

Wells noted that local white newspapers justified their murders because of supposed assaults on white women. Instead, she found that their deaths resulted from a confrontation with a white storekeeper who was competing with them.

In her gruesome accounting of lynchings in *A Red Record*, Wells documented that whites murdered many African Americans for the following offenses: arson, suspected robbery, wife beating, race prejudice, alleged barn burning, alleged murder, alleged complicity in murder, self defense, insulting whites, conjuring, writing a letter to a white woman, alleged stock poisoning, for no offense at all, and other "crimes." She included the names, places, and dates of the murders. At the same time, Wells documented the sexual assaults and murders of African American girls and women by white men who received little or no punishment.

Besides demonstrating that lynchings were a tool to keep African Americans disfranchised, the book also shows the depth of commitment by Wells to end such monstrous practices. She described how lynchings (which incorporated beatings, burnings, tortures, and mutilations) were acts of terrorism. Even when sex was involved, she showed that in many cases it was consensual. Though not an easy book to read, it is an important one because it provides some insight into the post-Reconstruction period and its attendant racial violence.

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Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky and Shelley Fisher Fishkin. *People of the Book: Thirty Scholars Reflect on their Jewish Identity*. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996). 507 pp., \$22.95 paper.

People of the Book is an important contribution to ethnic studies and identity politics. It is a dense and reflective collection of essays which defines Judaism in personal and scholarly contexts. As one of the contributors, Nancy Miller, says: "It's not easy to write about being Jewish" (168). The editors divide the essays into four parts. After the introductory essay, Part 2, "Transformations," examines how the authors' activism grows out of their Jewish heritage. "Negotiations," looks at Jewish definition in the context of other Jewish and non-Jewish communities, and "Explorations," shows the relationship between being Jewish and pursuing a discipline. "Meditations," is an application of previous themes to specific literary works. Certain concerns cross over all four sections to make the search for identity continuous and shared.

For instance, many authors come to terms with Judaism's patriarchal heritage and their feminism, which produces what Susan Gubar calls "a

vexed relationship" (15). On the other hand is the modern Jewish tendency to seek acceptance from those who hold the sociological hegemony and can confer legitimacy, which is discussed by Sean Wolintz (336).

Elaine Marks recognizes that "coming to terms with the existence of anti-semitism . . . is an important component of 'being' Jewish in the late twentieth century" (348). Thus, the Holocaust surfaces throughout these essays to define what it means to be Jewish, for as Michael Roth says, Jews must carry this loss with them always (406).

An argument weaves throughout *People of the Book*. The authors, in their introduction, say that this book is part of the new identity politics, which is based on what ones does, as opposed to what one is (6). They see the idea of Jewish peoplehood, "as a spiritual/religious community of choice rather than an ethnic community defined by birth" (96-7). Thus, Susanne Klingenstein believes that Jews in the U.S. are freed from history, and thinking Jewish comes from living Jewish (194).

Others would understand being Jewish as racially constructed or historical, such as those who define themselves by the Holocaust or, like Laurence Thomas, see Jews as distinguished by their historical narrative, which unities them with Jews all over the world (176). The persistence of Jews as outsiders provides a metaphor of otherness in the literary critiques about both Jewish and non-Jewish authors in this volume.

However, no one would expect thirty Jewish scholars to agree. It is the diversity of experience with intersecting threads which makes this anthology an interesting journey.

There are two omissions in this collection. First, there is very little about teaching or politics within the academy. This book is about how being Jewish affects one's scholarship, not what it means to be a Jewish professor. Also problematic is the omission of scientists. Except for two anthropologists, all of the contributors are humanists, predominantly literary critics.

People of the Book remains a noteworthy discussion of what it means to be a Jewish scholar in the contemporary world. It is good to see something which comes to terms with Muriel Rukeyser's poem, quoted in the text:

To be a Jew in the twentieth century
Is to be offered a gift. If you refuse,
Wishing to be invisible, you choose
Death of the spirit, the stone insanity.
Accepting, take full life. Full agonies:
Your evening deep in labyrinthine blood
Of those who resist, fail, and resist: and God
Reduced to a hostage among hostages. (31)

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