



Presenting the Past: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Misremembering

Jeffrey Prager

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Psychology is the dogma of our age; psychotherapy is our means of self-understanding; and "repressed memory" is now a universally familiar form of trauma. Jeffrey Prager, who is both a sociologist and a psychoanalyst, explores the degree to which we manifest the clichés of our culture in our most private recollections.

At the core of *Presenting the Past* is the dramatic and troubling case of a woman who during the course of her analysis began to recall scenes of her own childhood sexual abuse. Later the patient came to believe that the trauma she remembered as a physical violation might have been an emotional violation and that she had composed a memory out of present and past relationships. But what was accurate and true? And what evidence could be persuasive and valuable? Could the analyst trust either her convictions or his own? Using this case and others, Prager explores the nature of memory and its relation to the interpersonal, therapeutic, and cultural worlds in which remembering occurs.

Synthesizing research from social science, psychoanalysis, neuroscience, and cognitive psychology, Prager uses clinical examples to argue more generally that our memories are never simple records of events, but constantly evolving constructions, affected by contemporary culture as well as by our own private lives. He demonstrates the need that sociology has for the insights of psychoanalysis, and the need that psychoanalysis has for the insights of sociology.

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