



Jews And Gender. Responses to Otto Weininger

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In 1903 Otto Weininger, A Viennese Jew who converted to Protestantism, published "Geschlecht und Charakter" (Sex and Character), a book in which he set out to prove the moral inferiority and character deficiency of 'the woman' and 'the Jew'. Almost immediately, he was acclaimed as a young genius for bringing these two elements together. Shortly thereafter, at the age of twenty-three, Weininger committed suicide in the room where Beethoven had died. Weininger's sensationalized death immortalized him as an intellectual who expressed the abject misogyny and antisemitism. This collection of essays, many translated into English for the first time, examines Weininger's influence and reception in Western culture, particularly his impact on important writers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Sigmund Freud, Franz Kafka, and James Joyce. One essay considers the ways Weininger's ideas were used to further Nazi ideology, and several offer feminist approaches to interpreting the intersection of antisemitism and misogyny. The concluding essay explores Weininger's surprising role in Israel's ongoing sociopolitical self-definition through the bold production of Joshua Sobol's play, "The Soul of a Jew (Weininger's Last Night)." This volume 's close examination of Weininger's ideas, and their subsequent appearance in other well-known texts, suggests how the legacies of prejudice affect Western culture today. Author note: Nancy A. Harrowitz is author of Antisemitism, Misogyny and the Logic of Cultural Difference: Cesare Lombroso and Matilde Serao and editor of Tainted Greatness: Antisemitism and Cultural Heroes (Temple). Barbara Hyams is Lecturer with the rank of Assistant Professor of German at Brandeis University.

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