the prosecution was to set the record straight for all those that follow us into the next century."

One of the criticisms of Means's book is that not once did he bring up the issue of Leonard Peltier. I looked in the index under *p* and was disappointed. AIM leader Peltier needs no introduction. International and domestic indigenous communities know of him, of his more than twenty years in American federal prisons following a shoot-out between AIM members and FBI agents on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Peltier is mentioned in a new book, *Crow Dog: Four Generations of Sioux Medicine Men,* by Leonard Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes. He also is discussed in *Live from Death Row* by Mumia Abu-Jamal, an Afro-American journalist on death row. Abu-Jamal makes mention of an infamous lockdown of the Marion Federal Penitentiary, "where the government promptly dumped a number of political prisoners, including former American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier."

Recently, Peltier asked President Clinton for executive clemency, a sentence reduction or a pardon, but Clinton has yet to act on the request. Former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark, Peltier's lead defense counsel, once said, "If he's free, there is hope for the fruits of freedom and a better future." Why didn't Means mention Peltier, since it was a perfect opportunity to keep the case alive? Why not set the record straight on Peltier as we move into the twenty-first century? This is perhaps the major omission of *Where White Men Fear to Tread: The Autobiography of Russell Mean.*

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Winter of the Holy Iron. By Joseph Marshall III. Santa Fe, New Mexico: Red Crane Books, 1994. 295 pages. $19.95 cloth.

The historical novel *Winter of the Holy Iron* focuses on South Dakota's Wolf Tail Lakota Indians' first contacts with white men and particularly, with white men's guns. As Joseph Marshall III explains in his foreword, the "holy iron" or "mystery iron" was the name that the Lakota gave to the gun. The action of the novel takes place over a short period of time, a winter season in which Whirlwind, war leader of the Wolf Tail band, stalks the French trapper who has killed one of the tribe's elder women.

Whirlwind is aware of his strategic disadvantage in this manhunt, in that the trapper he stalks has a "holy iron"; Whirlwind also owns a gun but refuses to use it. Thematically, much of the novel is taken up with Whirlwind's philosophical musings about the effect the use of a gun has on the soul of a person, as well as its possible effects on his culture: "Did he shoot at me because he felt his weapon gave him a right to kill?" (p. 30). The philosophical contrasts are somewhat blurred, however, since Whirlwind, skillful with bow and lance, is hardly nonviolent. Marshall attempts to connect the use of a gun to a disregard for life, contrasting it with the culturally inscribed use of bow and arrow, which is carefully limited by ritual and tradition.

The premise of this novel is an intriguing one and the historical setting seems legitimately constructed. Its author, described on the book's jacket as a native Lakota speaker reared by his grandparents on the Sicangu Lakota Reservation of South Dakota, draws on a good store of knowledge of Lakota craft and tradition in his telling. The characters he creates, however, lack dimension, and the story he relates is too predictable.

In the novel's opening scene, Whirlwind meets and rescues a French trapper named de la Verendrye, who speaks Lakota. Whirlwind, although middle-aged, has seen only one white man before, a trapper whom he killed years ago in self-defense and whose "holy iron" he kept. Having perceived the gun to be an instrument of great change, Whirlwind has not attempted to use it. Instead he has kept it hidden in his home.

De la Verendrye has been wounded and abandoned by his former partner, Bruneaux. Whirlwind brings him to his home, but while de la Verendrye is recovering from his wound, Bruneaux attempts to kidnap a young Lakota woman, killing her grandmother in the process. Through a series of events, a wounded Whirlwind ends up on a lone hunt for the killer, although warriors from his band search for and eventually find and help him.

Winter of the Holy Iron is rather slow-moving, with careful, descriptive attention paid to the particulars of Lakota traditional skills such as bowmaking and the social traditions of marriage and leadership. The pace of the novel is not necessarily problematic, however, since it gives the story an aura of ritual. The descriptions, which link the processes of craftmaking to the beliefs they reflect, are interesting in themselves. When Whirlwind replaced his broken bow by making another out in the wilderness, he "had been careful of his thoughts as he had worked

on the bow. He had pushed aside anger and revenge from his heart and remembered that to everything there was a purpose" (p. 162). The description of the bowmaking itself is precise enough to serve as a how-to. *Holy Iron's* strength is that it reflects Marshall's clear understanding of Lakota tradition,

The occasional dialogue in the book also offers testimony to tradition. Marshall's use of indirect and ritualistic modes of speech suggest that care and respect pervaded all of the Lakota's verbal interactions. When an elder wishes to speak out of earshot of a youth, instead of asking him to leave, he says, "Grandson. I am worried about our new colt. The one born in early autumn" (p. 239).

Marshall's firsthand understanding of Lakota culture however, cannot in itself make for compelling fiction, and the reader might wish he had simply written a factual account of craft and custom. *Holy Iron's* characters, though not too numerous for a novel of this length, are barely distinguishable from each other because of their general lack of personality. It is difficult to determine whether this is an issue of the writer's lack of craft or an insistence on a utopian view of traditional Lakota life. In any event, the men are all brave, the women all beautiful and faithful, although there are gradations.

Oddly, two of the best-developed characters in the novel are the intruding French traders. De la Verendrye, the trapper who has lived with the Dakota and speaks the language, shows an intriguing alienation from his European roots. Bruneaux seems to benefit from the author's unwillingness to grant him any genuine evil power, and his character wavers suggestively between true villainy and oafish bungling. In one scene, he exhibits his European wastefulness by leaving behind most of a deer he kills. Whirlwind later finds and cooks the remains, while Bruneaux, now unable to kill fresh game, goes hungry. Marshall apparently has little faith in his reader; he declares that Whirlwind "smiled at the irony of sharing meat with his killer" (p. 228), instead of allowing the scene to speak for itself. The author's insistence on positive portrayals of the Lakota condemns the character of Whirlwind to a stream of conscientious thought and competent action, not the stuff of a really compelling story.

In spite of this idealistic portrayal of traditional Lakota life, *Winter of the Holy Iron* does not depict the culture as self-oriented. In an odd turnaround of the concept of the "other," Whirlwind seems a bit too preoccupied with simplistic musings about the

white men's goals and beliefs: "Did they feel a kinship with everything around them, like the Lakota did? If they did not, then they must be a poor people" (p. 182). Whirlwind's theorizing also sounds too much like hindsight he could not have possessed, especially considering that the setting of the story predates large-scale European intrusion on Lakota life. The extended musings and protracted chase of the novel finally climax in a scene of confrontation and poetic justice too reminiscent of an old-style cowboy Western for comfort.

The flaws in *Winter of the Holy Iron* may be more a matter of writing technique than philosophical attitude, but either way, the end result is a simplistic portrayal of a time period and a culture that already have too often been the objects of stereotype. By contrast, the growing body of excellent novels by contemporary Native Americans grant their subjects conflict and complexity, a better antidote to negative stereotyping. For example, Louise Erdrich, who was raised in Wahpeton, North Dakota, is a member of the Ojibwa tribe mentioned as neighbors and adversaries to the Lakota in *Winter of the Holy Iron*. Her historical novel *Tracks* subtly weaves Ojibwa tradition into a compelling and multifaceted story. In *Tracks*, setting and traditional culture serve to illuminate the story, not overwhelm it.

A historical novel succeeds if it fastens history so subtly to an examination of the human condition that the reader is disarmed, never quite sure of what hit him or her. In Marshall's novel, however, the aim of *The Holy Iron* is obvious, but it does not quite manage to hit the mark.

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Women and Power in Native North America. Edited by Laura P. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995. 294 pages. $24.95 cloth.

Since these papers were presented at the American Anthropological Association's annual meeting in 1988, this book has been much awaited. What appealed to most was the stellar quality of the presenters, who included Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Alice Kehoe, and Mary Shepardson. All had done ground-breaking analyses of women's place in selected indigenous cultures of North America.