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Source: *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Series 2, Vol. 20, No. 2 (SUMMER 2008), pp. 22-46
Published by: University of Nebraska Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20739548
Accessed: 27-02-2018 07:55 UTC

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"You can't run away nowadays"

Redefining Modernity in D'Arcy McNickle's *The Surrounded*

ALICIA A. KENT

When D'Arcy McNickle (1904–77) began work on his first novel in the 1920s, he hoped he would become part of the circle of modernist writers.[1] Inclusion in the American literary canon and incorporation into the greater American culture were not (and still are not) the goals for many Native writers, as Craig Womack argues in *Red on Red*. By contrast, McNickle, an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, longed to publish a novel that would reach "a wider audience than any other form of writing," as he described in 1934 his goal of writing fiction (Correspondence).[2] He traveled to Europe as a young man, where he mingled with American expatriates and began work on his first novel. He even called the manuscript "The Hungry Generations"—a title that invokes (with a difference) Gertrude Stein's "The Lost Generation" (which in turn refers to John Keats's term). Eventually published as *The Surrounded* (1936), McNickle's novel about a half-blood's return home to the reservation engages in an intertextual dialogue with modernist writers and artists of the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in the novel's thematic focus on the disorientation and disjuncture of the modern era.[3]

While McNickle was not a part of the modernist literary movement nor should his novel be considered a modernist text, understanding his life and his modernist-era novel enables readers to develop a more historically and culturally nuanced portrait of the modern era.[4] McNickle, who was raised on the Flathead Indian Reservation in northern Montana but lived all of his adult life off

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of the reservation, experienced firsthand many of the conditions that led to the modernist demand for new modes of representation, while he also directly experienced the sweeping changes occurring in federal Indian policy in the modern period. Drawing upon but also critiquing modernist concerns, *The Surrounded* illustrates that while many Native Americans experienced the despair that modernists expressed, its cause was the federal policies to rid the modern world of Indian cultures, not the ontological uncertainty of the period, as it was for many modernists. *The Surrounded* insists that Native American experiences of forced dislocation from homelands and the attempted eradication of tribal cultures be considered in understanding the modern experience.[5]

MODERNITY FROM MCNICKLE'S PERSPECTIVE ON AND OFF THE RESERVATION

Born in the first decade of the twentieth century, McNickle entered a world undergoing dramatic and dizzying transformations on both national and international levels. The advent of modernity meant that people participated in increasingly complicated networks of exchange, occasioned by the spread of capitalism and modernization to a wider range of people globally, accelerating industrialization and its changing modes of production and consumption, rapid technological changes (including electricity, the telephone, movies, automobiles), increased urbanization, and massive immigration and internal migrations.[6] The United States saw significant changes on economic, cultural, demographic, and political levels. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the nation was experiencing what historical geographer David Harvey has called a "time-space compression" in which it felt as if time were accelerated through the increased organization of production (e.g., Ford's assembly line) and as if space were collapsed with the increasing use of radio and automobiles. The closing of the frontier in 1890, at least in the popular American consciousness, further exacerbated this changing relationship to time and space.[7]

The transformations in the very structures of society led to new

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epistemological and ontological understandings of the world, with important developments in theories about the human psyche and the brain, culture and race, economics, religion and god, time and space, and the workings of the universe. Such a fundamental paradigm shift in thinking about the nature of human experience, in the very perception of reality itself, in turn led to radically altered ways of representing that world. For the modernist artists and writers of the early twentieth century, the new experience of reality led to a lack of confidence in an objective, external reality and in the ability of language to mimetically represent that reality (as realist literature of the earlier Victorian period had assumed). To many it seemed that the present held little resemblance to the past; the old ways did not match the new, and "all that is solid melts into air," as Karl Marx put it (and as Marshall Berman entitles his contemporary book on modernity). Modernity, in this sense, signified a rupture from all that came before, a shattering of the symbolic systems in the modern world.[8]

For McNickle, increased federal efforts in this period to eradicate tribal cultures and force Indian assimilation further intensified the schism between the past and present. After being forcibly removed at the age of ten from his mother's home on the reservation, McNickle attended an off-reservation boarding school for Indian children. Despite his mother's repeated petitions to bring him home, McNickle spent three years at a federally funded boarding school in Chemawa, Oregon, part of a larger federal policy to incorporate Indian nations into the larger American nation. As Gen. Richard H. Pratt, the founder of the first federally funded Indian boarding school, so infamously told Congress in 1879, "We accept the watchword, let us by patient effort kill the Indian in him and save the man" (qtd. in O'Brien 76). Besides the obvious assimilationist rhetoric, Pratt's comment to Congress suggests that while outright physical annihilation of Native Americans was no longer acceptable, cultural extinction, sponsored by the U.S. government, was.

Federal funding for Indian boarding schools increased dramatically from 1880 to 1925, and an increasing number of Indian children were forcibly removed from their families to live at off-reserva-

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tion boarding schools around the country.[9] Without the influence of family and tribe, ridding Indians of their distinct tribal cultures could occur more quickly. As Pratt wrote, he intended to imbue his students with the "courage of civilization which will enable abandonment of the tribe and successful living among civilized people" (42). But being civilized simply meant "be like the white man," as boarding school student Sun Elk (Taos Pueblo) put it (222).

As McNickle portrays in *The Surrounded* through his characters Mike and Narcisse and as the many first-person accounts reveal, the boarding school experience for many children was devastating.[10] At Carlisle, for example, only about one out of every eight students graduated, and many died prematurely. Denigration of Indian identity inherent in the boarding school project led to self-hatred, shame, and alienation for many. Boarding school attendees often found themselves caught between tribal and Euroamerican cultures but at home in neither, one of the central conflicts McNickle's protagonist Archilde faces.

Undeniably a destructive experience, federal boarding school policy simultaneously and most probably unintentionally provided many attendees with the very skills and experiences that enabled them to resist cultural annihilation. An unprecedented increase in publications by Native writers (and the concomitant increase in non-Indian readers of Native-authored texts) occurred in the early twentieth century. Most of these writers had learned to read and write English at boarding schools. As Gerald Vizenor writes, the ability to write in English became one of the most enduring effects of the boarding school experience: "English, that coercive language of federal boarding schools, has carried some of the best stories of endurance" (106). The boarding school period, a crucial time in which Native writers increasingly interacted with one another, marks the first "coming together" of a generation of Native writers in a shared project, as Robert Allen Warrior notes. These writers appropriated the colonizer's language and used it against the colonizer. As poet Simon Ortiz has suggested, "The indigenous peoples of the Americas have taken the languages of the colonialists and used them for their own purposes" (66).

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In a sense enacting Ortiz's notion of creative resistance, McNickle used his boarding school experience, which was intended to assimilate Indians out of existence, to instead write about the survival of Indian peoples in the modern era. He used writing as tool—indeed, his "only tool," as he put it in a 1934 letter (Correspondence)—not of assimilation but of survival. As McNickle later wrote in *Native American Tribalism*, "The white man's weapon, the written word, was being wielded by the native Americans with enthusiasm, if not always with quality printing" (xxi). After returning to the reservation in Montana, he enrolled in the University of Montana from 1921 to 1925, where he wrote and published his first poetry and fiction.

In 1925 McNickle acted on his dream to pursue a writing career. He sold the land allotted to him under the Dawes Act and used the money to finance a trip to Europe, where he hoped to become part of the literary experientialism flourishing among modernist writers there. This trip, in a sense made possible by the Dawes Act, marked the first step in McNickle's long career devoted to illustrating the continual survival and endurance of Native American cultures. An obituary for McNickle points out the irony: "Senator Dawes, even in his wildest imaginings, would never have envisioned forwarding the career of a man who would spend a lifetime demonstrating the errors in Dawes's contention that, if given private property, Indians would 'vanish'" (A. Ortiz 632). The Dawes General Allotment Act of 1887, which granted 160-acre allotments of land to individual tribal members, had significantly carved up the Flathead Reservation where McNickle was born and raised. Over half a million acres passed out of tribal ownership through land allotment, which began on the Flathead Reservation in 1904 (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes). The federal government hoped that by dividing tribally held lands into individual plots, capitalism and the veneration of private property would replace tribal communalism and bring Indians in sync with the core American value of individualism. As McNickle described the goal of the Dawes Act in a 1939 speech, "The American Indian Today": "The Indian might survive physically, but he would be assimilated into the general population. The separate Indian reservation would disappear

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from the geography of our states, and the separate Indian problem would disappear from the general social and economic problems of the nation" (2).

But this policy did little to end "the Indian problem" and instead led to radical dislocation for Indian peoples in the modern era. The Dawes Act substantially reduced areas of tribal lands and replaced communally held lands with small, often substandard plots of individually owned land while opening up the majority of Indian lands for non-Indian settlement, leading to tribal disintegration and the loss of over sixty percent of Indian-owned land during the period of allotment (Dippie; McNickle, *Native American Tribalism*). The erosion of the tribal land base significantly exacerbated the dispersal of tribal groups begun decades earlier in the Jacksonian era of forced removals. McNickle himself commented thoroughly on the detrimental effects of the Dawes Act. In his 1973 epic ethnohistory, *Native American Tribalism*, for example, he noted, "The effect of the law in operation was almost exactly what its opponents anticipated—it became an efficient mechanism for separating the Indians from their lands and pauperizing them" (83).

From the perspective of many Native Americans, government-imposed dissolution of tribally held lands and federally funded efforts to rid Indians of their tribal cultures served as the imposed meaning of modernity. The effort to dispossess Native peoples of their lands and cultures was grossly different than the chosen exile of many American expatriates in the period, whose decision to leave the United States was voluntary. For many Native Americans in the modern period, exile from homelands was not a choice but was forced, not a privilege but a federal mandate. The modernists' self-imposed homelessness still contained the possibility of returning home. For many Native Americans, however, the physical return home became an impossibility as a result of federal policy of the period, even as many Native peoples responded to this upheaval and dislocation by forging a diasporic, pantribal movement and recreating a new sense of home on reservations. As McNickle noted, in the wake of the Dawes Act and off-reservation boarding schools, the reservation "became the only friendly haven

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for the thousands of Indian children leaving the boarding school" ("The American Indian Today" 7). While Stein's label of the Lost Generation may have aptly described many modernists, McNickle appropriately called his "a generation of entirely landless Indians" ("The American Indian Today" 7). Even the desire to deny one's allegiance to the United States that the American expatriate life implied was not applicable to Native Americans, who were not recognized as citizens of the United States until 1924 and thus could not be expatriates to a country that did not even see them as patriots.[11] If the project of the modern era is, as Berman defines it, "a struggle to make ourselves at home in a constantly changing world" (6), the project for a Native writer such as McNickle—who left the reservation as a young adult and never returned home to live—is markedly incongruous with that of the modernists.

Yet despite the obvious difference in upbringing and historical experience from modernist writers, McNickle had hoped to live the seemingly romantic life of the American expatriate. When McNickle permanently left the reservation in 1925, he attended Oxford University, then lived briefly in Paris alongside modernist writers. When he returned to the United States in 1926, he had with him the first drafts of what was to become *The Surrounded*. Working a variety of odd jobs to support himself, he settled in New York City, an important hub for many modernist and Harlem Renaissance artists, to continue his dream of becoming a writer.[12] During this time he sent publishers several drafts of the novel begun in Europe, but it was repeatedly rejected.

In 1933 he reestablished contact with his mother in Montana when his daughter was born, although he did not return to the reservation he had left as a young man. Occasioned in part by these family changes and in part by his education, McNickle went through a significant personal transformation, during which time he significantly rewrote the manuscript of *The Surrounded*. These changes mirror in part the broader shift in the view of Native Americans from a disappearing race to the existence of multiple cultures living within the United States. McNickle extolled this change in his 1939 speech:

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> I want first to refer briefly to the fact that Indian culture, Indian institutions, Indian ceremonial life—that which we call his religion—has survived into our day, and more vigorously and on a wider front than perhaps any of us realized. It is coming to light, or we are becoming aware of it, perhaps because we have abolished that old policy of frowning upon it and of actively running it underground. ("The American Indian Today" 3)

Indian cultures became of interest to the general public not because they were extinct but because they had survived the threat of extinction (Oaks 85n2).

This change in public perception was reflected in the dramatic transformations in federal policies toward tribes, most notably in the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), which was intended to replace the Dawes Act with the promotion of autonomous tribal governments and economic development (Dippie). McNickle hailed the efforts of the IRA to halt the loss of Indian lands, regain tribal land and economic resources, and allow for Indian self-government. Underlying these changes, he noted, was a changing view of Indian peoples: "Fundamental to the program is a recognition of the right of Indian culture to survive and enrich the daily life of the individual and the group" ("The American Indian Today" 9). The IRA did not, of course, solve all of the problems caused by centuries of colonial policies, and it has been critiqued for relying too heavily on Euroamerican rather than indigenous models of governance, as M. Annette Jaimes argues. Most disastrously, the federal government reversed this policy once again in the Eisenhower years and then again in the 1970s with the policies of termination and relocation. Yet the IRA marked "a fundamental revision," in McNickle's words (7), of Indian policies that resulted in significant improvements for Native Americans.

In part out of economic need (a publisher still had not accepted his manuscript, despite his ongoing and repeated submissions) and in part out of a desire to become a part of these changes, McNickle applied for a job in 1934 with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) under John Collier, who spearheaded these reform efforts. In his

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BIA application material, McNickle indicated that he could use his writing skills to publish reports, prepare written matter, and help with editorial work (Correspondence). Before finding a position at the BIA, McNickle first took a job in 1935 with the Federal Writers' Project, as did many modernist and other writers of the period. He then joined the BIA in 1936 at about the same time that Dodd, Mead published *The Surrounded*. Despite generally favorable reviews, the novel sold poorly, and the publisher suffered a loss. In his first royalty statement, McNickle received $8.33 after his $50 advance and merchandising costs (Owens 78).

While he failed to achieve economic success as a novelist, McNickle soon became a leading figure in the modern pan-Indian movement, which began earlier in the twentieth century, an unintended outcome of the boarding school experience.[13] At boarding schools Native Americans from all over the country came into contact with one another and formed relationships that crossed tribal lines, perhaps for the first time. The shared experiences of removal from homelands and resistance to assimilation united their efforts (Hertzberg). Using the reading and writing skills learned at boarding schools, they launched a pantribal reform movement for Native rights. Primarily boarding school attendees, the leaders of the pan-Indian effort advocated a model of preserving Native American traditions while recognizing that they were changing, modernizing, and adapting to the modern world, a view McNickle shared and articulated in much of his writing. Believing strongly that Indians "could contribute toward the making of a wiser Indian policy," as he wrote in a 1934 letter to the BIA (Correspondence), McNickle became an advocate for Indian rights through his work at the BIA and then in subsequent positions as a political activist, historian, and anthropologist.[14] In 1944 he helped found the National Congress of American Indians, a leading pan-Indian entity. Most notably he continued to write about the survival of Native Americans in the modern era in a variety of genres. He became a prolific essayist at the BIA and then published several acclaimed ethnohistories while he was an anthropologist. While the modernist literary movement insisted on the inability of lan-

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guage to represent reality, McNickle conversely insisted on its ability to articulate Native American adaptations to the modern era.

THE USE OF MODERNIST TECHNIQUES WITH A DIFFERENCE IN *THE SURROUNDED*

The Surrounded represents McNickle's most significant effort to write such a novel that would advocate the ability of Indians to adapt while still preserving Native ways. *The Surrounded*, a bildungsroman that embeds Salish oral genres with ethnographic material and historical accounts, focuses on a young mixed-blood Salish Indian man, Archilde Leon, a sort of Nick Adams figure (à la Hemingway) in his isolated and alienated wanderings.[15] Although estranged from his Spanish-born father, Archilde returns home to Montana and eventually becomes embroiled in a murder investigation. Wrongly accused of killing a Euroamerican government official, Archilde flees with Elise, a mixed-blood woman, but is caught in the mountains after she kills the sheriff who attempts to arrest them. The novel ends as Archilde surrenders and is handcuffed to return to the town below "the mountains of the surrounded."

Generically categorized as a realist or naturalist novel, both for stylistic and thematic reasons, *The Surrounded* also contains many modernist characteristics in its rendering of its Salish characters' experiences in the modern era.[16] On a thematic level McNickle's novel reflects a kind of modernist despair. In an elegiac lament that is mirrored in many modernist writings that mourn the loss of wholeness in the modern world, Archilde's mother Catharine wonders, "How was it that when one day was like another there should be, at the end of many days, a world of confusion and dread and emptiness?" (22). Catharine evokes similar imagery of emptiness that T. S. Eliot uses in *The Waste Land* (1922) or Ernest Hemingway portrays in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" (1926). Similarly, in a moment that perhaps deliberately invokes William Butler Yeats's "The Second Coming" (1919) in its apocalyptic depiction, Catharine mourns what has become of the world. The narrative eye travels inside her consciousness, describing Catharine's thoughts: "Now

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in old age she looked upon a chaotic world—so many things dead, so many words for which she knew no meaning" (22). The chaos and emptiness here might be understood within the larger context of the then prevalent modernist angst about modernity, but with a difference, one that reflects the paternalistic and destructive federal policies toward Native Americans in this period.

The sense of existential futility of a desolate modern world that Eliot evokes in *The Waste Land* is invoked again in Archilde's pointless chase of an old mare (236–42).[17] *The Surrounded* depicts the landscape of the Badlands similarly to the landscape in *The Waste Land*, "wild and barren" (236), even more infertile that year because of a drought, the earth so "parched" (240) that the sweat drops from the old mare vanish into the parched dirt. Described in painstaking detail, Archilde's chase of the old mare foreshadows the chase of Archilde into the mountains, which in turn parallels the entrapment of Indian peoples, an "unaccountable game" (239), a pitiful "mockery" (238) of Archilde's purportedly good but misguided, and ultimately destructive, intentions. Archilde chases the mare because "he had to show her kindness in spite of herself" and "save" her, even though "she probably knew better than he how to reach water and feed" (240). His failed efforts leave him feeling "limp and ashamed" (240), a bit like Eliot's impotent J. Alfred Prufrock, who is incapable of acting, for there is "time yet for a hundred indecisions."

Archilde persists with his attempt to save the mare until she becomes lame from the chase, and "the tormentor had become the tormented" (241). He had taken it upon himself to improve the mare's condition but fails miserably, invoking not only Prufrock's paralysis but also the paternalism of federal policy toward Native Americans; just at the moment when Archilde thinks he has saved her and things have come to "a happy conclusion," she falls over groaning, "a final note of reproach for the ears of the man who had taken it upon himself to improve her condition" (242). Angry and resentful, Archilde blames the victim, deriding the mare for being "perverse" and "ungrateful" (242) as he realizes that he has to shoot and kill the horse that he had driven into becoming lame.

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Then, exhibiting the ultimate absurdity at work in the universe, he then has to guard the mare's carcass overnight to protect it from the coyotes (242).

In another concrete representation of modernity, the novel visibly demarcates the modern temporal break with the past in its physical descriptions of the town's architecture. The town is divided into two sections, the "Townsite" or "up- to-date quarter" (35) settled by the Euroamerican newcomers when the Indian reserve was opened up to white settlement under the Dawes Act, and "Indian town" or "old town," which lacks the telltale signs of modernity such as sidewalks, paved streets, and a linear layout. As the text notes, "The mission town of St. Xavier belonged to two ages. A brief sixty years separated its primitive from its modern, but the division was deeper than years" (35). The lines between old and new are sharply drawn in the town's physical layout, highlighting the schism between the past and the present in the modern era.

The text mirrors these modernist symptoms by drawing upon several modernist techniques and themes, yet McNickle adapts these features to fit the very different experience of Native Americans in modernity. The modernists often represented the disruption of the modern world in fragments, collage, parataxis, nonlinear narrative, even rebellion against the tyranny of plot, as Virginia Woolf put it. Among McNickle's use of modernist discursive tools, McNickle draws upon a Hemingway-esque style in his crisp descriptions of the landscape, as several critics have noted.[18] The novel's blend of oral and written forms suggests the use of montage and collage. McNickle also relies largely on free indirect discourse, a narrative technique that was not invented by the modernists but that has come to be associated with modernist writing.

Like the modernists, McNickle disrupts narrative as an organizing technique in *The Surrounded*. At the beginning of the novel, Archilde is the displaced, homeless modernist hero wandering through the exile that is modernity, much like the quintessential (anti)hero in Eliot's *The Waste Land* or Stephen in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). Alone and adrift in the world, Archilde returns to the reservation only to realize, "This, his home, was a strange

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country" (120). Archilde comes back home to find that the modern has made a claim on the reservation as well, signified by his father's new blue car, "the gaudiest of the machines which had just opened a new age in the valley" (26). Archilde's journey parallels Tom Joad's in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, published three years after *The Surrounded*; Tom, much like Archilde, says upon first seeing his Oklahoma home, "It ain't the same" (Steinbeck 39). Both Tom and Archilde return home to find that modernity has changed home into a strange country; both are expatriates in their own homeland.

Paralleling the project of many modernist novels that suggest the death of metanarratives in the modern era, *The Surrounded* (as does *The Grapes of Wrath*) illustrates that the Odyssean master narrative, in which the protagonist returns home after a long journey, no longer applies to the modern world. Rather, for Archilde, the return home signifies the familiar being defamiliarized. While Archilde remembers the "pungent odor of smoke" that his mother's moccasins give off (3), he has forgotten the obligatory feast with his mother and tribal leaders: "That was something he had forgotten to include in his visit—the old lady and her feasts" (4), he remembers with disdain. His father too is unfamiliar; seeing his father's thin, bony hand for the first time, he looks at it "with some surprise" (5). Upon his return home he realizes that he can no longer do the things he associates with home; he cannot fish because all of the fish have been killed off just as the Joad family farm has been plowed over by the ravages of industrial capitalism. Like many modernist texts, McNickle's novel focuses on an alienated modern hero and disrupts the universal plot of return to highlight the inability of European and American understandings of narrative to provide meaning in the modern world.[19]

Similarly, the ending of *The Surrounded* illustrates that the American version of the bildungsroman plot in the nineteenth century is no longer conceivable in the modern era, at least for Native Americans. One of the most American of all genres, the American bildungsroman focuses on a young hero who leaves home as part of the development process, in search of a better life and bet-

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ter opportunities. This plot is exemplified by the ending of Mark Twain's premodernist *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) in which Huck is about to "light out" (245) for the territories to escape the encroachment of modernity (and, ironically, to settle on the very land from which Indian peoples would be displaced under the Dawes Act). Similarly, the Joad family's migration west to freedom and economic opportunity offers the possibility of a new life. But the option of "lighting out" is no longer available to many Native Americans, *The Surrounded* suggests. In a twice-repeated statement, the novel reminds readers of the stasis and confinement modernity has brought for many Native Americans: "You can't run away nowadays" (287). Paralleling the novel's opening, which suggests that the modern individual can't go home anymore, the ending suggests that Native Americans can't run away anymore. But unlike the Joad family, Archilde's family becomes contained, "surrounded," unable to travel elsewhere.

McNickle's attack on this foundational American narrative of journey away from home suggests that the modern plight of many Americans must be rewritten to reflect the experience of many Native Americans in modernity. For the Indians portrayed in McNickle's novel, modernity has meant dislocation from home coupled with confinement to reservations. Before European contact, the Salish Indians followed a seasonal migration route as, Archilde's Indian mother, Catharine, recalls:

> In the old way of living one never stayed in one place for very long. One camped wherever there was game and grass and water for the horses. As a matter of fact, there were certain places where one always camped at the same time each season, unless for some reason game failed to appear in the usual way or a fire burned off the pasturage. (172)

Rather than the random wanderings of a dislocated people, these migratory routes were established through an emulation of natural processes. But the advent of modernity meant the end of the migrant culture as many Native Americans knew it. With European appropriation of Indian lands, many Native Americans were forced

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to migrate elsewhere and were then confined to reservations with the goal of halting their migratory lifestyle and assimilating them to capitalist values. While the Euroamerican priest Father Grepilloux is able to "come home to die" (36) after a long period away from the valley, McNickle suggests that the younger generation of Salish can never return home because they have been displaced. The modernist journey to fill the void of sterile European culture depicted in Eliot's *The Waste Land* seems painfully inappropriate to Native American efforts to recover cultures denied by European colonizers. Rather than the aimless journey of *The Waste Land*, McNickle constructs his plot as a "senseless" (240) chase of pursuer and pursued, an image he uses in the horse chase scene but one that embodies the novel's larger plot structure.

The incongruence between narrative structures available to Native American and modernist writers is perhaps most poignantly exemplified in Archilde's frustrated desire to go to Europe in the tradition of many American expatriates. In the middle of the novel, Archilde considers the route of the modernist expatriate, to go abroad to travel and escape the confinement of the United States, as did modernist expatriates. He and his Spanish-born father Max make plans for Archilde to go to Europe to study music and escape the confines of reservation life. Max envisions his son going to what he calls "the old country" (160), an ironic choice of words for Archilde who, as a Native American, is already in what might be called the old country for Indians. In an earlier manuscript of *The Surrounded*, "The Hungry Generations," Archilde participates in this expatriate lifestyle by going to Paris and living among American expatriate musicians and playing his violin before returning to the United States upon the death of his mother (Hans, "D'Arcy McNickle"; "'Because I Understand'").

But in the published version of *The Surrounded*, this cultural script is inaccessible to Archilde, who never travels to Europe. He instead remains on the reservation to translate the rapidly encroaching modern world for his mother who, despite her conversion to Christianity and education in Euroamerican ways, "had not been touched deeply" (173) by the changes of the modern world

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and has rejected it. This significant plot change allows McNickle to highlight the gap between the modernists' chosen exile from home and Native Americans' forced dislocation from homelands, the discrepancy between those choosing homelessness and those forced into it. Unlike the modernist expatriates, Archilde is never able to go abroad and live the life of an artist, suggesting that the modernist notion of flight to Europe to pursue an artistic calling is not applicable to most Native Americans. And unlike the modernists, Native Americans in modernity did not have to go abroad to be homeless; as Native Americans they already are homeless in their own home. As Catharine pronounces of her Indian sons' fate in modernity, "My sons are scattered" (10). Many of the tribal elders, including Modeste and Catharine herself, who rejects the Catholic and Euroamerican teachings she learned as a young girl, try to recreate a more traditional home and return to tribal values. In McNickle's portrayal, however, the next generation, personified by Archilde, learns the consequences of trying to return home.

Mr. Parker, the Euroamerican government agent who leads Archilde away in handcuffs in the end, reminds the reader that Indians cannot escape the way modernist expatriates did. Mr. Parker repeats Archilde's earlier statement, "It's too damn bad you people never learn that you can't run away" (297). While the government agent's statement is steeped in racist condescension, he repeats Archilde's phrase exactly but with a difference, giving it a more biting meaning in its repetition and emphasizing that it is specifically Indians, "you people," who cannot run away from colonialism.

Confinement becomes the controlling metaphor for modernity in McNickle's novel, most obviously suggested in its title. Like Mourning Dove's *Cogewea* (1927), *The Surrounded* ends in an image of containment, as Archilde "extended his hands to be shackled" (297) and is taken into police custody. In *Cogewea*, however, the picture is more optimistic than the tragic ending of McNickle's novel, as Robert Holton argues. In Mourning Dove's novel, Cogewea makes the bittersweet recognition that a "corral" surrounds the half-breed, perhaps suggesting the confinement that Archilde faces. But Cogewea goes on to describe the corral as

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one of protection, wishing "that the fence could not be scaled by the soulless creatures who have ever preyed upon us" (Mourning Dove 283). She envisions her confined position as one that protects her from the dangers of Euroamericans. McNickle's novel similarly hints at the possibility of escaping modernity when Mike and Narcisse, Archilde's young nephews, run away into the mountains. Echoing the description of the old mare earlier in the novel, Mike and Narcisse simply want "to be let alone" (247). While Archilde might think their choice to be foolish, they teach Archilde that his wishes can't be forced onto others; they "show him how foolish that was" (247), invoking a desire for self-determination and sovereignty rather than the paternalism Archilde had shown earlier in the horse chase scene. When the novel ends the two boys are not surrounded; instead, they have asserted agency through movement.

While the fate of Mike and Narcisse is left open and thus offers the possibility of an escape from modernity by returning to Salish ways, the final image of Archilde at the end of *The Surrounded* is of a silent/silenced man in shackles "surrounded" by Euroamericans. The paternalistic protection of the Dawes Act is literalized; Archilde is taken into "protective" custody by the Euroamerican sheriff, a powerful metacommentary on the conditions Indians have faced in the modern era. Capture and enclosure contrast sharply with the travel and self-imposed exile portrayed and lived by many modernists.

Because dissolution of tribal lands and the attempted eradication of Indian cultures were central historical conditions of modernity for Native Americans, modernity looks different from the vantage point of many Native Americans, for whom the modern effort to break with the past was not chosen but imposed. In drawing upon modernist themes but also in revising the narrative of the modernist expatriate life in his novel, McNickle simultaneously engages in and challenges the modernist project in order to suggest that it does not apply neatly to the situation of most Native Americans in the modern era.

The modernists' response to the radical changes of modernity

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was only one of the many reactions to the "vertigo" (Foucault 39) of the modern era, but it has come to dominate our understanding of modernity. Our current definition of modernity is marred by ethnocentrism, as Paul Gilroy argues in *The Black Atlantic.* Gilroy calls on scholars to broaden their focus: "The time has come for the primal history of modernity to be reconstructed from the slaves' point of view" (55). Depending on race, class, nationality, ethnicity, gender, personal experience, sexuality, and location, "Modernism looks quite different depending on where one locates oneself and when," as Harvey puts it (25).

The point here is not to claim that McNickle or other writers outside the modernist circle did not share many of the same concerns about representation that modernists did. Rather, because of significantly different sociohistorical circumstances in the early twentieth century and a different experience in modernity, McNickle and other historically colonized peoples have developed alternative discursive solutions to these challenges in their project to narrate their visions of the modern world. McNickle's novel both testifies to the survival of Native Americans despite the persistence of the image of the Vanishing American and requires its readers to explore the experiences of Native Americans in the ongoing reinterpretation of the meanings of modernity. Vine Deloria Jr. argues that the American idea of Indian culture has little connection to the lives of Native Americans: "Not even Indians can relate themselves to this type of creature who, to anthropologists, is the 'real' Indian" (82). Similarly, understandings of modernity should more closely reflect the lived experiences of Native Americans in the early twentieth century.

NOTES

1. McNickle was born William D'Arcy McNickle in Saint Ignatius, Montana, to an Irish-American father and a mixed-blood mother. His maternal grandfather was a Métis (Cree) of mixed background who fled Canada in 1885 after the failed Riel Rebellion in Saskatchewan. McNickle's mother, along with McNickle and his siblings, was adopted into the Flathead tribe, which later became part of the Confederated Salish and Koote-

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nai Tribes, and received land allotments under the Dawes Act of 1887. For biographical information about McNickle, see Hans, "D'Arcy McNickle"; Dorothy Parker; Purdy; Ruppert.

2. Before American expansion westward, the tribes that later became the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes—also known as the Salish and as the Flathead—lived in the Pacific Northwest. The Hellgate Treaty of 1855 established a reservation in northwestern Montana for the Salish, Kootenai, and Upper Pend d'Oreille. The Salish and Kootenai passed a constitution under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and created the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. While the federal government attempted to terminate the confederated tribes in 1954, it failed. Today the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Reservation in northwestern Montana is 1.2 million acres in size (1.317 million, according to the tribes' official Web site), although only fifty-seven percent of the reservation land belongs to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes due to non-Indian settlement following the Dawes Act (Hill). The population on the reservation is 22,000, with 5,400 of Indian descent, of which 3,100 are enrolled members of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (Hill). In all, there are approximately 6,000 members enrolled in the confederated tribes (Hill).

3. *The Hungry Generations*, an earlier manuscript of *The Surrounded*, has recently been published as a book, transcribed from the handwritten original by Birgit Hans. For comparisons between the manuscript and published versions of *The Surrounded*, see also Hans, "D'Arcy McNickle" and "'Because I Understand'"; Owens; Dorothy Parker; Purdy.

4. For the purposes of this essay, I am defining "modernity" as a particular historical moment occasioned by the rapid changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I use the term "modernism" to denote the specific early-twentieth-century literary and artistic movement that focused on formalist experimentalism in response to modernity. While McNickle traveled to Europe, he did not directly participate in this literary movement, which included Euroamerican expatriates Gertrude Stein, H. D., T. S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Ezra Pound. For a sampling of definitions of modernism, see also Bradbury and McFarlane; Eysteinsson; Friedman, "Definitional Excursions"; Nicholls; Perloff; Singal; Williams.

5. While my book *African, Native, and Jewish American Literature and the Reshaping of Modernism* explores the meanings of modernity for Native Americans, it focuses on genre issues and McNickle's portrayal

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of Native American culture rather than this article's focus on modernist themes and techniques.

6. For more specific discussions of historical changes in this period, see Berman; Harvey; Painter; Singal; Susman; Trachtenberg.

7. See Dippie for further discussion of the then popularly accepted thesis by Frederick Jackson Turner, who argued that the frontier molded a distinctly American character. As the open spaces of the American West were settled and Indian populations were "removed," America was no longer seen as a land of endless possibilities, and the frontier was no longer seen as an "escape valve" for population growth, urbanization, and increasing immigration. Without an open frontier, some felt a loss of connection to nature while others felt a sense of progress and security with the settlement of the West.

8. For similar understandings of modernity as a break with the past, see also Berman; de Man; Friedman; Harvey.

9. While the number of schools on reservations exceeded the number of off-reservation schools, an increasing number of students were sent off reservation during the 1880s. In 1887 there were eight off-reservation government boarding schools, plus Hampton (not solely an Indian school). After 1890 the focus was on reservation day schools (Hertzberg 15).

10. For examples of first-person oral and narrative accounts of the boarding schools, see Archuleta, Child, and Lomawaima; Nabokov. For more in-depth analyses of the impact of boarding schools and responses to the experience, see also Adams; Dippie; Hertzberg; and Hoxie.

11. The 1924 Citizenship Act might also be viewed as an effort to force Indians to assimilate by denying tribal sovereignty and replacing it with American citizenship, as Jaimes has argued.

12. For the collected short stories written in this period (1927–35), see McNickle's *The Hawk is Hungry.*

13. McNickle published only one other novel in his lifetime, *Runner in the Sun: A Story of Indian Maize* (1954), a historical novel for young adults. After this publication he worked on and off for the next twenty-five years on a novel that was published posthumously in 1978 as *Wind from an Enemy Sky.*

14. McNickle left the BIA in 1952 because he could not support the federal policy of termination of tribal recognition. He became the executive director of American Indian Development, a nonprofit organization focused on Indian economic self-development. He later became a professor and chair of the anthropology department at the University of Sas-

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katchewan in Regina, Canada, and, although he never finished a degree, he earned an honorary doctorate in 1966 from the University of Colorado for his work in applied anthropology. He then helped create the Newberry Library's Center for the History of the American Indians in 1972 (posthumously named after McNickle), where he served as director until his death in 1977.

15. For analyses of the role of orality and oral stories in the novel, a project that is beyond the scope of my essay, see Brown; Doss; Evans; Robert Dale Parker; and Purdy.

16. Ruppert suggests that the novel finds its roots in the naturalism of Theodore Dreiser and Frank Norris. While *The Surrounded* is not as outspoken in its protest of American racial relations as is Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940), both texts explore the sociological processes that entrap their protagonists and deny them the opportunity to articulate their situations. For a discussion of Archilde's predicament, see Evans; Owens. *The Surrounded* also invokes Western regional texts of the period in its detailed descriptions of the landscape, such as Willa Cather's portrayal of the American frontier; see Hans's introduction to *The Hawk is Hungry.*

17. My appreciation to one of the anonymous *SAIL* reviewers of this article who made this point to me.

18. See, for example, Purdy, *Word Ways*; Dorothy Parker. Doss argues that the novel's framework of separation-initiation-return is one of its "Modernist characteristics" (231n13).

19. In its use of oral Salish stories, the novel suggests that tribal understandings of narrative might provide meaning. I explore this point in my book, where I consider McNickle's solutions to the dilemmas of Modernist representation.

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