heideggerian* approaches tend to recover ethics through experience or realism, whereas *deconstructionist* approaches recover ethics through haunting and instability.

Overall, the interplay among theories of presence shows that, despite their divergence, they share a common conceptual horizon. Each lineage engages with the problem of presence through distinct philosophical sources and methodological approaches, yet all contribute to a collective effort to articulate the meaning of presence within historical thought.

Moreover, examining them from this unified perspective clarifies the *academic geography* of presence theories in contemporary theory of history. Table 3 illustrates the academic backgrounds and institutional affiliations of the theorists included in this study, highlighting generational and geopolitical factors that shape the development of the lineages and branches analyzed throughout the article.

Table 3 – Academic background and institutional affiliations of the authors in the article's sample

Author	Year	City/Country	Undergraduate degree/country	PhD thesis title	PhD discipline/country/year	Institutional affiliation
Franklin Ankersmit	1945	Deventer, **Netherlands**	University of Groningen – **History and Philosophy – Netherlands**	*Narrative logic. A semantic analysis of the historian's language*	University of Groningen – **Philosophy – Netherlands** (1981)	**University of Groningen** (1971–2010; professor emeritus since 2010) – **Netherlands**
Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht	1948	Würzburg, **Germany**	University of Munich – Romance Philology, German Studies, **Philosophy and Sociology - Germany**	*Functional Shift and Reception: Studies on Hyperbole in Romance Literature of the Middle Ages*	University of Konstanz – **Romance Literature - Germany** (1971)	University of Bochum (1975–1982) - Germany; University of Siegen (1982–1989) - Germany; **Stanford University - USA** (1989–present, professor emeritus)
Ewa Domańska	1963	Poznań, **Poland**	Adam Mickiewicz University – **History - Poland**	*Historiography in the Light of Narrative and the Postmodern Turn in the Humanities*	Adam Mickiewicz University – **History – Poland** (1995)	Adam **Mickiewicz University** (1990–present) - **Poland**
Eelco Runia	1955	Vlaardingen, **Netherlands**	University of Leiden – **History - Netherlands**	*The Pathology of the Battlefield: History and Historiography in Tolstoy's War and Peace*	Erasmus University Rotterdam – **History – Netherlands** (1995)	University of Leiden (1990s–2000s) - V; NIAS; **University of Groningen - Netherlands**
Ethan Kleinberg	1970	**United States**	University of California - **Humanities - USA**	*Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France*	University of California, Berkeley – **History – USA** (1998)	**Wesleyan University** (2004–present) - **USA**

Valdei Lopes de Araújo	1971	**Brazil**	State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) – **History - Brazil**	*The Experience of Time: modernity and historicization in the Empire of Brazil (1823-1845)*	Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro – Social **History of Culture - Brazil** (2003)	**Federal University of Ouro Preto** (2004-present) - **Brazil**
Berber Bevernage	1978	**Belgium**	Ghent University – **History - Belgium**	*History, Memory and State-Sponsored Violence: Time and Justice*	Ghent University – **History – Belgium** (2009)	**Ghent University** (2008–present) - **Belgium**
Anton Froeyman	1982	**Belgium**	Ghent University – **History - Belgium**	*History, Ethics, and the Recognition of the Other: A Levinasian view on the writing of history*	Ghent University – History – **Belgium** (2013)	**Ghent University** (2010–present) - **Belgium**
Mateus Henrique de Faria Pereira	1979	**Brazil**	Federal University of Ouro Preto – **History - Brazil**	*The Memory Machine: History, Event and Present Time in 'Almanaque Abril' (1975-2006)*	Federal University of Minas Gerais – **History – Brazil** (2008)	**Federal University of Ouro Preto** (2009–present) – **Brazil**
Ana Laura C. Cunha	2001	**Brazil**	State University of Northern Paraná (UENP) - **History - Brazil**	*Seule la présence se maîtrise": spacing, layers of time, and historicity. (In progress)*	São Paulo State University (UNESP) – **History – Brazil** (In progress	São Paulo State University (UNESP) - PhD student **- Brazil**

Fonte: Cardoso Jr. *et al.* (2026).

The data displayed in table 3 indicate that the theorists of presence examined here share a broadly *continental* philosophical background, yet they did not develop their concepts in the traditional centers of continental philosophy—France and Germany—where their masters of presence worked. Instead, significant clusters of theorists of presence emerged in newer and comparatively peripheral locations within the theory of history.

Ankersmit formulated his notion of presence in the Netherlands, drawing on German Romantic sources reinterpreted by Benjamin and Meyer and historiographically elevated by Huizinga. Runia's concept also develops in the Netherlands, grounded in Vico. Gumbrecht, Domańska, Froeyman, Pereira and Araújo elaborate their versions of presence from Heidegger, respectively in the United States, Poland, Belgium, and Brazil. Bevernage, Kleinberg, and Cunha, whose approaches are rooted in Derrida, develop their theories in Belgium, the United States, and Brazil.

This displacement of continental philosophical centers toward historically less central countries deserves closer examination in the future. It suggests that

theories of presence—and theory of history more broadly—have *decentered their points of origin*. The trend becomes even more striking when we consider that influential theories of presence are being developed in Brazil, a country traditionally peripheral to mainstream debates in philosophy and theory of history. This raises the question of whether similar developments are occurring in other peripheral contexts.

It is therefore essential to situate theories of presence within the broader panorama of contemporary theory of history. At the same time, it is important to relativize the presence paradigm within its own field, since it does not constitute the only available approach to historical time. Fareld warns against concentrating all the gains of the reconceptualization of historical time in the presence paradigm, noting that such focus may obscure "new possibilities for deconstructive work in contemporary thinking on historical time" (Fareld, 2016, p. 436). Indeed, although historical presence has become a prolific path for thinking about historical time, it is not the only one. Presence theories belong alongside approaches grounded in *multiple temporalities* and in the renewed *analytic philosophy of history*, forming part of the broader wave of temporal studies that has reshaped the theory of history (Cardoso Jr., 2024).

Finally, this article has examined varieties of historical presence that primarily address the relationship between present and past, in which the past appears as an absence that nonetheless remains present. Yet one may ask whether it is also possible to speak of the *presence of the future* in the present—particularly in light of recent discussions of historical futures understood as "the plurality of transitional relations between apprehensions of the past and anticipated futures" (Simon; Tamm, 2021, p. 3). Cardoso Jr. and Viotto da Silva observe that "the future as a dimension of historical time, although never absent from traditional historiographical practice, has recently become a prominent theme in both historiographic debates and the theory of history." Building on this observation, they analyze "three modalities [of historical futures] that correspond with different temporal frameworks and distinct ways of articulating the continuity or discontinuity between nature and history" (Cardoso Jr. and Viotto da Silva, 2026).

In this sense, the study of historical presence opens onto broader questions about the temporal structure of historical thought. Presence, absence, and futurity form a conceptual constellation through which contemporary theory of history rethinks temporal experience —its discontinuities, its spectralities, and its possibilities

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