

**Bruno Feitler. *The Imaginary Synagogue: Anti-Jewish Literature in the Portuguese Early Modern World (16th-18th Centuries)*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015, 216 pp. ISBN13: 9789004264106**

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In an already extensive bibliography, this book by Bruno Feitler offers new possibilities for analysis. His research is conducted in parallel with the work of other researchers from his generation, such as Juan Ignacio Pulido Serrano, Claude Stuczynski and François Soyler. The book consists essentially of four parts. A study and a typology of the writings that have been hostile to Jews and *conversos*; a synthesis of the elements that made up the negative portrayal of Jews and *conversos* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; a presentation of the evolution of these phenomena during the eighteenth century; and, finally, an edition and translation into English of the *Sermam no Auto da Fé* written by Friar Antonio de Sousa on the occasion of the *auto da fé* held in Lisbon in 1624. Through a remarkable iconography drawn from the private library of Mr. Roberto Bachmann in Lisbon, this book provides us with the opportunity to see the richness and diversity of the printed production on this particular topic in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. A chapter is also devoted to an analysis of extraordinary objects: the medals and certificates on parchment (not paper) that distinguished the judges of the Portuguese Inquisition and their relatives.

Bruno Feitler's analysis is centered on the production of anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic doctrines in the territories of the Portuguese empire in early modern times, but it does not ignore the texts that circulated these ideas and the practices that constantly took place in relation to such issues in the Portuguese and Spanish societies themselves. Both before and after the period during which the two crowns were united (1581-1640), ideas circulated intensively. Always attentive to the circumstances, Bruno Feitler does not fail to observe the coincidence of the sacrilege attributed to the *conversos*, committed in the Santa Engracia sanctuary in Lisbon in 1631, and the scandal of the sacrilege perpetrated in the Calle de la Infanta in Madrid in 1632. This was the time when *converso* merchants from Portugal were flying to the aid of Filipe IV's (Filipe III of Portugal) finances and when

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those opposed to the policy of the Count-Duke of Olivares, in both Lisbon and Madrid, were beginning to maneuver openly. The world of the printers and publishers knew no borders between the two societies at that time. Therefore, to take a famous example, Francisco de Torrejoncillo's treaty is not excluded from the study proposed here. However, the specificities of the Portuguese case are clearly marked. The first is the well-known time lag. Everything happened late in Portugal: forced conversions, the date of the establishment of the Inquisition, the last *autos da fé* against the *conversos* continuing well into the 1730s. The corpus of the Portuguese texts differs from the literature generally studied for the Spanish case: the number of sermons written on the occasion of *autos da fé* that were sent to the printers in order to guarantee their long-lasting influence on the audience and readership *a posteriori*. From this point of view, the collection that has Roberto Bachmann assembled, and the research center he has created for those who wish to study this subject, were essential contributions for the work of Bruno Feitler. Using the data that Edward Glaser collected, he draws the greatest advantage from this source, which reflects the ceremonial and sacrificial dimension of public convictions while seeking to understand the pedagogical intentions of clerics engaged in a fantasy fight against a nonexistent Jewish threat. Nor does he forget the contribution of the increasingly important Italian translations of texts on the Mediterranean Jewish world, especially the Ottoman Empire, after 1650.

Among the most interesting themes in Bruno Feitler's work is the doctrinal idea that *conversos* had nothing Jewish about them, in the sense that they did not inherit anything from the Jews of the Old Testament. They not only ruined the first covenant by denying the second one. But they were ambivalent and heretical to Christian beliefs and practices. They were even likely to exhibit an atheist profile. The Inquisition and the authors involved in the anti-Jewish doctrine sought to deprive the *conversos* both of their Christian present and their Jewish past. They lived in this in-between world that Yirmiyahu Yovel and Natalia Muchnik have recently analyzed so well.

Bruno Feitler's conclusions also contain something that is essential for historians: his position on the question of the chronology of anti-Semitism. On the one hand, as we know, events in Portugal took place "later" than in Spain. And, from this point of view, the Portuguese case could fuel the idea that anti-Semitism – like racism – should be included in a later chronology of the early modern period. But, on the other hand, the book shows exactly the opposite, namely that, in the sixteenth century, doctrine laid the foundations for a natural definition of Jews according to their genealogically transmitted physical traits

(especially male menstruation), while the eighteenth-century persecution focused exclusively on suspicions of heresy. In other words, arguments of a racist nature preceded strictly theological arguments over time. This conclusion contradicts those authors who continue to claim that racial doctrines only emerged in Europe in the final phase of the early modern era. During and after the government of the Marquis of Pombal, it was prohibited to publish (or republish) lists of people who had been convicted by the Inquisition. This was a very important legal standard, since it sought to break away from the socially disseminated idea that parents transmitted their own sins to their children. In other words, the Portuguese Enlightenment brought an end to the definition of a default part of nature, whereas the earlier period, from the sixteenth century onwards, produced all kinds of variations on the strength of blood as a vector of human qualities, both good and bad.

Overall, Bruno Feitler's is a book that will be very useful for those studying the history of anti-Jewish doctrines in European history, with particular emphasis on the Portuguese dimension of the phenomenon.