The Whole in Small Compass: D'Arcy McNickle's Social Vision in The Surrounded

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A notable feature of the early scholarship on D'Arcy McNickle's *The Surrounded* is the widely made case for the book's prescience. *The Surrounded* first appeared in 1936 to generally good reviews, but poor sales made for a short run.[1] In 1978, the University of New Mexico Press reprinted the novel, and shortly thereafter, the first wave of scholarly articles began to appear. In many of them, one finds language noting uncanny ways McNickle's book anticipates later canonical Native American novels.[2] Given their first real look at *The Surrounded*, literary scholars saw a book way ahead of its time. Given their first real look at McNickle as a novelist, literary scholars heralded the arrival of a major "new" literary voice.[3]

A notable feature in more recently published scholarship on *The Surrounded* is the widely made case for the book's historicism. Some approaches stress the book's fidelity to the actual historical material conditions behind the story and the characters being narrated.[4] For these critics, the novel provides a useful record of Montana Salish and Kootenai life on the Flathead Indian Reservation in and around the time of allotment (1904) and homesteading (1910). Other approaches consider the novel's positioning within the literary currents and genre traditions of its time. For these critics, the novel provides a useful record of an alternative literary modernism.[5] In either case, the contemporary critical view on *The Surrounded* regards the book as a useful form of social and historical knowledge, one productively responsive to its various contexts of production and influence.

Combining these approaches, the present essay claims prescience for *The Surrounded* on the basis of its sociohistoricism—specifically, the productive ways its socially expansive methodology for understanding culture, history, and race speaks

to current trends in reading Native American literary texts. In McNickle's time, theories of Native history and culture overburdened by exoticisms, primitivisms, and an ethnographic present much cruder than any current culturalism dominated the ruling colonial intellectual milieu. Academic, popular, and bureaucratic knowledges on Native American life fed government policies geared toward American Indian vanishing whose legitimation depended on the legitimation of the dominant theories just described.[6] In *The Surrounded,* McNickle sets out to understand how and why allotment and homesteading policies on the Flathead Indian Reservation where he grew up played out as they did and how and why these policies impacted those who lived under them the way they did. The result is a comprehensive narrative examination of causes, consequences, backgrounds, and contexts that counters these colonial essentialisms through a dynamic account of the social whole under allotment-era colonialism—what led Oliver La Farge in his 1936 review to praise as McNickle's "success in catching the whole in small compass." For McNickle, the local is an intensification of the global rather than its opposite or other. The novel puts front and center the ways characters' intimate personal and family details are always subject to the influence of external forces and processes—federal Indian policies, colonial administrative rule, in-migration and demographic shifts, capital flows and the introduction of capitalist social relations—and how the consequent impacts constrain culture, identity formation, personal choice and decision-making, and mobility. This methodological co-articulation of inside and outside elements and of micrological interests and forces with macrological ones is a distinctive feature of McNickle's sociohistorical imagination.

By laying bare how McNickle's socially and historically dynamic perspective plays out in *The Surrounded*, the present essay aims to show how the novel, more than just anticipating later Native novels through shared transhistorical literary associations, speaks to certain social reading practices on today's post-nationalist Native American literary-critical scene. To provide context, the first section below offers a brief historical sketch of recent major trends in Native American literary studies followed by a brief survey of current leading critical statements with an eye toward relevance to *The Surrounded*. The second section below is a close reading of McNickle's expansive, anti-colonial theorization of culture and history in *The Surrounded*. The third section examines the novel's treatment of Native American identity in light of its sensitivity to allotment-era socioeconomics of race and anti-Indianism. A brief final section summarizes the argument.

Native American Literary Studies and *The Surrounded* Today

Political criticism has dominated Native American literary studies since the late 1980s when a pervasive culturalism grounded in anthropological readings of texts gave way to theoretically-informed anti-colonial perspectives that promoted the decolonizing (and democratizing) capacity of Native American literatures.[7] The 1990s saw the rise of nationalist and tribal sovereigntist approaches that argued tribal specificity (in terms of culture, history, politics/government, and community) should be both the main source and the main beneficiary of literary and scholarly work and that changed the face of the discipline by holding up research and development projects in tribal literary canons, tribal literary theory and method, and Native intellectual sovereignty as models.[8] Today, post-nationalist critical

trends are on the rise, calling into question the political and intellectual utility of tribally-focused scholarship and clearing space for interdisciplinary and intersectional approaches—indigenous feminisms, Two-Spirit theory, transindigenous methodologies, indigenous transnationalisms—that read Native literary texts expansively, albeit for reasons and in ways different from McNickle's own approach.

Although separated from *The Surrounded* by nearly a century, today's critical reading practices are shortening that distance through heightened sensitivities to the socially expansive character of Native life and literature. Socially expansive, anti-colonial readings of Native literary texts are thus also on the rise, making *The Surrounded* once again relevant. A brief rehearsal of current influential representative positions in the field should help illustrate the point. In *Red Land, Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the Native American Novel* (2008), Sean Teuton (Cherokee) rereads the main texts of the Native American Literary Renaissance through a Native Americanist "realist theory" designed to rescue the core analytical concepts of identity and experience from poststructuralist scrutiny in order to clear the way for an "alternative knowledge built on accounts that adhere to the social facts of Native life" (16). On this "alternative knowledge" model, experiential knowledge becomes an epistemologically privileged normative knowledge and, in turn, the Native literary text becomes "a place in which to imagine what kind of social vision it would take for Indian Country to flourish " (40). Shari Huhndorf's *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture* (2009) focuses on "alliances among tribes and the social structures and practices

that transcend their boundaries, as well as processes on a global scale such as colonialism and capitalism" (2). Critiquing nationalist criticism for disregarding "global social dynamics and colonial critique" in favor of a localized tribal focus, Huhndorf's transnationalism proposes incorporating such dynamics into a line of inquiry that "brings Native studies into closer relation with other fields engaged in critiques of nationalism and colonialism" (11, 15). In their introductory essay to the recent *American Quarterly* special issue, "Alternative Contact: Indigeneity, Globalism, and American Studies" (2010), Paul Lai and Lindsey Claire Smith argue for inaugurating work on "'alternative contact'—contact apart from narratives of 'first contact' between Native Americans and Europeans (including Euro-Americans)—among Indigenous Americans and other populations in the United States and around the world," of conducting "research [that] puts Indigenous peoples in the role of active, mobile, and even cosmopolitan actors on the world stage in ways that complicate static and incomplete definitions of Indigenous identity," and of pursuing "other modernities that might open up radical decolonial strategies" (407-8, 411). And in *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, Jodi A. Byrd works to "account for the traverse of U.S. empire by resurrecting indigenous presences within cultural, literary, and political contexts" and by tracking how "Indianness becomes a site through which U.S. empire orients and replicates itself by transforming those to be colonized into 'Indians' through continual reiterations of pioneer logics" (xi, xiii). "In the wake of this transit," according to Byrd, "and indeed as its quality as colonialist practice, one finds discordant and competing representations of diasporic arrivals and native lived

experiences" (xiii). These four summaries, while indicating the great Native literary-critical diversity of these times, display a shared commitment to expanding "decolonial" critical knowledges on Native life and literature ("alternative," "dynamic," "discordant," "native lived"), often doing so with particular attention given to the social.

These critical vocabularies provide a language for *The Surrounded* to speak its available social truths just as the novel provides a methodology that speaks to certain social inclinations in Native literary criticism today. *The Surrounded* tells the story of Archilde Leon, a young mixed-blood Salish person, who suffers tragic loss and racial injustice upon coming home to the Flathead Indian Reservation in western Montana after living and working in Oregon. Archilde is the sign of both "diasporic arrivals" and "alternative contact" due to his successful stint in Portland and his "active, mobile, and even cosmopolitan" plans to study violin in Europe, but his promise as the emergent two-world subjectivity, the new man for the new times, comes undone through ironic "reiterations of pioneer logics" amid the "global social dynamics" of allotment-era colonialism. *The Surrounded* is instructive, then—first of all, for narrating details of the colonial social nexus that renders Archilde's "alternative contact" impossible, and second, for modeling a "discordant," "decolonial" analytical methodology expansive yet nimble enough to narrate the "other modernity" that is Archilde's lived experience.

The Status of Culture and History in *The Surrounded*

Readers of *The Surrounded* will recall the scene of the feast Faithful Catharine holds for her son Archilde upon his return home from Oregon. Away from his home

on the Flathead Indian Reservation for nearly a year playing fiddle in Portland show houses, Archilde makes this brief return—or so he intends it to be—to see the old mountains and to fish the familiar streams one more time before leaving again. He wants only to stow away a few good memories for the next chapter in his life. He has no intention or desire to stay, and he is definitely not looking forward to the feast: "That was something he had forgotten to include in his visit—the old lady and her feasts! You gorged yourself on meat until you felt sick, and a lot of old people told you tiresome stories. He frowned. He ought to refuse. He had not come for a feast" (4).

Readers of *The Surrounded* will recall the three stories shared at the feast. An old woman shares "The Story of Flint," which tells how Coyote acquires flint for the tips of his arrows instead of tree bark and then gives the new knowledge to the people. Whitey tells "The Story of the Thing to Make Life Easy," which relates how a lazy but visionary old man introduces the axe. Old Modeste then tells the third story, which is categorically different. The other two stories, says Modeste, "make the heart light," but the one he shares is designed specifically to help Archilde see "better just what it was like back in those [pre-colonial] times" (69, 70). In effect, Modeste's story is different because it tells the recent tribal history. Modeste's story begins in pre-contact times and goes on to discuss the signing of the 1855 Hellgate Treaty, the introduction of guns and the intensification of regional intertribal warfare, the Salish efforts to recruit the assistance of the "black-robe Fathers," and the challenges brought by the arrival of the whites (73).

Readers of *The Surrounded* will also recall that it is precisely this feast that warms Archilde's sensitivities to the old people and provides the initial impetus for Archilde's extended stay at home, thus begging the question: How, exactly, does the feast transform Archilde's consciousness, recruit his allegiance, and cultivate his new sense of tribal identity and belonging? The answer leads to the book's expansive, "decolonial" theorization of culture and history. In *The Surrounded*, there are three ways culture and history are treated as socially dynamic, enmeshed, and activated rather than, according to the ruling colonial ideas, phenomenologically or conceptually isolated. First, culture and history are shown as important, internally persuasive forms of knowledge that are most effective when delivered within a socioaffective context based on compassion or friendliness. Second, the transmission of culture and history through story and storytelling practices is shown as an ordinary, cross-cultural human activity, not primitive, exotic, or other. And third, culture is shown as historically mutable and technologically open-ended, not fixed, frozen, or static. In the time of *The Surrounded*, the dominant uses and meanings of Native culture and history were damaging to Native peoples. Unquestioned belief in the appropriateness of using a notion of authenticity fully buttressed by the ethnographic present as a means of adjudicating cultural status and tribal identity led to conceptual malignancies on a wide scale. Native culture thus became a narrow, essentializing description of beliefs, practices, and material life, and cultural change, whenever considered, always invoked the specter of loss. Native history thus became a narrow description of the ethnographic present that denied Native peoples and cultures access to the present and to world history

without also invoking the specter of loss. The dominant concepts of culture and history McNickle confronted were part and parcel of a colonial logic of dispossession that reduced, isolated, differentiated, exoticized, primitivized, and sequestered Native American peoples. In *The Surrounded*, however, the concepts of culture and history McNickle employs are part and parcel of a progressive, "decolonial" approach that "complicate[s] static and incomplete definitions of Indigenous identity" and are thus conceived more expansively, dynamically, and inclusively to express "native lived experiences." The feast scene dramatizes the construction of Archilde's Salish ethnic identity and political belonging just as it constructs the expansive conceptual framework that enables the dramatization in the first place.

So, with respect to the first point above, how, conceptually, does the feast move Archilde's consciousness to the Salish side? For some commentators, the answer is culture. John Lloyd Purdy cites the "significant, compelling force" and "power" of Salish "verbal arts" in the novel (*Word Ways* 58). For others, the answer is history. Enrique Lima cites the valorized "shared history of survival" in Modeste's story as the basis for Archilde "to affirm [his] right to existence" as a Salish person (299). Both explanations are partly right. The feast scene indeed showcases Salish cultural and historical continuity and privileges Salish knowledge, history, and value systems in ways that move Archilde, but Archilde mentions he has been to feasts before, and the stories he hears at this one he knows quite well.[9] What makes this feast experience different? As just mentioned, Old Modeste understands matters of degree and kind and offers an instructive distinction that privileges historical over

cultural knowledge as a tool of enculturation (69, 70). While the novel largely upholds this distinction throughout, historical knowledge alone proves insufficient to explain Archilde's transformation.

A core theme in *The Surrounded* is the power of friendliness to induce compassion and understanding, and the feast offers a key instance. Aside from being the font of tribal knowledge, Old Modeste holds a special place for Archilde, having appeared "at intervals during his life in some act of generosity" (60). He makes Archilde feel understood, respects his dignity, and "more than his mother, made what he was seem important" (61). At the outset of the storytelling, Archilde expresses discomfort at being there: "You people talk of the old days as if they were here. But they're gone, dead. So don't tell me what I ought to do to be like that" (63). At this moment, Modeste takes his side—"You old women forget that what our children are like they cannot help"—showing Archilde great but unexpected empathy that, in combination with the care he has provided over the years and the considerate gift of the tribal history he is about to relate, gains the young man's ear and eventually opens his heart to the stories, the old people, the tribal past, and his personal relationship to it all. The scene concludes this way:

> Archilde, listening closely, felt something die within him. Some stiffness, some pride, went weak before the old man's bitter simple words.
>
> For the first time he had really seen it happen. First the great numbers and the power, then the falling away, the battles and starvation in the snow, the new hopes and the slow facing of

> disappointment, and then no hope at all, just this living in the past. He had heard the story many times, but he had not listened. It had tired him. Now he saw that it had happened and it left him feeling weak. It destroyed his stiffness toward the old people. He sat and thought about it and the flames shot upward and made light on the circle of black pines. (74)

The ceremonial context of the feast, the stories and the storytelling, the tribal history, and Old Modeste's empathy—all elements are part of winning over Archilde's heart and mind, but none alone is the efficient cause. Culture as "significant, compelling force" or as "power" in the form of "verbal arts" proves inadequate as a sole determination just as history as a "shared history of survival" also fails alone. As a Salish cultural tableau, the feast scene displays McNickle's inclusive, expansive culture concept in action, one broad, flexible, and supple enough to contain different kinds of knowledge and discourse (cultural and historical), established taxonomies (kinds of stories and kinds of affect), and established networks of social relations, such as kinship, determining codes of conduct, like the empathy, affection, and dignity Modeste shows Archilde. In *The Surrounded*, the interpersonal, affective dimension of social relations is a necessary precondition for activating the power of culture and history in story. The key point here is how for McNickle, the socioaffective context of story is as pivotal as story's cultural form and historical content.

With respect to point two, this social conceptualization of culture and history puts *The Surrounded* at odds with dominant colonial theories of the time, a contrast

made stronger when considering the feast scene alongside the parallel chapter immediately preceding it. Here, wealthy reservation landowner, Max Leon, like his son, Archilde, suffers from blinding pride. He sits down with a revered, compassionate elder (Father Grepilloux) and is softened to the Salish people (and to his family) through the socioaffective ensemble of story, history, and kindness. In this chapter, Father Grepilloux, the old Jesuit priest who has returned to the reservation to write the history of his work among the tribal people, shares his account of the Salish past with Max, his old friend:

> To Max, who had never heard them, these stories were surprising. He knew in a vague way that the Salish people had a reputation for having met the white men with open friendliness; but now to say that they had stood ready to be Christianized, and even sought out the priests—that was bewildering. It made him feel all at once that he was ignorant of these people, which was somewhat like being told that he knew nothing about the back of his neck, after he had lived with it all his life. (48-9)

The next scene featuring Max concludes by staging his reconciliation with the estranged Archilde. Later in the book, Max goes on to reconcile with his wife, Faithful Catharine, and he dies, not insignificantly, with a now-devoted Archilde at bedside holding his hand. These many examples showcasing the effective empathic sharing of history and culture solidifies McNickle's social thinking about the power of story and storytelling, but the Max-Father Grepilloux scene goes further in treating this formulation as a cross-cultural universal rather than as a Salish-specific

cultural element as Max and Grepilloux are neither tribal members nor Native Americans. The conspicuousness of the non-Salish context of the parallel storytelling scene adds emphasis to the ordinariness of storytelling's social power, troubling culturalist readings of Archilde's transformation that confer sole determining power upon Salish culture itself.

The third way McNickle's anti-colonial conceptual progressivism plays out in the feast scene comes through the theory of culture that underpins the feast stories themselves. While the feast is traditional, as McNickle makes abundantly clear, and the stories shared all come from the traditional tribal oral archive, each story deals with a major moment of historical technological change. "The Story of Flint" tells of how Coyote discovers flint for everyday use. "The Story of the Thing to Make Life Easy" tells of the introduction of the axe to everyday life. And Modeste's story of the Salish tribal history tells of guns, which came first to the Blackfeet and other traditional enemies of the Salish, and of Catholic missionaries. This consistent thematic element shows, first of all, that change is a longstanding, well-understood, and accepted aspect of Salish culture rather than culture's adversary and that culture is neither reducible to nor equivalent with technology. The three stories illustrate the persistence of culture in and through change and McNickle's belief in culture's adaptability and flexibility at absorbing (or withstanding) new and foreign elements (flint, axe, gun, even Catholicism).[10] For McNickle, adaptation and innovation are as much a part of culture as are consistency and continuity. These stories give the lie to early modern anthropological cultural theory that codified incompatibility between change (especially the technological innovations of

western modernity) and Native peoples and, instead, articulate a dynamic, expansive theory of culture that accounts for change over time and contests static notions of cultural pedigree. In sum, in *The Surrounded*, the efficient cause of Archilde's transformation is thus not exposure to culture (in the narrow sense) but rather immersion in an enculturating socioaffective context in which expansive reckonings of cultural and historical knowledge are compassionately bestowed.

Theorizing Race and Anti-Indianism

As it does with history and culture, *The Surrounded* treats the concepts of race and racism with similar attention to social nuance and complexity. A major factor in *The Surrounded*, anti-Indianism plays out in the actions and attitudes of major characters (Archilde, Max, Sheriff Quigley, Agent Parker), in local color tableaus of everyday reservation life (the Fourth of July dance, the Farmers' Hall dance), and in the segregated social geography of the reservation itself (Indian Town vs. St. Xavier). Its presence in the novel serves as prelude to its indictment and analysis. *The Surrounded* is an unequivocally anti-racist book. It urges cross-cultural understanding and respect for tribal autonomy. But *The Surrounded* also condemns the racism it uncovers, investigates sources and conditions of anti-Indianism, and seeks to understand how the racial category "Indian" is constructed and applied to disadvantage those, like Archilde, who become forced to live its dictates. As an historical novel, *The Surrounded* endeavors to give a full picture of Flathead Indian Reservation life during the social transformations of allotment and homesteading in the early twentieth-century, but it also theorizes those transformations, examining causes and consequences, especially the social ill of

anti-Indianism. This section concerns how the novel portrays race and racism as social processes—in particular, Agent Parker's incipient racism and the process of Archilde's racialization as "Indian."

Consider the book's gripping final action and famous last lines. Near the campfire in the mountains, Sheriff Quigley lies dead, Elise having delivered three rifle blasts to his chest, and head of the Indian police force, Joe La Ronde, steps forward to place Archilde in handcuffs as Mike and Narcisse, on horseback, slip away down the trail. At this moment, Agent Parker delivers the book's closing words: "It's too damn bad you people never learn that you can't run away. It's pathetic—" (296-97). And so the novel concludes in typical McNicklean fashion: a collision of grim ironies pregnant with social drama and dripping with causal intrigue. Critics have argued over the conclusion's significance to the book as a whole by focusing on a single irony: Archilde, like a new Big Paul, is ultimately unable to overcome the surrounding contradictions of his day despite his obvious fitness as, in Father Grepilloux's words, "the promise of the new day"—the new man for the new times (97).[11] Readings that privilege the fatalism of Archilde's arrest also tend to existentialize the text, seeing it as a naturalist novel.[12] But the conclusion poses several ironies, ones less attended to by scholars but no less important to the present discussion as they spotlight the book's social methodology. The ironies discussed below stand as the culmination of the book's thematic development of race as social process that treats Archilde's arrest less as existential irony and more as the racial logic of colonial social relations during the allotment and homesteading era in western Montana.

Now consider the novel's closing lines as an irony that crystallizes around Agent Parker's dehumanizing racist generalization—"you people"—for him, an uncharacteristic but clear racial epithet. In the lines he speaks just prior to this, Parker berates Archilde with a similar racist reproach: "You had everything, every chance, and this is the best you could do with it! A man gets pretty tired of *you and all your kind*. That's all I've got to say to you" (my italics 296). It must be remembered that at this point in the novel, despite looming legal difficulties stemming from his perceived part in Dave Smith's (the game warden) death, Archilde has no intention of running away or hopping a train or otherwise betraying Agent Parker's trust, his intentions in perfect accord with the agreement struck at the end of Catharine's deathbed scene. Archilde agrees to take a short but unspecified period of mourning, after which he will turn himself in to the agent to arrange his exoneration in Smith's murder. According to Parker, "It will be just a matter of form, nothing to fear" (275). So, in the meantime, Archilde, Elise, Narcisse, and Mike retreat into the mountains for a few days of camping and relaxation. The trip is Elise's idea, who urges Archilde to skip town instead of following Parker's plan, but despite refusing to flee, Archilde does agree to take time in the mountains to repair his weakened emotional state grieving his mother and because, after all, he does enjoy Elise's company. Agent Parker is given no reason or evidence to doubt Archilde's intentions other than the latter's momentary unavailability, but somehow, Parker immediately loses all faith. Somehow, Agent Parker becomes suspicious of Archilde even though, previously, he has always given Archilde the benefit of the doubt. For example, as he also tells Archilde at the scene of

Catharine's passing, "I leave you on your honor" (275). Somehow, despite La Ronde's best (and correct!) hunch that the party has not fled the area but instead remains in the mountains, Agent Parker becomes convinced Archilde is trying to catch a train. Somehow, Agent Parker, who shows Archilde nothing but compassion and understanding throughout the entire ordeal of Smith's disappearance, turns in the book's final two chapters from being a rational, fair-minded, supportive advocate to becoming an irritated, suspicious racist. And somehow, Agent Parker, who despises Sheriff Quigley for his racist assumptions of guilt concerning all Indian people and for acting "as if a state of war existed between the two races," ironically becomes Sheriff Quigley himself—distrusting, angry, and anti-Indian as a matter of course. What contributes to Agent Parker's descent into racism and his ironic transformation into what he most despises in Sheriff Quigley (280)?

One explanation is colonial administrative careerism. Mounting stress over Archilde's whereabouts brings Agent Parker to feel he is losing control of the situation and, consequently, his job security. One will remember how McNickle introduces Agent Parker to the reader:

> Mr. Parker, the agent, was a tall, active man whose hair was just beginning to gray. He liked his job and he liked his Indian wards. He saw their helplessness and realized, without getting excited about it, that he was of little use to them. He did what he could but at every turn he was hampered by a system which penalized initiative and by the Indians' own poor understanding of what was expected of them. . . . Above all, if an agent wished to remain in the Service, he had to keep

> his record clear. If in doing this somebody was put to an inconvenience or made to suffer, well—that was when it was handy to have developed a callous layer. Of course, if you were naturally fair, you tried to make it up in some way, off the record. In any case, whether you made amends or not, you had to be in the right position at all times. It was the only way to survive.
>
> Mr. Parker understood this working philosophy of the Service. He had come through a score of years with few complaints. (151-52)

One will also remember the intricate emplotment of miscues and threats that build up to the novel's conclusion and that strain Agent Parker's "callous layer" and compromise his being always in "the right position." "To survive," "to remain in the Service," Agent Parker begins to abandon being "naturally fair" in order "to keep his record clear." Once again, prior to his arrest, Archilde does nothing deliberate to give Agent Parker cause for suspicion—he promises to come in after a few days following his mother's passing, and he fully intends to do so despite the short mountain sojourn—but Agent Parker starts to worry about his position as pressure builds to carry out his professional duties and responsibilities without "complaints." The "working philosophy of the Service" takes over.

Agent Parker's "main source of irritation," however—the main source of the mounting stress—comes from Sheriff Quigley being called in to find Archilde. Agent Parker dislikes Quigley for three main reasons. First, as mentioned above, Parker disapproves of Quigley's harsh treatment of Native Americans: Quigley is "one of the last survivals of the 'Old West,' one who carried with him out of the past a

grudge against all Indians" (280). Second, Parker bristles at Quigley's disrespect for the Indian Service: Quigley "could not get over the fact that the Government had taken the Indians under protection" (280). But worst for Agent Parker is Quigley's "habit of assuming the entire Indian agency had been turned over to him" when his help was needed: "The insinuation was that if he [Quigley] were holding down the Agency things would be run differently, much differently" (280). Stated plainly, Parker feels Quigley as a threat to his survival in the Service. Here is how McNickle narrates the impact of these growing troubles on Agent Parker's judgment:

> As the day wore on the Agent grew increasingly irritated. He succeeded in getting some work done, all the time resenting the fact that he could not work untroubled. He was not a fretful man. He had been in the Service long enough to know that things did not get done in a day. Ordinarily that knowledge bore him up through weeks and months of inaction. But this was not a matter of waiting upon someone to make a decision for him. The boy might be getting farther away every hour that he waited. No matter how thoroughly he believed in him, he could not take chances in an affair of this sort. (280-1)

Despite Agent Parker not being "a fretful man," the added pressure of having to be "someone to make a decision" in a serious "affair of this sort" removes the possibility of being able to "take chances," so even though no concrete or even circumstantial evidence against Archilde's trustworthiness is ever brought forward, Agent Parker "no longer trusted the boy. He expected the worst of him. The only

thing left to do was to make up for lost time" (283). Characteristic of McNickle's narrative habit throughout, the scene of Parker's growing irritation is intricately drawn, but from the tangle of detail, it is Agent Parker's professional self-interest and personal and professional pride, all brought to crisis by the new uncertainty of Archilde's whereabouts given La Ronde's failure to find him, but especially by the humiliating and threatening prospect of Sheriff Quigley on the case, that bring about Parker's abrupt shift to careerist self-preservation—and the anti-Indianism that follows it.

According to McNickle's social vision, Parker's abrupt shift to anti-Indianism is symptomatic of the default affect for white fear and anger associated with economic stresses under the prevailing allotment-era colonial social relations. *The Surrounded* presents allotment-era colonial life as a web of personal and institutional interactions shaped by social, cultural, economic, and legal forces. The patterns generated through this dynamic interplay reveal colonial social logics—for instance, the social logic behind Agent Parker's ironic transformation—that link consciousness, affect, and anti-Indianism under the prevailing material social conditions of allotment-era colonialism. McNickle's social theorization of anti-Indianism finds corroboration in the relevant scholarship on the history of white settlement in western Montana. Ronald L. Trosper (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes) shows how anti-Indianism in western Montana after the establishment of the Flathead Indian Reservation (1855) intensified during moments of "competitive conflict" between groups over resources. In "Native American Boundary Maintenance: The Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana,

1860-1970," Trosper points out how "during the period of 1865-1885, approximately, the political elite of Missoula [just south of the Flathead Reservation] portrayed the Indians as fierce, dangerous opponents. During the early part of those two decades, these men desired a fort to which they could sell supplies, not to protect themselves from Indians" (261-62). Drawing upon the earlier work of James Carroll, Trosper adds how

> the stereotype that Indians are lazy, inferior workers, and people prone to drink heavily did not arise until there was competition over farm land in Western Montana. The image of Indians as subordinate rather than as merely different arises once whites seek rationalization to take Indian lands. (262)

The historical record of early colonial western Montana bears witness to economic and resource competition as clear drivers of anti-Indianism. In Agent Parker's example, *The Surrounded* bears witness to career and financial insecurities as clear drivers of anti-Indianism. Different in scope and degree but not in kind, the historical record and McNickle's narrative examples reveal early colonial anti-Indianism in western Montana as a socioaffective epiphenomenon of economic interests and concerns.

A second socially significant irony at the end of *The Surrounded* is the completion of Archilde's racialization as "Indian." The awful irony of Agent Parker's situational decline into racism is not self-contained but affects Archilde, as well. Illustrating Althusser's famous parable of the policeman on the street, Agent Parker's final words "hail" Archilde into a racialized colonial subjectivity as "Indian."

Archilde's silent acquiescence—"Archilde, saying nothing, extended his hands to be shackled"—is the final action (and sentence) of the novel, signifying his complete interpellation as "Indian" subject, the silent surrender marking Archilde's self-recognition in Agent Parker's racialized shout, "you people" (296). Looking back over the text, however, one recognizes how Archilde has been subject to and subjectivized in several racializing encounters, all situationally intensified by episodic resource conflict. Consider the events leading up to the Farmers' Hall dance. Archilde is leaving a restaurant in St. Xavier when he runs into Elise, who convinces him to accompany her to the "regular dance" at the Farmers' Hall nearby. Archilde, having recently inherited Max's extensive and valuable estate, is driving Max's spectacular big blue automobile. Earlier that same day, Archilde is at the Fourth-of-July Dance (what Elise derisively calls the "Indian dance"). There, he has an uncomfortable encounter with Sheriff Quigley that makes him consider catching a train or hiding in the mountains ("Like Louis—like an Indian!"), but he brushes aside such thoughts before entering his mother's tepee where feels "unexpectedly sheltered and safe" (220). These feelings are no small matter, for they signify Archilde's successful socialization into the Salish tribal community. Two pages later, the chapter concludes: "Archilde sat quietly and felt those people move in his blood. There in his mother's tepee he had found unaccountable security. It was all quite near, quite a part of him; it was his necessity, for the first time" (222). So, that evening, as Archilde exits the restaurant, he indeed stands as the fulfillment of Father Grepilloux's prediction—Archilde Leon, the new man for the new age, controlling and commanding both heritages from his mixed parentage. Salish

identity is now a "necessity, for the first time," and through the earlier reconciliation, Archilde now controls his father's vast wealth in land, money, and the prestige and influence that follow both. Archilde is thus not the model assimilated colonial subject (as his mother, Faithful Catharine, had been sacrificed to be), the novice yeoman farmer apprenticed to state power with his land held in trust. Archilde stands instead as a modern Salish landowning middle class subject with a deep sense of tribal identity and with social ties to the traditional tribal leadership (Modeste). The text visually evokes this synthesis in the image of Max's extravagant blue car with Archilde behind the wheel and Elise by his side. The text geographically evokes this synthesis in the social fluidity with which Archilde moves across white and Indian spaces of the reservation, which became segregated when opened to homesteading.[13] On the day in question, Independence Day, one finds Archilde in his mother's lodge at the summer ceremony and in a restaurant in the white town of St. Xavier with Max's big blue car, now a metonym for a new culturally enmeshed but socially unsegregated and economically independent colonial subject.

Of course, as the reader knows, the prospect of Archilde living out "the promise of the new day" quickly unravels. Archilde's final pose—shackled, silenced, and in the custody of colonial authorities for a crime he did not commit—is the dramatic visual proof. McNickle, through subtle cues, once again implicates the colonial sociology of race as a major reason why. Farmers' Hall is located in or very nearby the segregated white town of St. Xavier on the reservation. The crowd at the dance is white. Once at the dance, Archilde betrays some initial awkwardness but soon enough loosens up. Elise suggests the two pay a quick visit to the bootlegger.

Archilde is unpracticed in the ways of alcohol but agrees. After some time passing the bottle while parked "in an opening in the brush patch which they had been skirting," Archilde suggests they return to the dance (226). Archilde, now possessed by "a certain fire of recklessness," begins losing his better judgment, and the scene devolves into scandal and anti-Indian prejudice:

> The whisper went round the room. "It's the Leon boy! Look! He's been drinking and he's after one of those La Rose sluts!"
>
> There were lamentations among the old women that his father hadn't been buried six months. The money wouldn't last much longer. "He's just getting started on it. Wait till he gets going good." Whenever an Indian had money to spend the talk was the same—how long would it last. (228-9)

From this point on, the scene devolves further into chaos and violence. Archilde ends up in an altercation with the manager, gets thrown out, and is beaten badly in the street by a group of men. Once again, true to McNickle's keen sense of irony, it is Archilde, a novice at both alcohol and dance halls, who ends up the victim of both. And, importantly, it is Archilde, "the promise of the new day" and in no way exemplary of anti-Indian stereotypes, who ends up not just the victim of stereotype but the embodiment, as well.

But stereotype, without the social dynamic of economic conflict, is insufficient at explaining Archilde's racialization. As the crowd at the dance becomes more aware of Archilde's growing recklessness, the initial whispers refer to Archilde as "the Leon boy," marking his identity through his European family

name. The narrator, however, points out in a sardonic editorial aside that Archilde, at this point in the scene, is now "Indian." In this shift of address, which indicates racialization, Archilde is stripped of one identity—the formal, personalizing identity as a member of a local family—and assigned another—the informal, depersonalizing identity as a race. It is a shift, moreover, that dictates, on the one hand, how being publically intoxicated and having "money to spend" can transform a "Leon boy" into an "Indian," and on the other, how being marked "Indian" with "money to spend" invites anti-Indianism and associated racist assumptions, such as the stereotypes of licentiousness and wastefulness. This is not to say the Farmer's Hall crowd misinterprets or overreads Archilde's drunken recklessness. According to the prevailing colonial racial logic in the text, the crowd reads the scene perfectly. In *The Surrounded*, anti-Indian stereotypes function less as simple, linear racist responses to anticipated behaviors and more through a colonial sociology of race made manifest in an anti-Indianism that intensifies and flares to view during competitive conflict. Archilde's inherited wealth (and Max's opulent blue car) is just as vital as his public intoxication in this particular racialization episode as both a source of and target for the crowd's contempt, which gets expressed in its conviction that Archilde will squander his inheritance: "He's just getting started on it. Wait till he gets going good." As the narrator shows, the contempt, the wealth, and the racialization all feed each other in a dynamic causal loop: "Whenever an Indian had money to spend the talk was the same—how long would it last." Archilde's wealth intensifies the contempt that creates and then fixates on his "Indian-"ness, of which the stereotypes are an after-effect.

Conclusion: Irony and Colonial Social Logic

The details that intricately compose the various vignettes of Archilde's racialization build toward crescendos of painful irony, but the details themselves are not ironic. They refer to the conditions of a life lived surrounded, one ordered by allotment-era colonial social logics on the Flathead Indian Reservation. It is instructive (and not ironic), then, that the only scene in the novel featuring Archilde being publically racialized as "Indian" through colonial discourses of anti-Indianism occurs after Max's death (and Archilde's inheritance), involves alcohol, and takes place in Farmers' Hall in the white reservation town of St. Xavier. Although the Farmer's Hall episode might not present an obvious example of open Indian-white economic conflict over land or resources, three factors indicate a positive correlation: 1.) as the text shows, Archilde is not only rich through inheritance, but his wealth is largely based in land, a very large, estimable ranch on the reservation; in fact, Archilde is now one of the largest landowners on the reservation; 2.) as both the text (in the example of Mr. Moser) and the historical record show, homesteading on Flathead followed an early boom and rush, and competition for land was intense; and 3.) as the tribal history shows, racial tensions in the reservation white towns during the homesteading period were not only keen but reinforced the preexisting segregation allotment created.[14] With legal and economic status as a landowner (rather than as a mere allottee) on the reservation during the homesteading period, Archilde, at this moment, is more white than Indian. The fact that Archilde is not publically racialized as "Indian" until he first becomes "white" by virtue of inheritance is yet another acid irony in a book full of them. Their cumulative heft

boldly signals Archilde's impossibility as the new man for the new times, as a diasporic arrival or departure, and as a subject of "alternative contact." *The Surrounded* is an historical novel in which irony signals socially referential causes and consequences of this impossibility. The irony of Archilde's arrest, far from self-serving or existential, is McNickle's mode to mark the historical associations between an allotment-era anti-Indianism and a colonial socioeconomics of race.

For today's uses, perhaps the most productive irony in *The Surrounded* is the tension between a resigned, despairing view of Native life and a positivistic faith in Native social theory to understand the complex machinery of that life. Despite the book's questionable utility, given its forbidding conclusion, as a "place in which to imagine what kind of social vision it would take for Indian Country to flourish," McNickle's social vision, which is built on "accounts that adhere to the social facts of Native life," provides a useful methodology for understanding what impedes such flourishing. For Archilde, Agent Parker, and others in *The Surrounded*, a life lived surrounded means the world closing in. But for McNickle, as the author of *The Surrounded*, a life lived surrounded means the world opening up—an opening up of the allotment-era Flathead social world to an extensive analysis of the interests, forces, structures, and prejudices that constitute the surrounding. In *The Surrounded*, McNickle uses narrative space as a kind of sociohistorical laboratory, examining the component parts at work in the conceptual problem of culture and in the socioeconomic problem of race under allotment-era colonialism. Few issues today are more vital in struggles over how the status of Native American peoples, histories, societies, and knowledges gets defined and disciplined than the

theorization of culture and identity. Who gets to define, establish, and apply the meanings of Native American culture and identity? How do such meanings impact the representation of Native American peoples and issues in literary, scholarly, and other texts? What are the broader real-world implications of such meanings and representations? What can be done to combat meanings and representations that are damaging to Native peoples and issues? What can be done to support Native flourishing? Today's transnational methods explore how these questions extend across national borders and international cultural spaces. McNickle felt the urgency of these questions, too, but worked through the implications in a more localized, though no less global, context. As Huhndorf observes, "transnational issues find an important, though often overlooked, place in earlier cultural production" (14). The transnational issues in *The Surrounded* are methodological. They deal with how colonial critique can be carried out by opening the customary borders of colonial concepts and contexts to the edifying light of sociohistorical expansion. Current critical perspectives with like-minded expansionary agendas stand to gain from reconsidering *The Surrounded.*

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[1] See John Lloyd Purdy, *Word Ways*, pages 78-81, for a discussion of the early reception and first reviews of *The Surrounded*.

[2] See Charles Larson, *American Indian Fiction*, page 78; Louis Owens, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*, pages 24-26; and Leif Sorensen, "The Threat of Unrecovery," chapter seven in *Ethnic Modernism and the Making of U.S. Multiculturalism*.

[3] See Purdy, *Word Ways*, especially chapter 2, and "Introduction" in his edited volume, *The Legacy of D'Arcy McNickle: Writer, Historian, Activist*.

[4] See Robert Dale Parker, "Who Shot the Sheriff: Storytelling, Indian Identity, and the Marketplace of Masculinity in D'Arcy McNickle's *The Surrounded*," in his *The Invention of Native American Literature*.

[5] See Enrique Lima, "The Uneven Development of the *Bildungsroman*: D'Arcy McNickle and Native American Modernity."

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[6] See Stephen Pevar, *The Rights of Indians and Tribes*; Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, especially "Anthropologists and Other Friends"; Christopher Lyman, *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions: Photographs by Edward S. Curtis*; and David E. Wilkins and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *Uneven Ground: American Indian Sovereignty and Federal Law*.
[7] Representative texts from this period include Arnold Krupat, *The Voice in the Margin*, and Gerald Vizenor (ed.), *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*.
[8] Representative texts from this period include Robert Allen Warrior, Jr., *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions,* and Craig Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*.
[9] The privileging here is one reason why early McNickle scholars thought of novels of the Native American literary renaissance when reading *The Surrounded*.
[10] In *The Surrounded*, McNickle withholds absolute judgment on these technologies. As the reader can see, these technologies in and of themselves are treated as neither good nor bad; it's a matter of how they are used. An axe saves time and creates efficiencies. Catharine also uses one to kill the game warden, Dave Smith.
[11] The disagreement hinges upon whether the novel's ending is so pessimistic as to override the novel's faith in tribal cultural continuity. See Louis Owens, *Other Destinies*, pages 72-78.
[12] See Owens, chapter three.
[13] See Theresa D. O'Nell, "Telling about Whites, Talking about Indians: Oppression, Resistance, and Contemporary Indian Identity."
[14] See the tribal history documentary film, *The Place of the Falling Waters* (1991), especially part one. In this film, tribal elders discuss what living through the homesteading boom was like and provide accounts of living under reservation segregation. See also Heather Cahoon, "For Better or Worse: Flathead Indian Reservation Governance and Sovereignty," especially chapter two.

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