The Surrounded Short Guide

The Surrounded by D'Arcy McNickle

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The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites".

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Characters

Often when writers address serious social issues, their characters become more caricature than fully realized human beings. While there are several figures in this novel—Sheriff Quigley and Louis Leon come to mind—who are indeed less than fully realized and only one-dimensional, a number of characters are so deftly and completely drawn that they remain in the mind long after the book is closed. Principal among these are Archilde Leon (the hero of the novel), his father Max Leon, his mother Catharine Le Loup (Faithful Catharine), and Father Grepilloux. Several others are memorable, if one dimensional, including Moser, the desperate and befuddled merchantspeculator and Horace Parker, the Indian agent, a bureaucrat who wishes to be thought just.

McNickle's fiction includes a number of Native Americans, both men and women, young and old, who attempt in various ways to understand, resist, assimilate, and accommodate to what their situation has become as the result of the European conquest. These are unique individuals, not the romanticized (or demonized) Indians of popular fiction written by whites. McNickle's characters include such memorable figures as Archilde Leon, a mixed-blood, the youngest child of Max Leon, a Spaniard who had immigrated to the United States, roamed the west for a number of years, and finally married Catharine Le Loup, a Salish Indian, the daughter of Chief Running Wolf, niece of Modeste, and known since her conversion as Faithful Catharine by the Jesuit Fathers. Initially, Archilde is educated at the local Mission school under Father Grepilloux, a kindly, well-intentioned priest whom Archilde and his father regard with respect and love. Later—as McNickle had been—Archilde was forced to attend an abusive federal boarding school. Except for learning to play the violin, Archilde recalls his years there with pain and regret. His nephews, Mike and Narcisse, are likewise kidnapped or tricked into the captivity of the federal Indian boarding school, which, while not named in the novel, is clearly modeled after Chemawa. Louis Leon, Archilde's older brother, changed when he went to the school of the Fathers from a loving son to a rider of wild horses and horse thief who showed no respect or love for his mother; he functions as the "bad" Indian, rebelling against the forces of a foreign religion and a foreign culture. Elise La Rose, the daughter of the "shiftless Octave La Rose," becomes Archilde's lover and thus one more entanglement that keeps him from leaving the valley. A "wild" woman of impulsiveness and craft, she flings a pot of hot coffee in the sheriff's face, then shooting from the hip, kills him with three shots to the chest. Modeste, the leading elder of the tribe, Running Wolf's brother and Catharine's uncle, is a wise and compassionate man who knows the value of his culture and seeks to renew the traditional rituals and values among his disheartened people. Modeste, Max Leon, and Father Grepilloux are in many ways parallel characters, each representing an essential good of his respective culture.

The principal Euramerican characters in the story include Max Leon, the Spaniard, the husband of Catharine Le Loup, and father of Archilde, Louis, Agnes, and other sons; Horace Parker, the Indian agent, who believes himself genuinely concerned with the well-being of the Indians but treats them as children and fails to recognize the destructive consequences of governmental paternalism; George Moser, a storekeeper

who is land-poor because his debtors have pledged their land allotments to secure their debts for seed, food, and other farming supplies; Sheriff Dave Quigley, a harsh and unyielding man whose racist biases inform his law enforcement; Father Grepilloux, a member of the original party of Jesuit mis sionaries, although not the actual founder of the mission. These men—each a good person in his own eyes and in the eyes of his subculture—are individuals as well as representatives of the conflicting cultures in the story. Inevitably, each is doomed by the forces of misunderstanding stemming from cultural differences, anger, the tragic wrongheadedness of federal policy, and decades of white oppression of native peoples.

Archilde, Max, and Father Grepilloux are the principal point-of-view characters, and as they relate the story, they provide a great deal of the perspective on how they view the other characters and each other.

Max Leon, for instance, is described first of all from Archilde's perspective as a son in conflict with his father. Later, McNickle provides a privileged interior view of Max, his origins in Spain, his coming to the Montana wilderness, his responses to the Salish people and to the country, and his deep respect for and friendship with Father Grepilloux, a friendship that transcends a mere confessor-parishioner relationship.

McNickle also shows Max in action; he is in a rage, for instance, when the binder breaks down, and he goes to Moser's store to get a replacement part, necessitating a halt in the harvest. Max has a temper, but he also loves his grandsons, Mike and Narcisse. Even so, he betrays their trust by tricking them into taking a ride in his great blue car, a ride that ends in the Mission's yard where the boys are incarcerated so that they can be sent back to the federal boarding school for Indians. Max is a man who has worked hard, whose values center around the land that he has amassed and on the hard work he has committed to the land. He values the willingness to work hard when he sees it in others and despises anyone who shirks work and who does not share his reverence for the land. Consequently, it is only when he unexpectedly comes upon Archilde hard at work shocking wheat on his own volition that he begins to reassess his relationship with his youngest son.

Max's relationship with his native wife, Catharine, is likewise something of a mystery to Max, but it is clearly symbolic of the larger and equally problematic relationship between the European Americans and the Native Americans generally. For example, Max is incarcerated because he reportedly covered for several of their sons who stole cattle, ran them in with his herd, and then shipped them out. When the sheriff came to arrest the boys, they "had skipped out," and Catharine told the sheriff that Max had told them to leave. "They wanted to hang me," Max tells Archilde, so when he got out of jail, he built the big house for himself and moved out. Catharine was left with the dirt-roofed log cabin down by the creek, estranged from her husband of forty years with whom she had borne eleven children.

She does not trust him nor he her, a situation that would "make a man reflect on the meaning and purpose of his life." In Max Leon's family, there was "always this distrust,

this warfare" that was similar to the misunderstanding and conflict between whites and Indians.

Thus, despite their intimate connection, Max and Catharine exist separately, yet they are entangled; psychologically and physically separated, the rupture of their domestic and marital relationship reflects the overall complex and destructive relationship of mutual ethnocentrism, but perhaps more importantly it is a deeply human theme. Max's personality—autocratic, dogmatic, abrupt yet principled and guided by solid values—is coupled with a complex and deep-seated love for the country and for the people. Not long before Max dies, he tells Archilde that "I was a fool to think your mother was the cause of my bad luck," referring to his unresolved estrangement from all but one of his sons. His relationship with his family is one of several expressions within the novel of the complicated theme of human entanglement, its pain, its inevitability. Later as Catharine lies dying, Archilde reflects that "People grew into each other, became intertwined, and life was no mere matter of existence, no mere flash of time. It was time that made the difference. . . . And a still greater difference was this entangling of lives."

Social Concerns

D'Arcy McNickle (1904-1977) was an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes of Montana, an anthropologist, historian and ethnologist, and an effective administrator with the Bureau of Indian Affairs from 1936 to 1952.

From 1972 to his death on October 18, 1977, he served as founding Program Director for the Center for the History of the American Indian at the Newberry Library; the Center was renamed in his honor as the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian. He was also a lifelong and distinguished writer, publishing three novels, a number of short stories, five booklength nonfiction works, and forty-five articles. In both his fiction and nonfiction, he explored with profound sensitivity and understanding the issues and problems facing Native Americans as a result of the European conquest. He explored these problems on many levels, studying the disruption, if not destruction, of Native-American families, the survival of tribes, national landtenure issues, as well as other issues concerning Native-American rights and freedoms. He based his writing not only on his personal experience but also on scholarly study and professional involvement as an able and respected administrator in the Bureau of Indian Affairs and as a lifelong student of the English language and American literature.

In The Surrounded (1936), McNickle shows these two vast cultural groups (each possessed of enormous differences within themselves) who are unable to understand each other even when they are willing to do so.

The novel is a rich examination of nearly every social issue that emerged when European and Native-American cultures met and clashed especially in the West. The European invasions of the Americas (with a few exceptions), supported by the Europeans' superior technology, destroyed Native Americans' traditional means of making a living and nearly destroyed Native-American family and tribal cultures, creating among the Native Americans an overwhelming sense of loss, alienation, and alternating modes of fierce resistance and passive acceptance of their fate. The loss of their lands, identity, and culture was thus and continues to be destructive to individuals and communities, with consequences ranging from alcoholism, psychiatric disorders, criminal activity, and reliance on welfare. McNickle attributes these destructive social conflicts between the Europeans and Native Americans to a complicated and mutual ethnocentrism, which is each group's deep-seated conviction of its inherent superiority to the other.

The consistent assault by many elements of the Euramerican community on every aspect of native culture (song, storytelling, traditional celebratory behaviors, religions, concepts of land ownership, and stewardship of national resources) is central to the plot, structure, and thematic core of The Surrounded. McNickle specifically attacks a number of federal policies, especially the forced education of Indian children in federal Indian boarding schools (such as Chemawa in Oregon, Chilocco in Oklahoma, and Carlisle in Pennsylvania) and the General-Allotment Act of 1887, which divided Indian lands into individual holdings of a quarter section (or smaller units) to promote

assimilation of Native Americans into the general society of the country by deliberately destroying tribal relations (see the site of historian E. A. Schwartz at http: / /www.csusm.edu/nadp/ for documents and analysis). Historians, such as Brian W. Dippie and Leonard A. Carlson, have agreed with John Collier's assessment that the Act was, in fact, one more nail in the coffin of all native cultures. It was, as Collier put it, the "principal tool" of the old policy of destruction of tribal life and the cause of "poverty bordering on starvation in many areas, a 30 percent illiteracy rate, a death rate twice that of the white population, and the loss of more than 90 million acres of Indian land" because it starved the Indians and forced the sale of their lands. McNickle in The Surrounded shows clearly the devastating effects of this act, the general destruction of the native economic base, and white expropriation of native lands.

An even earlier consequence of federal policy was the creation of the Indian agent, a man who had under his "paternalistic care" the lives of the reservation Indians. In The Surrounded, the agent is Horace Parker.

He is responsible for, among other things, gathering up Indian children and shipping them to federal Indian boarding schools such as the one McNickle (much against his and his mother's will) attended for several years, Chemawa in Oregon. In one of McNickle's ethnographic histories, Indians and Other Americans: Two Ways of Life Meet, he argues that the purpose of such federal boarding schools was to remove all traces of Indian culture from the children—language, beliefs, cultural values and behaviors—and the schools' methods were harsh to the point of abuse.

These methods included a large measure of psychological "terrorism" ranging from incarceration in an isolation cell to brainwashing children with images of devils and witches to direct physical brutality. McNickle's portrayal of the evils of the system of federal Indian boarding schools connects directly with the social issue (and federal policy) of what is recognized now as nothing less than cultural genocide, the denial of the right of existence to entire human groups. Implemented by such agents of the federal government as the military, the federal Indian boarding schools, and the Indian agents, these policies and practices enabled invaders to take the lives, lands, and resources of the native people.

In a series of memorable scenes, McNickle reveals how the Native Americans subsequently attempted to restore the old ways to the forefront of their consciousness and to the center of their lives and the lives of their children. Modeste, the senior elder of the Salish people, believes in the power of traditional rituals to reconnect the individual and the tribe to its historic culture. He believes that the Indians can heal themselves and their youth—for example, young Mike who has been traumatized by his treatment at the boarding school—by participating in "a dance of the old times."

Through the traditional rituals associated with the dance as well as the dance itself, Modeste believes that the pernicious effects of cultural genocide will be mitigated if not completely eliminated. Such efforts at cultural renewal are among the great themes of this novel as well as perhaps the most significant of its cluster of related social issues. McNickle explores this theme of cultural renewal not only in such sensitive scenes as

the ritual dance and Catharine's requested whipping to remove guilt but also in scenes of traditional hunting beliefs and practices, in which Indians speak in the "old tongue," and seek advice and counsel from tribal elders.

On the one hand, the novel's plot would seem to indicate the imminent and inevitable destruction of the Indian people, body and soul. The central and underlying conflict, the continuing struggle between Euramerican and Indian culture, is figured in the actions resulting from the ethnocentrism of the game warden and the sheriff and of the Native-American characters, Louis and Elise. The warden, assuming that Louis is reaching for his rifle to shoot the warden rather than to follow his orders to "pack up," shoots Louis first. This killing sets in motion a chain of events that lead inexorably to the final scene of the novel in which Louis's brother, Archilde, extends his hands to be shackled, and he is arrested for killing both the game warden and the sheriff although Archilde had no hand in either killing. On the other hand, his submission to arrest may ironically suggest a means of salvation for the native peoples.

McNickle is making a hard argument here that the choices realistically facing Native Americans are resistance and destruction on the one hand or striving for understanding and accommodation on the other. As the handcuffs are being placed on Archilde's wrists, Mike and Narcisse, his nephews, are escaping into the mountains where Archilde believes that they will survive. McNickle does not choose a sentimental and simpleminded resolution to the dilemma facing native peoples, but having Archilde accept responsibility for his actions and for Elise's shooting of Sheriff Quigley suggests the same sort of moral strength that makes Greek tragedy and the novels of Thomas Hardy such powerful testimonies to the strengths of human character.

Techniques

The version of The Surrounded published in 1936 shows McNickle to be absolutely in control of his language, a point made by Birgit Hans in the article on McNickle in The Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 175.

McNickle writes spare, exact, and visual description of settings, characters, and actions. He reveals characters deftly through action and speech. He selects an omniscient point of view to narrate the story of Archilde's return to meet his fate. His thirty-four chapters take us from Archilde's return from Portland, Oregon, to the family ranch in western Montana to his arrest in the novel's final scene. He makes effective use of flashbacks to provide the historical background of the principal figures in the novel. His most notable technical device, however, as James Ruppert argues in his useful Western Writers monograph, is a deftly managed parallel structure that highlights the clash of the two cultures—Indian and white— that forms the basis of the novel and argues the impossibility of assimilation.

This set of balanced oppositions is evident in characters, in plot elements, in actions, and in specific scenes that skillfully reveal and underscore the tensions—their sources and their consequences—between the two worlds in which Archilde Leon finds himself. The two communities, the two houses of Archilde's parents, the two dances (one the Farmers' Hall dance and one the Indian Ceremonial dance), the community's two religions of Spanish Catholicism and the native religion, its two types of education, the two old men (Modeste and Father Grepilloux) vying for Archilde's soul, the two trips into the mountains all provide the bipartite structure that reveals and enacts the conflicts that lock the characters into various fatal embraces and destroy a culture. In every instance, the symbolic significance of these elements works to reveal the opposing claims of the native and the Euramerican worlds on the body and soul of Archilde Leon. He is a "mixed blood," a person who belongs to two worlds; his father is Spanish (European), his mother Salish (Native American). This tension informs the novel through a number of symbolic settings, actions that illuminate the conflicts both trivial and significant, and pairs of characters often set in opposition to each other or to Archilde. They surround him, ensnare and entangle him, sometimes with skeins of love, sometimes with chains of prejudice, but always they combine to weave the net that captures him.

A closer look at several events, sets of characters, and particular actions will show how McNickle uses this sophisticated device. First of all, the book's actions are balanced between two ritual food-centered events. When Archilde returns home, his mother arranges a traditional feast to celebrate his homecoming, and, near the end of the novel, Archilde feeds the Salish people who have come to mark and mourn his mother's death. In the first feast, Archilde is made ill by the rich meat and fat served; he must become reacquainted with and reassimilated into his native culture before he can comfortably participate in such a ritual feast with the foods that traditionally mark happy and prosperous times because his traditional appetites have been changed by his boarding school experiences. Scholars of foodways have long shown how fundamental and full of meaning are a group's traditional uses of foods to mark boundaries and

transitions in the lives of its members. McNickle skillfully weaves these elements together to support his principal thematic concerns.

Secondly, he balances the two religions— Christianity and the "old" native religion to which Catharine returns before her death— with a series of actions that argue the greater utility and thus the greater truth for Native Americans in their native religious practices. Perhaps the most telling example has to do with the cultures' different means of remitting one's sins. The Spanish Catholic church required confession and penance and the last rites of Extreme Unction (the anointing with oil). The native belief and custom also required confession and penance but in the form of "going under the whip," which "covered the fault." Whipping removes the burden of guilt. Because Catharine has confessed her sins to the elders of the tribe in the old way and has "gone under the whip," her sins have been "covered." Therefore, she has no need for the ritual of Extreme Unction of her adopted but later renounced faith of Catholicism.

Archilde's refusal to allow Father Jerome to administer the Catholic last rights to his mother excites the prejudice of the priest.

Commentators have long noted how the two dances—the tribal dance and the farmers' dance—balance each other. What may not have been noted is how thoroughly, here as in all of the other sets of oppositions, the Euramerican event, the farmers' dance, comes off as inferior to the tribal dance. The tribal dance has a profound purpose, a spiritual and healing one, to return the people to the old ways and provide the rituals of preparation, dress, song, and movement that help to heal Mike from the abuse he has suffered at the school of the Fathers.

Its ritual power, however, has been compromised by the presence of the white community, which turns it into mere spectacle; from the white point of view, it serves merely to thrill and titillate spectators. Nevertheless, it does seem to help Mike, a success that makes the final scene of the novel where Mike and Narcisse escape into the hills at least somewhat hopeful. At the farmers' dance, Archilde and Elise return the favor of spectacle, one might say, by drinking, dancing "too close," and refusing to heed the whispered criticism that Elise is a promiscuous woman whose presence "pollutes" the purity of the Euramerican wives and daughters. When an "official" attempts to throw them out, Archilde levels the man with a "no-look" blow, and the fight is on; Archilde is hauled outside by a mob and severely beaten.

Two hunts comprise another pair of thematic and structurally significant bipartite parings: in the first, the game warden kills Louis and is killed, in turn, by Catharine, initiating the principal plot line; in the second, Elise kills Sheriff Quigley rather than let him arrest Archilde, who then holds out his wrists to be shackled by the tribal policeman and the Indian agent. The pairing of the two women here is significant, for it is they who take decisive if impulsive action to avenge or defend their men and their culture. Catharine, who kills the game warden, and Elise, who kills Sheriff Quigley, are both motivated by the desire to avenge or save their men—sons or lovers—from the agents of Euramerican dominion. Furthermore, the two armed agents of the federal government both act out of their ethnocentric bias, a prejudice against all Native

Americans: Sheriff Quigley, who "carried out of the past a grudge against all Indians" and "could not get over the fact that the Government had taken the Indians under protection" and Dan Smith, the game warden, who exclaims after he shoots Louis, "T got him first, and damned lucky!'" seconds before Catharine kills Smith with a hatchet blow to the head. The two Catholic priests could not provide a greater or more telling contrast. Old Father Grepilloux loves the Indians and tends to his flock with love and mercy; young Father Jerome, whose stern, unfeeling sense of duty is rigidly constructed according to the letter rather than to the spirit of his calling, allows no sense of compassion to stir a deeper understanding of the people under his care. The setting also reinforces the novel's central theme of cultural conflict: the plain versus the mountains, the city versus the reservation, each unyielding in its opposition to the other.

McNickle uses material and storytelling techniques from the Salish-Flathead oral tradition to move the plot of the novel along and to explain Salish worldview. The three stories told at Archilde's homecoming feast provide instruction necessary to reintegrate Archilde into the tribe and reveal the people's awareness of the threats to their culture. That the oral tradition is alive despite the pressures of Christianity is demonstrated in a balancing story that Father Grepilloux tells Max about "Big Paul," a Christianized Flathead from a distinguished family who is destroyed by the conflict between tribal law and Christian beliefs. McNickle characterizes Father Grepilloux as aware of how oral tradition works, mentioning that he is acquainted with several versions of the story of Big Paul and acknowledges that there may be a much older tale behind it. When his mother dies, Archilde thinks that now "he too belonged to the story of Snielemen," suggesting that he has chosen "the Indian" path.

Themes

The themes of this novel derive from social issues, but they also transcend them.

The issues surrounding the themes of cultural identity and recognition are quite similar to those involved in the other terrible ethnic conflicts of the twentieth century in the Middle East, the Balkans, the former Soviet Union, and the tribal strife in Central Africa and Northern Ireland. The necessity facing Native Americans—as it is for all ethnic and cultural groups that must share the same space—is assimilation without extermination. Thus, McNickle's novel explores the great themes of alienation, cultural and individual identity, family and community, reconciliation and sacrifice, activity and passivity, abandonment, acceptance and belonging, catastrophe, chaos, order, conscience and redemption, the clash of cultures, death and dying and the various customs and traditions surrounding death, and discrimination based on ethnicity. McNickle develops these themes by focusing on the family of Max and Catharine Leon, a family that is both Spanish and Salish. His central figure, Archilde Leon, has completed his boarding school education and initially searches for his identity by staying in Oregon, in the "white man's world," for a year and scraping out a living playing the fiddle for dances. Having studied life "from both sides," as John Purdy puts it, as a "Salish/Cree man seeking knowledge. . . . in voluntary isolation from his family and their land" (Word Ways), and having lived the hand-to-mouth existence of a fiddle player in Portland "where the stinking water is," Archilde comes home only for a visit but finds himself drawn into an effort to win the love of his estranged parents. He proudly shows his mother the money he has earned, the tokens and signs of success in the white world, but his mother dismisses the money as inconsequential.

Max Leon, Archilde's Spanish father, is scornful of Archilde's money and the idea that money is the only thing that matters in a society. Max, on the other hand, values land and hard work as fundamental moral values. He desires, as any father would, that his children accept and enact his values.

Given what McNickle reveals about the causes and effects of cultural genocide, one may ask whether either Archilde's isolation or his return was voluntary and why his return, therefore, sets in motion the tragic and destructive forces that appear likely to destroy him. McNickle answers these questions by arguing that federal policy and local cultural biases determined Archilde's isolation from both his culture and family.

When he returns home and greets his mother, she thinks that "an Indian boy . . .

belonged with his people," and she welcomes him with her unconditional love as her youngest and best son. His father's acceptance, love, and admiration are not, however, so readily forthcoming. Max Leon scorns Archilde's intention to make his living as a fiddle player. Archilde decides, therefore, to return quickly to the vaguely outlined life he has been living in Portland.

But he stays on to care for his mother and to attempt to win his father's love. He does not plan to "recover" his "Indian" identity.

In fact, doing so is not easy. For example, when his mother throws a traditional feast to celebrate his return, its food and activities make him literally ill, suggesting at the most fundamental level that crossing cultural barriers is difficult, dangerous, and perhaps impossible. Archilde searches— without quite knowing what he is doing— for his identity by engaging in those activities he knew as a child. He fishes, hunts, and visits with family and friends. And, as elements of his traditional culture surround him and draw him back in, he begins to find a degree of comfort and understanding that he had forgotten existed—and which ensnare him. Thus, McNickle develops the powerful theme of identity.

The theme of identity is related, of course, to the theme of survival, not only of the individual but also survival of native cultures despite the cataclysmic changes, challenges, and adaptations made necessary by the European conquest of the Americas. The shaping of the "new" Indian in McNickle's fiction and in "real" life was and is a complex and difficult matter that does not conform to easy generalizations and cultural beliefs. What happens to indigenous peoples when invaders with fundamentally different world views come into their country and move them out? The aggressive, exploitative, rapacious Europeans came into the New World with the idea of owning the land, exploiting its natural resources, exterminating or enslaving its prior inhabitants (human as well as animal), and imposing their spiritual and cultural values upon the Native Americans. Native Americans, many baffled by the behavior of these invaders, reacted in a variety of ways to the continuing destruction of their way of life.

They defended themselves with warfare, accommodation, and retreat. For example, the branch of the Salish people under the leadership of Running Wolf, Archilde's grandfather, sent messengers to St. Louis three times requesting that the Jesuit missionaries come to the valley of Sniel-emen.

When they came, the chief and his people greeted them and were baptized into the Christian faith. Archilde's mother was four years old and was baptized as Catharine Le Loup and was known as Faithful Catharine.

But now in her old age, she "looked upon a chaotic world—so many things dead, so many words for which she knew no meaning; . . . she could not understand the ruin that had overtaken her." She retreats from the Christian faith and traditions and seeks to return to the old ways, finding solace in her original cultural traditions and beliefs in the face of the loss of sons, husband, and community.

Three other themes further enrich the novel. The conflict between father (Max Leon) and sons is an old one in literature as in life. The family is, as we might say now, dysfunctional. Max's sons are all estranged from him, and he cannot figure out why.

Max's neighbor, rancher Emile Pariseau, has come looking for the son named Louis because he has stolen horses from Pariseau.

In disgust with Louis's behavior as well as the unnamed problems with his other sons, Max angrily says that they could all be sent to the penitentiary for all he cares and he damns them all except Archilde. Max desires that at least one of his sons would turn out well and be worthy and able to take over his extensive ranching and farming operations. But when Archilde returns home, Max is scornful of his fiddle playing and doubts that even this, his youngest son and his last hope, has what it takes. Later, however, when Archilde appears, much to Max's surprise, as a worker in the wheat harvest, a reconciliation appears to be possible even to the point that Max makes Archilde his sole heir. And in the middle of the book, Archilde and Max have a conversation that results in a complete reconciliation between father and son. It would seem that disaster can and will be avoided, that Max will send Archilde to Europe to study music and thus remove him from the threats poised by Sheriff Quigley and Agent Parker. However, Archilde has become involved with Elise La Rose, a free-spirited and rebellious young woman. Their ill-fated and impossible passion (similar to that shared by Angel Clare and Tess in Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles) and his love for his mother keep Archilde at home and create another unshakable entanglement.

Finally, there is the theme of unintended consequences that are revealed throughout the novel in many ways but especially during the hunt that Archilde and his mother go on (at her request) and during the long conversation between Father Grepilloux and Max Leon, his old and dear friend, at the Mission of St. Xavier in chapters four and five. Even though Archilde has a premonition about it, he agrees to take his mother hunting. He has grown closer to her and desires to make her happy. Max, despite his misgivings, sees to it that they are well equipped, and they leave at the beginning of October. But the mountains are empty of game. After two days, they have found nothing, but they find comfort in trying "to go backward in time." Soon they encounter Sheriff Quigley, a sinister figure who announces that he is "looking for a horse thief" but does not detain the hunting party.

A day later, they find deer tracks, make camp, and are suddenly joined by Louis, who,"child that he was," is unaware that the sheriff is hunting him even though he has figured out that horse stealing is no longer culturally acceptable. They go out the next day, and Louis kills a doe because does are tender and good eating. When the game warden, yet another agent of white culture and law, appears and attempts to arrest Louis, disaster occurs; the warden kills Louis mistakenly thinking he is reaching for his rifle. Their mother then hatchets the warden. And the plot takes an unexpected and tragic turn that no one anticipated and from which no one will escape.

The second example of this theme involves the lives of Father Grepilloux and Max Leon as revealed in conversation between the two old friends. Although both have worked hard, very hard, all their lives to bring "civilization," a spiritual center, and prosperity to the valley—in Euramerican terms, of course—each of them is frustrated by the outcome of their efforts. Max is estranged from all of his sons at this point, even Archilde, and Father Grepilloux, grown old in his loving service to the Church and to the Salish people, is the only person with whom Max can discuss his problems and fears. Neither can see the end from the beginning any more than any person can; both can see that the present condition of the Salish people is not what had been intended by the Jesuit

missionaries. Both can see that Euramerican settlement of the valley unleashed upon the people a torrent of terrible consequences that they were unable to avoid even with the aid of the Church.

These consequences are revealed in three critical scenes that are central to the plot.

The first occurs on the hunting trip that Archilde, his mother, and his older brother Louis take into the mountains. When Louis brings a doe into the camp, the game warden appears to arrest the party for illegally shooting it. Thinking that Louis is reaching for his rifle to resist arrest rather than to "pack up" as ordered, the game warden shoots him. When Archilde says the obvious, "You fool! You've killed him," the warden replies, "I got him first, and damned lucky!" Enacting the widespread and deepseated racial bias of the 1870s and 1880s epitomized by the expression, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian", the warden's killing of Louis entrains a series of tragic consequences. Catharine, Archilde and Louis's mother, immediately reacts to the death of her son by dispatching the game warden with a hatchet blow to his head. Rather than bury both the game warden and her son in the mountains in the old way, she insists that Archilde bury the warden, hide the site, and bring Louis's body home for a proper Christian burial, which Archilde does out of devotion to his mother.

As a consequence of the disappearance of the game warden, the Indian agent detains Archilde at the agency.

The second scene occurs after the death of Father Grepilloux as Max Leon reflects on the saintly life and work of his friend who was "working like a peasant" to be of genuine use to the Indians and the white settlers both, yet the Indians perish in poverty and misery while the European Americans poured "into this sheltered valley, a paradise in its original state." The third scene is the final and climactic scene in the novel: in it Elise kills Sheriff Quigley, who has surprised her, the two boys, and Archilde in the mountains.

There is no escape for Archilde. Having returned to his home, he cannot leave. His loyalty to and love for his mother combine to ensnare him in the first instance when he takes her into the mountains for a hunt with disastrous consequences. Because Catharine is herself caught between two sets of conflicting cultural values, those of the foreign religion of the Catholic Fathers and those traditional values of the Salish people, she acts in ways that ironically seal the tragic fate of her sons. Archilde reconciles with Max Leon, his father, just before Max's death from the exposure he suffered as a pallbearer for Father Grepilloux, his best friend. Archilde stays home after Max dies even though he realizes the personal dangers of doing so; furthermore, he seeks to fulfill what he sees as his obligation to Max to get his crops in, to take hold and become a responsible steward of his father's land.

His becoming entangled with Elise La Rose adds further to his inertia because, as Elise says of herself, "When you start lugging me around your hard times are going to begin."

Key Questions

McNickle makes significant use of the oral tradition, especially the traditional narrative genres of local legend, tall tale, personal experience narrative, and anecdote; these stories are told by nearly every major character at some point. Attention to all aspects of storytelling, including Archilde's recognition that he too now "belonged to the story of Sniel-emen" will reveal McNickle's attitudes toward his material and raise interesting and useful technical questions about the uses of meta-narrative (commentary within the fiction about the relationship of fiction to reality and to other forms of communication).

1. Archilde Leon is a "mixed blood"; his father is Spanish (European), his mother Salish (Native American). Examine how the tension between these two aspects of his lineage is expressed throughout the novel. Research the progress made in the last fifty years of children who are the product of two (or more) racial groups.

2. How is the concept of race treated within your own family and in your own community?

3. How would you describe the family of Max and Catharine Leon? To what does McNickle attribute the rift between Max and Catharine?

4. In what ways is Archilde Leon a naif?

Compare and contrast him with Clem Yeobright, the hero of Thomas Hardy's The Return of the Native, and Elise La Rose with Eustacia Vye of the same novel.

5. Who or what is to blame for Archilde's tragedy?

6. Describe and analyze the role of the violin in The Surrounded. What are the implications of Archilde's learning to play the violin?

7. Analyze the Euramerican cultural context of the novel, focusing especially on its agricultural elements, on knowing the value of work, and the function of a belief in commercial and moral "progress."

8. The storekeeper, George Moser, the Indian agent, Dave Parker, and the game warden, Dan Smith, are three minor characters that play important roles in the novel. Analyze their function and the implications of their roles for understanding McNickle's themes.

9. Identify traditions and rituals that you observe in your own family and in your community. Compare their expression and their functions with those of the rituals and traditions enacted in The Surrounded.

10. None of McNickle's fictions has been adapted for other media. Select a scene or section of the novel, write a script, and make your own video production of it.

11. Select one of McNickle's nonfiction works on the history of the Native American. Compare and contrast his treatment of native concerns in his nonfiction work with its treatment in The Surrounded.

Literary Precedents

McNickle is now acknowledged as one of the originators of modern Native-American literature, but only two Native-American writers preceded him: Mourning Dove, whose novel Cogewea appeared in 1927, and John Joseph Mathews, whose novel Sundown appeared in 1934. However, the views reflected in their novels were focused on assimilation and thus were unlike McNickle's.

His literary indebtedness to the Victorian novelists, especially Thomas Hardy, seems probable since he certainly studied these authors as an English major at the University of Montana and at Oxford University, which he attended without, however, taking a degree. Of the Moderns, most scholars ascribe elements of McNickle's techniques to Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein.

Related Titles

McNickle's novel for young people, Runner in the Sun: A Story of Indian Maize (1954, 1987), is rich in information about native peoples at a remote point in their histories; he derived much of this information from his extensive research into the work of ethnographers such as Elsie Clews Parsons and Adolf Bandelier. The young hero, Salt, goes on a long journey, learning about different peoples and their cultures, encountering challenges that test and train him so that he can return with new varieties of corn seed and a bride from one of the distant cultures. McNickle celebrates here the important contributions of Native Americans to the agriculture and prosperity of post-contact world cultures while lamenting the wanton destructiveness of the European invaders whose sole focus was the destructive exploitation of what they found.

The world might have been, he argues, even richer from the contact than it became if the invaders had "adopted and carried away with them the respect for peaceful living which characterized the first Americans." Published posthumously in 1978 and reprinted by the University of New Mexico Press in 1988, Wind from an Enemy Sky, McNickle's third novel, underwent revision for over forty years as he worked, researched, and wrote it during his several careers as administrator, anthropologist, and advocate. Set in the 1930s in Western Mon tana, Wind, like The Surrounded, also attacks federal policies that fostered, if not forced, assimilation by destroying native tribal structures and cultures as well as tribal administration of their own affairs. The plot centers on a long-standing division between a traditionalist leader of the Little Elk people, Bull, and his brother, Henry Jim, a "progressive" who has adopted agriculture and built a "white man's house." The fundamental conflict is a spiritual and cultural one between the Euramerican invaders, who bring Christianity and a strongly ethnocentric attitude of superiority to their relationships with the Indians while denying the validity of their spirituality and destroying their holy places, and the Indians. Thus, the whites make the Indians "small," in Bull's words, and are fundamentally untrustworthy. The novel is a well-written historical tragedy.

In Native American Tribalism: Indian Survivals and Renewals, published for the Institute of Race Relations by Oxford University Press in 1973, McNickle surveys the years of "inter-ethnic contact in the New World," noting especially the efforts of the French and English to colonize the Eastern seaboard and the resulting displacements of the native peoples by purchase, treaty, and conquest. Until recently the ruling assumption by the Euramerican settlers was that the Indian was, indeed, a "vanishing race," doomed to extermination at the hands of a superior race. The Hawk Is Hungry is a collection of sixteen stories published posthumously in 1992, ten of which were never previously published. Birgit Hans, the editor of the collection, notes that they represent work McNickle did mostly during the years he lived in New York City, 1927-1935, when he was working on his first novel. In fact, several of the stories were originally part of "The Hungry Generations," the working title of an early draft of what finally became The Surrounded, a manuscript of which is now among McNickle's papers in the Newberry Library in Chicago. These include "Snowfall," "Hard Riding," and "Train Time." Hans has

arranged the stories according to three themes: Reservation, Montana, and the City, all reflecting McNickle's concern with a sense of place.

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