

## **FRACTURED LIVES: A STUDY OF FACTIONALISM IN LOUISE ERDRICH'S TRACKS**

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One of the lasting changes brought about by colonialism to the colonies is the market oriented economy driven by individualism. Although Native Americans<sup>1</sup> participated in the market economy during fur trade, they were largely involved in bartering fur and pelt for liquor and other articles they needed.<sup>2</sup> Fur trade or even ceding title deeds to colonial forces may not have challenged their economy and in part their world view as much as the introduction of individual allotments. The American government's assimilation attempts by introducing agriculture and individual ownership thwarted their relationship with the land and created scenarios like the ones witnessed in *Tracks*. The first thing that gets the attention of the readers in *Tracks* is the conflict that is present in the community. The discordant community seen in *Tracks* is the direct outcome of imposing an economic structure alien to the Native Americans.<sup>3</sup> The new economy jeopardized survival, forced adaptation, and created disagreement with the traditionalists.<sup>4</sup>

Faction, enmity, animosity, or whatever name that can be given to the cacophony in *Tracks* is self-evident. With two narrators recounting the life of one person, filling in the gaps left by the other, and one praising and the other accusing Fleur, the narrative sculpts the personality of Fleur only ostensibly. The conflicting narrative only highlights the conflict itself which leaves the readers curious to know more about the feud. Feud as such is not alien to the Native Americans or the Chippewa<sup>5</sup> portrayed in the novel. It is historically too well known that the tribes in North America fought over territory,<sup>6</sup> and conflicts between civil and warrior leaders within a community has been the subject of scholarly study.<sup>7</sup> But what makes the conflict in the novel unique is the near complete loss of livelihood due to forced adaptation.

A skilled writer like Erdrich camouflages the real causes of the conflict with failed ambitions, love potions, bear medicine,<sup>8</sup> wealth, and revenge. But a look at the lives led by Eli Kashpaw, Nanapush, and Fleur shows that they survived by hunting, a common Native American way of life. The others in the community like the Morrisseys are agriculturalists, or they have entered the service of American administration like the Pukwans who are the tribal police officers. Even others like George Many Women – guides into the bush - have turned out to be in service of American companies. This basic difference in the choice of life ways – to adapt to the American market economy or to stick on to the old ways – causes the faction between traditionalists and non-traditionalists, Christians and non-Christians, and within family members.

This faction is the study of at least one scholarly article: “The Fragmentation of a Tribal People in Louise Erdrich’s *Tracks*” by Larson Sidner. Larson argues that the faction seen in the novel is between full blood and mixed-blood Indians basically with two evidences: the killing or rejection of mixed-blood infants by maternal kin among the Mohave Indians and the authoring of the Curtis Act (1898)<sup>9</sup> by Charles Curtis, a mixed-blood Kaw. Larson adds interesting ancillary evidences: the non-consideration of the mixed-blood people for tribal government by traditional members and mixed-blood participation in facilitating allotment of Kaw lands. His evidence shows two basic trends in the aforementioned genetic faction. One is the essential non-acceptance of mixed-blood people by full bloods and the other is the mixed-blood divergence from Indian values towards a greater participation in capitalist American economy. Larson unifies both the trends as an essential hatred based on the presence of white blood. He says, ...mixed-bloods are considered racially alien and therefore capable of causing full-blood Mojave Indians to contract “the foreign illness,” or *Ahwe*, which the Mojave believe can cause death. As a result, mixed-blood infants were sometimes killed, or, if they were permitted to survive, their fate was harsh: They were rejected by their maternal kin and shunned by the rest of the tribe...it does suggest foundations of Native American thought that are responsible for tribal organizations being quite strict with regard to identity (4).

Another example is the fact that mixed-bloods were considered peripheral to tribal government by traditional members. These traditional members were consistently opposed to giving up tribal land and to the process of assimilation into white culture. As a result, European administrators often turned to the mixed-blood population as a means of gaining enough support to obtain concessions; by proclaiming that mixed-bloods were to have a say in decision-making, white agents were often able to get their way. (5)

In the former case, the Mojave Indians feared mixed-blood children because the white blood in them is supposed to carry *Ahwe* or “the foreign illness.” Larson stretches this idea to include tribal organizations’ particularity about identity and the marginalization of mixed-blood people from tribal government. White administrators used the latter for their advantage. Here, the key to understanding the marginalization of mixed-blood is the presence of white blood. However, a faction based on the presence of white blood is not useful for *Tracks*. Alienation of mixed-blood people which is central to the argument of Sidner Larson is not that hard and fast in the novel as among the Kaws. There is no outright hatred based on the genetic identity of a person and the mixed-bloods considered them a part of the community. Even in a casual remark, Nanapush remembers the Puyats only remorsefully. There is not a tinge of hatred or mistrust in his tone when he says, “Puyats...were always an uncertain people, shy, never leaders in our dances and cures” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 38). He refers to the other mixed-blood families, Morrisseys and Lamartines with such fondness – “our best farmers” – that the feud with them later even surprises the readers. Even the wannabe white Pauline identifies her family in two antagonistic terms – mixed-bloods and skimmers – antagonistic only if the alienation of mixed-blood is understood to have existed. It is also to be noted that it is Pauline who even uses the term mixed-blood as a part of her identity. Pauline’s father, however, considers them “Indian” and urges her to stay within the community to remain so. His remark erases the difference between mixed-blood and full blood completely. If the alienation of mixed-bloods is to be believed, the affection shown by Nanapush and the Puyats’ willingness to identify themselves as “Indians” only confuses and hinders the readers from arriving at a clear understanding of who a mixed-blood is and who is not.

In order to understand the faction better, it is mandatory to understand the various definitions of the term mixed-blood. The most popular and legally authorized definition of the term mixed-blood is based on blood/genetic lines. This definition was issued by the United Supreme States Court in the year 1914 following the charges of fraud in buying pine lands from the White Earth Chippewa. It held that “an Indian having any identifiable blood other than Indian was a mixed blood” (Beaulieu 287). The definition is presumptuous because the courts related “competency”<sup>10</sup> to the amount of white blood present in a person (Beaulieu 287). Therefore it is no wonder that the United States Circuit Courts and later the United Supreme States Court reversed the District court’s requirement of one-eighth white blood to any identifiable white blood to be a mixed-blood (Beaulieu).

The Chippewa had their own definition of a mixed-blood which is centered on cultural characteristics such as the way of dressing, hunting, dwelling, and so on. The Chippewa considered a person Indian if they lived like one: “...those who wore breechcloths and blankets, lived in wigwams, and associated primarily with Indians were considered to be full bloods (Meyer, Signatures 321). There were other markers of being a full blood like having a dodaim;<sup>11</sup> dodaims are passed paternally, so the children of native mothers and white fathers do not have dodaims, and the economy of hunting; Indians hunt for survival not to make profit and so on. The White Earth Chippewa also relied on physical markers such as complexion, nature of hair, color of the eye, and body hair to distinguish a full-blood from a mixed-blood. They also took into consideration the variations in these physical features to understand the limitations of physical features in determining a mixed-blood (Meyer, Signatures 320). Some distinguished mixed-bloods from full bloods through intermarriage. Children of white and Indian parents and children of mixed-blood parents were considered mixed-blood whereas the children of mixed-blood and Indian parents were considered Indian. So, there was a whole of lot of ways to define a mixed-blood and blood alone is not a categorizer. Cultural affinity also played an important role. Therefore, the term mixed-blood for the Indians was a lot more fluid i.e one can change from being a full-blood to a mixed-blood. Me-zhuc-e-ge-shig brings out this difference through his observation about his friend: “He was a very old Indian. He was a full blood Indian but when he adopted the church, why he felt as though he was a Frenchman. He acted as one” (qtd in Meyer, 1990 321). As the later definition shows, it is clear that Nanapush’s identification of the Lamartines and the Morrisseys as mixed-blood because they practiced farming and the Puyats’ identification of themselves as “Indians” despite having white ancestry follow the Chippewa understanding of the term mixed-blood. Therefore, to say that the novel showcases a faction along blood lines is faulty.

### **Is it a reflection of traditional Ojibway/Chippewa polity?**

Studying the Minnesota Ojibway between 1825 and 1898, Kegul argues that the factionalism within the Minnesota Ojibway resembled the civil and warrior leadership faction found in traditional Ojibway polity. Among the Ojibway the civil leaders enjoyed great esteem. They were respected for their age, wisdom, and “their commitments to insuring intra-Ojibwe unity and to building unanimous community agreement on political issues.” The warriors were also very popular “as protectors and defenders of their people and their villages.” In this capacity, their role was to carry out “the decisions reached by the civil leaders in their long council.” The civil leaders despite their wisdom and commitment were given to lengthy deliberations and pacific ways which could irritate members who sought “quicker or less pacific” actions. It is highly likely that the civil leaders displeased the warriors often. According to Kegul,

the warriors “could and historically did, compete for political primacy with the civil leaders.” However, their relationship was more complex than a mere fight for leadership position. Anthropologist Harold Hickerson described it as “solidarity and opposition.” Kegul herself calls them “counterpoints to one another; the warriors propensity for action modified civil leaders’ tendency toward long deliberations...the civil leaders’ caution acted as a brake on the impetuosity of the young men” (Kegul 4, 5).

In the nineteenth century, rivalry became intense factionalism as the people tried to benefit from the land grabbing, assimilationist approaches of the United States adopting two different methodologies. The older civil leaders attempted to adopt an accommodative strategy trying to balance the new economy, religion, and governance with political autonomy. They volunteered to practice agriculture and thereby made friends with Christian missionaries and Indian reformers. It is not because they hated their old ways. It is because the circumstances forced them to take such a stand to survive. A closer example at hand is the Minnesota Ojibway between 1838 and 1868. During these years, the Minnesota Ojibway ceded both parcels and land en-masse. Ceding land had a direct impact on the quality of Ojibway life. Lumbering destroyed game and its habitat, seasonal foods like “berries, seeds and nuts,” raw materials needed to build their houses, tools, cradleboards, snowshoes, and canoes. With the influx of Euro-Americans, diseases such as small pox spread, alcohol became readily available, and there was a general misunderstanding of Ojibway friendliness by Euro-Americans. All these factors contributed to the deterioration of Ojibway life. All these convinced most of the people to adapt to the changing times. Flat Mouth the younger wrote to Bishop Henry B. Whipple in 1866 that his Leech Lake people are willing to “better our condition, and live as White people do” (qtd in Kegul 167). The White Earth Ojibway civil leaders had a close alliance with John Johnson Enmeghbowh, the Canadian born Episcopal missionary of Odawa and Ojibway descent. He through Bishop Whipple secured a double “annual appropriation for the White Earth people” (141). Such events induced the civil leaders to trust the new religion and therefore the Americans. They encouraged their kin to become deacons (Kegul).

This deteriorating condition of the Ojibway and the failure of the civil leaders’ rationale convinced the war leaders to reject the “strategy of accommodation and continued alliance” (Kegul 69). They “opposed experiments with agriculture and reasserted traditional Ojibwe beliefs concerning proper social and economic relations” (Kegul 70). They defiantly killed the “farming Indians” and settlers’ cattle and robbed their cabin to provide food and supplies to the people. War leader Hole-in-the-day the Younger of Gull Lake exerted great influence on the Ojibway. Similarly Leech Lake civil leaders recognized the influence of their war leaders. Hole-in-the-Day the Younger greatly dissatisfied with the Americans took up armed resistance in the year 1862. In the same year Dakota warriors too raided traders, settlers, and soldiers.<sup>12</sup> This attack convinced the Commissioner of Indian Affairs William P. Dole to consent for negotiations on the terms set by Hole-in-the-Day.<sup>13</sup>

This framework is suitable for *Tracks* in some respects. Erdrich embellishes Fleur with strong images reminiscent of warriors. Fleur is a Pillager, a surname which alludes to great warriors. The historian William Warren describes the Pillagers thus: “Notwithstanding the continual drain made in their ranks by their inveterate and exterminating war with the Dakotas, the large band of the Ojibways who lived on Leech Lake, and had become by the name of Pillagers...” (Warren 336). Interestingly Fleur belongs to the bear clan “...the acknowledged war chiefs and warriors of the tribe...keepers of the war-pipe and war club...often denominated the

bulwarks of the tribe against its enemies” (49). Not only that even the personal traits of Fleur are much like a warrior. Fleur exhibits warrior like stoicism in trying to guard her land. She is rumoured to have killed three men who were associated with the lumbering work in the island using the dreaded Ojibway sorcery. The entire community is dreadful of her powers. She like Nanapush is a hold out i.e. she refused to sell her allotment to the settlers. She starves, hunts, and sells cranberry barks to raise the money to pay off the money for her allotment. Her characterization as a warrior is complete at the end when she sawed the trees around her allotment in such a way that they fall down all at once as in an earthquake or a tornado.

Fleur’s rivals show the characteristics of civil leaders who worked along with the missionary in the White Earth Reservation. Pukwans are tribal Police men, the Morrisseys and Lamartines are prosperous in farming. The Morrisseys along with the Lazzares are supporters of the sale of timber in the reservation. They also take an active part in auctioneering the unpaid allotments. Bernadette is not less of an expert in book keeping that she actually runs the Morrissey farm. She is also quick in adapting as the agent’s secretary when her family treads on the path of neglect. And Pauline completes the civil leaders’ desperate measures of survival by becoming a nun.

Pauline’s action brings out the anxiety of the civil leaders clearly. The anguish to survive motivates Pauline. She moves out of the reservation voluntarily to learn the lace making trade. She hates the Chippewa part of her identity so much so that she wished she was as pale as her white grandfather. At the same time, she is also concerned about the wellbeing of her family. The dreams of her “sisters and...mother swaying in the branches, buried too high to reach, wrapped in lace...never hooked” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 15) torments her conscience every single day of her existence in Argus. She is equally taunted by her loneliness and the failure of her aspiration to learn lace making. When Fleur is employed by Pete, Pauline makes excuses to work next to her to gather the whereabouts of her family. This agony in Pauline extends beyond her family to the whole of her community after she enters the convent:

I saw the people...the influenza and consumption dead... They traveled, lame and bent, with chests darkened from the blood they coughed out of their lungs, filing forward... I saw them dragging one another in slings and litters. I saw their unborn children hanging limp or strapped to their backs...(Erdrich, *Tracks* 140).

In such a distressful state Pauline continues to observe, “It was clear that Indians were not protected by the thing in the lake or by the other Manitous who lived in trees, the bush...” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 139), expressing the idea that survival is possible only by adapting to the requirements of the new economy. A new knowledge dawns on Pauline that “there would have to come a turning, a gathering, another door. And it would be Pauline who opened it...” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 139). It is clear that Pauline, Morrisseys, Lazarres, and Pukwans intended a dynamic change in their economy to survive.

There is, however, one hindrance in adapting this framework for the analysis of factionalism in *Tracks*. The quintessence of traditional Ojibway polity of civil-warrior leader opposition is friction, necessary for the smooth functioning of the community. Kegul states that like their ancestors the faction in the Minnesota Ojibway was beneficial. Both the parties in their own style-the warriors threatening the settlers and the civil leaders holding talks with the authorities- negotiated with the American government to attain their goals. In both the situation the goals of the factional leaders are same while they differed in their means.

But the faction in the novel is not productive. The community attains little in terms of allotment or money from the American government irrespective of their orientation. The Morrisseys and Lazarres fail to foresee that “land is the only thing that lasts life to life. Money burns like tinder, flows off like water” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 33). These are the ones that have adapted to farming and making money. Since they understand the value of money in the new economy they live in, they initiate sale of land. At the other end, Nanapush – a traditionalist and a hold-out – declines father Damien’s advice to take up leadership of the community. Thus, Nanapush has trodden off the only path that could lead to convincing the community not to sell their land and flag off resistance to the encroaching settlers.

#### **Economical orientations:**

Other evidences in the novel point to something more than a civil-warrior leadership faction. This faction ebbs out through the betrayal of Fleur by Margaret and Nector. The incident raises pertinent questions as to why Nanapush, Fleur, and Eli Kashpaw consider Matchimanito Island more important than the rest of the reservation. Why does Nector and Margaret, close associates of Nanapush do not consider the island important? The readers are left without the simple answer - selfishness.

The betrayal of Fleur shows the changes in the attitude towards land introduced by legislation –The Dawes Allotment Act (1887). Interaction with fur traders had introduced not only the use of money, but also dependency on market commodities for living while still retaining indigenous practice of hunting, gathering, and communal dependency. The Dawes Allotment Act, through its individual allotment policy launched agriculture as the means of living. The aim of the act was to make Native Americans “productive capitalists, capable of assuming the responsibilities of landholding-such as paying taxes...” (Peterson 986). Though the act was not much of a success in making farmers out of Native Americans, it did introduce a new economy centered on ownership and money. The act left behind two groups of people; the ones who accepted the market economy and the ones who did not.

One of the reasons for the non-acceptance of agriculture is the Native Americans’ perception of land. For the Chippewa earth or “Aki not only means “earth” or “country” but also “cosmos” - a diversified and complex social circle of overpoweringly immense and timeless proportions, completely devoid of emptiness and (linear) time, and permeated with and unified through certain values and properties such as kinship, mutuality, and reciprocity” (The Universe of the Ojibwe/Anishinaabeg). Since the earth relates human beings with the cosmos, it is a sacred being. In fact it is so sacred that Smohalia, a Nez Perce elder, considered ploughing as almost killing. He says: “You ask me to plow the ground. Shall I take a knife and tear my mother’s breast? Then when I die she will not take me to her bosom to rest” (Johnston xiii). In *Tracks*, the Morrisseys and many others have got passed this idea of earth as a sacred being. They have accepted land as an object to be owned and cultivated to earn profit. Margaret and Nector – though not farmers – show this understanding of land as property. And, that is why they hold the Matchimanito Island less important than owning the Kashpaw allotment in town.

However, for Nanapush, Matchimanito Island is not only Fleur’s allotment but the place where the lake man lives. The island is the only place which retains some of the earlier beliefs in the form of the dwelling place of the Pillagers – strong medicine men - and the Manitou, Misshepesu. The presence of the lake man and Fleur’s association with him makes the island a microcosm of Chippewa world view. Nanapush and Fleur are holdouts because they do not consider money to be lasting like Margaret and Nector. And most importantly he and Fleur know

that “...the water thing was not a dog to follow at our heels” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 175). This is the profoundest statement that underscores the difference in the perception of land between Native Americans and Euro-Americans.

The faction in *Tracks* is a result of this difference in ideology. The term “blanket Indians” used by Napoleon to refer Fleur and Nanapush denotes this difference and the arrogance of having chosen the right strategy for survival. Similarly, Nanapush’s disapproval of the new economy is seen when he says: “Money burns like tinder, flows off like water” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 33). Nanapush’s comment on the feud “The two families ranged on two sides of the question of money settlement” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 109) shows that the faction is indeed based on economic ideology.

### **Religious faction**

Closely connected to the economical/political faction is the religious faction. Yet the course it takes is different from the economic faction in that it is not showcased blatantly. The dislike between Christians and non-Christians is dormant – Nanapush has run away from the mission school and Christianity to live in the woods in the Chippewa tradition, and Pauline hates the Chippewa part of her identity. In fact, the community shows an intersection of the two faiths: Margaret and Pauline retain their fear for Misshepesu, Bernadette trusts the Chippewa dream catcher to stop the nightmares of Pauline. Pauline herself indulges in visions (An Anishnaabe feature according to Gross) in her mission of Christianization of the reservation. But the dormant dislike resurfaces clad as political enmity.

Within the framework of civil-warrior leader opposition conversion to Christianity is a survival strategy chosen by civil leaders. Accordingly, Margaret, Bernadette, and many others embrace Christianity, but they don’t forget or lose faith in their ‘earlier faith’. There is a faction within individuals but not conflict; neither Margaret nor Pauline has any difficulty to identify with either one of the faiths. The characters draw a boundary between the two belief systems. Margaret knows that she has to appease Misshepesu in order to cross the lake. Bernadette leaves an extra pair of shoes for the departed if they be unconverted. They rarely allow them to overlap except Pauline whose characterization is beyond the scope of this paper. Here it is suffice to say that Pauline assumes non-Christians – Fleur and Nanapush – as rivals to ‘devout’ Christians and Christ. But for Bernadette and Margaret Christianity is a way to participate in the market economy. Bernadette “kept the accounts for the farm, always took a sheet of figures along when she went to visit the sick and dying” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 64-65). Perhaps Margaret was interested in farming too. The readers know little about her aspirations except that she is a Christian. But Margaret certainly expresses a clearer understanding of the new economy. She disapproves Fleur’s confidence in retaining the allotment thus: “She’s living in the old days when people had respect” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 174). Nanapush too takes note of her preparedness to raise money by selling cranberry barks to the dealer. In this respect the religious faction both within individuals and within the community falls in line with the political/economic factionalism. Those who have adopted Christianity understand the functioning of the Euro-American market economy. In other words the religious faction is a part of the economical faction.

### **Mother-daughter faction:**

Another unlikely part of the economic factionalism is the feud between mothers and daughters in the novel. Erdrich weaves economic disagreement into mother-child faction to show the interrelatedness of the private sphere and the political sphere. The novels of Erdrich have both

positive and negative mother-child relationship. While *Love Medicine* abounds with positive filial relationship, *Tracks* gives testimony to two of the most fractured mother-daughter relationship.

The mothers in the novels of Erdrich play a crucial role in cultural continuity. For the Chippewa “...the mother is not merely one’s biological parent; she is all one’s relation (male and female, human and animal, individual and tribal); she is connected to the earth” (Wong qtd in Tanrisal 72). Through child bearing and rearing Native American women have played an important role in the continuity of their tradition<sup>21</sup>.

Fractured filial love results in fractured individuals not able to ground themselves in their own lives. This is evident in the characterization of the influential Lulu Lamartine. Lulu’s separation from her mother Fleur at an early age leaves her frustrated, angry, yearning and without a sense of belonging. In *Love Medicine*, her anguish and anger is summed up thus: “...she had tore herself away from the run of my life like a riverbank. She had vanished, a great surrounding shore, leaving me to sill out alone.” Though Lulu “wanted to fill her (Fleur) tracks” (Erdrich, *Love Medicine* 68), she never forgives her mother. Lulu is a young woman, watching her mother return to the reservation in *Four Souls*. There is no evidence in *Love Medicine* for renewed love and affection between Fleur and Lulu.

For Pauline, Marie is a symbol of sin and a hindrance to her aspirations of sainthood. In *Tracks*, Marie is a mere temptation that Pauline had to overcome. Since Marie is unaware of her biological mother, she doesn’t express hatred for her mother. Yet Pauline and Marie are two opposite poles and remain so till the end. Like the other two faction in the community the mother daughter feud too originates in opposing economical orientation. It is the search for a viable economic future that makes them abandon their daughters. This in turn fractures the filial love between mother and daughter. Fleur abandons Lulu in the boarding school to get her land back from the usurpers. Similarly Pauline abandons Marie in pursuit of sainthood.

The seemingly distant economic orientation triggered events in succession. All the faction in the novel is caused by opposing economic orientations of the community. By presenting these factions, Erdrich portrays the changes brought over by colonization. Diseases like consumption and small pox killed people while intrusion of western individualistic ideologies destroyed communal harmony and encouraged to disown their identity. However, even in the portrayal of a torn down community, the readers can notice the spirit of survival, the struggle to control their lives, and the will to maintain their uniqueness. Like Pauline’s comments on the indomitable spirit of Fleur, “It’s hard to tell which came out worse, her or the men or the town, although as always Fleur lived” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 13) Native Americans have survived against all odds.

#### Notes:

1. The words native, Native Americans and Indian are used to refer to the tribes of the USA as a whole.
2. See William Warren’s *History of the Ojibway Nation* for a discussion of the interaction of the Ojibway and the French fur traders.
3. See “Signatures and Thumbprints: Ethnicity among the White Earth Anishinaabeg, 1889-1920” by Melissa L. Meyer. This article discusses Native response to market economy in detail.
4. See “Signatures and Thumbprints”
5. Both the words refer to the same tribe. In Canada they are called Ojibway. In the US they are called Chippewa. Both the terms have been used interchangeably.



6. See *History of the Objiwa Nation* by William Warren. This book discusses the fight between the Sioux and the Chippewa over territory. Melissa Meyer discusses the conflict between the Chippewa in the White Earth reservation over control of resources in the article “We cannot get a living as we used to.”
7. See *To Be The Main Leaders of Our People: A History of Minnesota Ojibwe Politics, 1825-1898* by Rebecca Kugel.
8. See the story *The Bear-Walker Mukwo-bimossae* in the collection *The Bear-Walker and Other Stories* by Basil Johnston. Bear medicine is considered to be very powerful. It can be good or bad.
9. The Curtis Act of 1898 brought the allotment principle for the Five Civilized Tribes: the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muscogee, Cherokee, and Seminole who were not included in the Allotment Act (1887). The Curtis Act 1898 transferred the tribes powers of tribal membership to Dawes Commission. This act gave Dawes Commission the power to enroll members without the knowledge of the tribes. This act was instrumental in abolishing tribal courts and tribal governments in Oklahoma which paved way for Oklahoma becoming a state.
10. A competent Indian is one who can manage their own affairs without the intervention of the government. See Peterson for the details of Dawes Allotment Act and other acts passed by the congress which subjugated the tribes.
11. Dodaim is commonly known as totem. The dodaim is an animal that becomes a badge or symbol for a “grand family.” See William Warren’s *History of the Ojibway* for a detailed discussion of the various dodaims and the taboos attached to it.
12. Hole-in-the-Day believed in civil leadership to begin with. He supported farming as late as the signing of the 1855 treaty. However, the American government’s attempts to subordinate the Ojibwe, the corruption among the Indian Agents, the decaying living conditions of the Ojibwe, and the rejection of a special allotment to Ojibwe leaders induced him to take up arms.
13. It is widely believed that the Dakota warriors and Ojibwe warriors together had planned for the attack in 1862. But Kegul thinks it is merely coincidental. See Rebecca Kegul for details.
14. 13 See Kegul for details.
15. See “Mother and child relationships in the novels of Louise Erdrich” by Meldan Tanrisal.

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