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Author
Snyder, Michael

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However, these are of no consequence for the points Steckley makes and are only apparent to those who are analyzing the words and will recognize the alterations as mistakes. Only one potentially confusing error occurs in the English, in the Iroquoian family tree (2), where it appears a separator has been left out before the Onondaga and Susquehannock lines (and arguably before Laurentian as well), leading it to appear that both languages are in the Wendat branch.

Craig Kopris
Apptek, Inc.

X-Indian Chronicles: The Book of Mausape. By Thomas M. Yeahpau. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2006. 240 pages. $16.99 cloth.

This gripping collection of interconnected short stories is the first book by Kiowa filmmaker, poet, and story writer Thomas M. Yeahpau, a graduate of Haskell University who grew up in Anadarko, Oklahoma. His cast of teen-aged and early-twenties "X-Indians," belonging to, according to Yeahpau, "a race that was losing its culture and a generation that was losing its mind," are depicted spending their time aimlessly drinking, drugging, and "snag-ging" women for casual sex in these stories mostly set in the 1990s and early 2000s. Set against urban, small town, or rural American Indian backdrops, and integrating traditional stories, magical realism, and popular culture, the mood is grim and the content raw. Although providing intoxicating diversion and dark humor, like its characters, the work often seems to lack direction and a coherent vision of what it wants to do in fiction. The stories are quite entertaining and sexy but often lack a consistent message or even a modicum of hope for younger Native Americans.

The book's strongest section, and of most interest to Native American literary studies, is the opening sequence of stories called "An X-Indian Legend." These stories draw from Kiowa and other Oklahoma Indian legends and stories, intermixing the supernatural and the natural in a Native American magical realism. For example, in "Deer Lady," the protagonist Mausape's traditional Kiowa grandfather, an itinerant medicine man, tells Mausape, then a child, a story explaining why he is constantly on the road, only visiting his grandson and wife periodically. Back in the "good ole days when pow-wows were pow-wows" and "everybody sang," a scintillatingly beau-tiful woman out-dances all of her competitors, transfixing all of the Kiowa men, until she is the last woman dancing (7–8). But someone in the crowd finally notices her feet are hoofed, and a young man dashes into the ring to expose her cervine legs—to disastrous consequences. Grandfather opened his medicine bag to thwart her, but from that day he was cursed, forced to flee from her perpetually.

Although the collection does carry on and retell Native American stories to some extent, on the whole it is fairly pessimistic about the future of indig-enous traditions. In "Dancing Days," Mausape dreams that he is awakened by

his grandfather, who believes that Mausape is an accomplished fancy dancer, and tells him to get his outfit ready to go to the big competition. Mausape is slated to spar with the King of All Fancy Dancers, who turns out to be The King himself, Elvis Presley (who believed that he had Cherokee blood). Grandfather's medicine takes hold of Mausape's legs, and he makes an impressive showing. Mausape awakens, his curiosity about his grandfather piqued. His grandmother tells him that his grandfather had been a superlative fancy dancer, "except it was called war-dancing then" (29), and his prize money helped support their family. Though his grandfather had taught him a little bit when he was young, Mausape has forgotten, and he now wonders if it's not too late to carry on this tradition. Grandmother replies, "Sure, but it's not an easy road to travel. You see, every time an elder like your grandpa passes to the next world, they take more of their culture with them. A lot has already gone to the next world for good, and only so much is left here for people your age to learn. It's so sad. Your generation is going through the future with very little of your past. But if you really, really, want to learn" (31). Mausape's friend Brando, who, it transpires, has pilfered a joint from his father's stash, interrupts Grandma's reply. They are headed to school picture day with the rest of the spruced-up X-Indians, "all waiting for a free ride to assimilation." Mausape bathetically ends the story: "ANOTHER FANCY-DANCER LOST." Subtle, it is not, and the pessimism doesn't let up. Are we meant to believe that this joint is the "gateway drug" leading to the destruction of a culture? Moments like this that explicitly present an antidrug message seem to be an attempt to atone for the later ambivalent portrayal of drugs and sex, because often the joyrides and hookups of these characters seem fun (if not healthily sustainable). One main character, Brando, a former drug kingpin who has gone straight and "snags" a job as a lawyer without going to law school (straining verisimilitude), feels this ambivalence when he looks back on his old life.

Another story that draws from orality tells of the Cowman, who feeds on the flesh of any man who disrespects a cow. This is due to an arrangement that the Great Spirit made after the cow's original spirit lost a handgame to the spirit of man, allowing humans to feast on cows' flesh rather than vice versa. Cowman has his revenge on a "half-white" boy who concocts a cruel plan at a cow's expense. Again, a pessimistic ending occurs. The boy's full-blood friends who look on horrified are found innocent of the boy's death but are sent to an Indian boarding school. Yeahpau grimly concludes, "and so, assimilation was exchanged for decimation," without elaborating on what he means. The narrator points out that the boy's killing was never solved (how could it have been?), and Yeahpau concludes that "most murders in NDN city never are" (43). After this first "part," American Indian traditional stories are altered in a way that reinforces the pessimism. The legendary figure Grandmother Spider (or Spider Woman) becomes a drunk who lurks in the alley in back of a liquor store. The Kiowa's trickster-hero Saynday is usually invoked to instruct children in morality, but when Mausape composes his own Saynday story, the hero is destroyed by alcohol and dies. Although this bears an obvious lesson about alcohol, killing off Saynday comes off as a nihilistic move, typifying the book's tone.

The pessimism, recalling Sherman Alexie's rebarbative generalizations about "Indians" in *Reservation Blues*, for example, is not the only problem with the stories. It is unclear how the reader is meant to respond to some of the characters. Yeahpau, in postmodern self-reflexive moments, makes it clear that Mausape is to be understood as based on the author. Mausape, a Kiowa, aspires to be a well-known writer and writes "about the trials and tribulations of being an X-Indian; he wrote stories involving his X-Indian friends" (213). Moreover, one can almost transpose the letters of Thomas Yeahpau's name to get Mausape Onthaw. The problem is that, though it is clear that Yeahpau loves Mausape—even giving him a perfect guardian angel who falls in love with him, coming down to earth so that she can experience mortal love with him—the reader is not sure to agree. "God knew what he was doing when he created Mausape," the narrator tells us, ironically recalling John Updike's well-known critique of J. D. Salinger's fictional Glass family: "Salinger loves the Glasses more than God loves them" (149). Mausape, after all, is a young man who selfishly "narcs on" his best friend Brando so that he may go free and pursue his writing. Most troublingly, in the final story he finds a handwritten erotic love poem by a famous Native writer addressed to his ex-Angel wife Desire, which seems to implicate her in adultery. Instantly, he grabs his gun and resolves to kill them both, without a second thought or desire to confirm his suspicions.

Yeahpau dramatizes the Oedipal conflict involved in generational literary influence, what Harold Bloom had discussed with regard to poetry as "The Anxiety of Influence." Here, the character seemingly based on the author takes up arms against "Sean Arrows," who was Mausape's "idol, the very person who inspired him to write, the god of all X-Indian writers. . . . He had countless award-winning books under his belt" (215). Although some might say Yeahpau might have done better idolizing fellow Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday, Yeahpau's style, and the alliteration of "Sean Arrows" and "Sherman Alexie," strongly suggest that his hero is Spokane. Mausape guns Arrows down in cold blood; then, ignoring the message of a visit from the ghostly Grandma Blessing, whom he had picked up off a snowy road, he murders his wife as well.

So at this point, this title character, who is meant to be sympathetic, has just killed a preeminent Native American writer and a woman who, until Mausape neglected her in favor of his writing, loved him unconditionally (perhaps as only a former guardian angel can). So what are we to think about this ending—which follows hot on the heels of a story of a man who runs over his best friend with a car and who is, in turn, bludgeoned to death by his mistress with a baseball bat? How is Yeahpau going to conclude this bleak book? Shrugging his shoulders at the reader's desire to have some kind of meaning, or explanation, or derive some moral from all of this violence, Yeahpau only tells us, "Mausape had lost his mind." Because the budding writer Mausape had been thinking of this whole crazed incident as a story, he concludes that committing suicide would be too expected. Instead, he opens the medicine bundle that Grandma Blessing gave him, which causes him to become something invisible and ethereal gliding through the air. Is Mausape punished for

his multiple murders and betrayal of his friend Brando? Far from it—he finds gliding through the air to be "soothing, liberating" (230). He doesn't know what has happened to him, but he knows that it is better than life.

Thus, in a quandary, Yeahpau turns to N. Scott Momaday after all—ironically, drawing from his essay "The Man Made of Words" but neglecting its message about the power and responsibility of imagination and storytelling. All of this cold-blooded killing doesn't matter in the least after all—or so he would have us believe—because it turns out that Mausape is only "an idea, a story in its infancy. Mausape blew into the room and landed right on the writer's mind. And in that moment, Thomas M. Yeahpau began to write. He wrote the perfect ending to a perfect story" (231). Whereas Momaday stresses the responsibility to choose words and tell stories carefully, Yeahpau's ending (ironically, given its nod to Momaday) seems to be a refusal to take responsibility for his words, saying that it's "just" a story bristling with hubris. This talk of a "perfect ending" to a "perfect story" is a ruse meant to distract us from the story's unresolved problem and its ending staring us in the face.

Although this book—for some reason being marketed as young adult fiction—draws from Native American fiction and stories, it owes as much to Quentin Tarantino and Bret Easton Ellis. Yeahpau told a reporter from Lawrence.com, regarding his filmmaking, "My biggest goal is to entertain, to get into the mass market. . . . A lot of people want to preach and teach, I just want to entertain." *X-Indian Chronicles* entertains but lacks emotional depth and the will to edify. Too frequently the author's vision is muddled and his writing unpolished. When Yeahpau continues his literary work, which he ought to, based on the promise of this book, he might opt to read up on his Native literary forebears such as John Joseph Mathews, who dealt with a much earlier Indian "lost generation" with skill, craft, and nuance in *Sundown*, along with contemporaries such as Richard Van Camp and Gerald Vizenor, whose concept of the "Post-Indian" might provide a thoughtful counterpoint or remedy to the "X-Indian."

Michael Snyder
University of Oklahoma