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together, this volume forges new links between literary, historical, and gender scholarship.
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Though history and autobiography both claim to tell true stories about the past, historians have traditionally rejected first-person accounts as subjective and therefore unreliable. What then, asks Jeremy D. Popkin in History, Historians, and Autobiography, are we to make of the ever-increasing number of professional historians who are publishing stories of their own lives? And how is this recent development changing the nature of history-writing, the historical profession, and the genre of autobiography? Drawing on the theoretical work of contemporary critics of autobiography and the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, Popkin reads the autobiographical classics of Edward Gibbon and Henry Adams and the memoirs of contemporary historians such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Peter Gay, Jill Ker Conway, and many others, he reveals the contributions historians' life stories make to our understanding of the human experience. Historians' autobiographies, he shows, reveal how scholars arrive at their vocations, the difficulties of writing about modern professional life, and the ways in which personal stories can add to our understanding of historical events such as war, political movements, and the traumas of the Holocaust. An engrossing overview of the way historians view themselves and their profession, this work will be of interest to readers concerned with the ways in which we understand the past, as well as anyone interested in the art of life-writing.
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