



Antisemitism, Misogyny, and the Logic of Cultural Difference: Cesare Lombroso and Matilde Serao (Texts and Contexts)

Nancy A. Harrowitz

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Are there connections between misogyny and antisemitism? If so, what would these connections be and to what degree are these prejudices reinforced or even generated by nineteenth-century science? This book explores these compelling questions by discussing two Italian authors of the late nineteenth century, a period when both antisemitism and misogyny were crucial concerns to society, as they still are today.

One author, Cesare Lombroso, was a famous criminologist whose ideas about juvenile court, indeterminate sentencing, and parole still influence the American justice system. He was Jewish himself, yet wrote a book about antisemitism which blamed the Jews for their condition and proposed assimilation as an answer to the problem of prejudice. He also wrote highly derogatory work on women.

The other author, Matilde Serao, a well-known journalist and novelist, built a brilliant career for herself but in her newspaper editorials advised other women to stay home. In her novels she often demonstrated ambivalence and hostility towards women's condition, and she used antisemitic stereotypes in some of her work.

Antisemitism, Misogyny, and the Logic of Cultural Difference demonstrates how similar is the 'logic' of these two authors' prejudice towards women and Jews, as they both depend on the science of their day, such as Darwinism, to justify their views. It raises as well the issues of why their prejudice focuses on women and Jews, since one author is Jewish and the other a woman, how prejudice towards different groups can intersect, and the role of the difficult and complex concept of self-hatred.

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