

Necropolitics, Indigenous Sovereignty, and Posthuman Ethics in Louise Erdrich's *The Night Watchman*

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Abstract

Native American history is marked by a systematic displacement of Indigenous communities from their ancestral lands over centuries due to colonial expansion and government policies. This research examines how the United States government's 1950s termination policies specifically House Concurrent Resolution 108 functions as a necropolitical mechanism that threatens the legal status of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa in *The Night Watchman* (2020) by Louise Erdrich that tends to strip Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa off their legal status, identity and land to render them legally obsolete. This research analyzes "how the government uses terms such as 'freedom' and 'advancement to erase Native Indians administratively without using any weapons. Drawing on Rosi Braidotti's theory of Critical Posthumanism this research contends that the Chippewa community's resistance, survival is rooted in a relational ontology and posthuman affirmative zoe-centered ethics. Through characters' deep interconnectedness with the non-human world this research shows that they survive by becoming a part of a vitalist continuum and by becoming imperceptible to the state's necropolitical mechanisms.

Keywords: Necropolitics, Zoe, Relational Ontology, Termination, Becoming-imperceptible, Posthuman Ethics, Vitalist Continuum, Resistance

Introduction

The history of Native American displacement was not carried out in geographical domain but also includes administrative policies that facilitated a systematic erasure of cultural identity, and collective survival. This research examines how the

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United States government's 1950s termination policies specifically House Concurrent Resolution 108 employed by the U.S. Congress in 1953, and represented in Louise Erdrich's *The Night Watchman* (2020) acts as a legal and administrative tool of erasure. It employs the lens of necropolitics to examine indigenous resistance through posthuman ethics. The autobiographical historical novel set in 1950s on the Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota tells the story of Thomas Wazhashk inspired by Erdrich's grandfather, Patrick Gourneau, who resisted the U.S. government's termination policy and led a collective struggle to preserve tribal sovereignty, cultural identity, and communal survival against U.S. government's Termination Bill of the 1940s-1950s, a policy aimed at dissolving tribal sovereignty and dispossessing Indigenous communities of their land. Erdrich has made significant contribution to the Indigenous studies through the portrayal of Thomas and the wider Ojibwe community.

Posthumanism is a twentieth-century philosophical and critical framework which challenges humanistic thinking particularly its dualistic stance and emphasizes human exceptionalism while advocating a shift towards embodied experiences (Daigle & McDonald, 2022, p. 2). Post-anthropocentrism is the foundation of posthumanist thought which challenges the presumption that human beings occupy a central position in relation to other forms of life. Within its core the idea of relational agency asserts that agency is not an intrinsic property of the individual human but a networked phenomenon shared among humans, nonhumans, technologies, and environments. Within Braidotti's (2013) posthuman philosophy, ethical responsibility towards all forms of life, humans, non-human, ecosystems and future forms of life provide a theoretical perspective for examining Indigenous resistance in *The Night Watchman*.

The theoretical framework draws particularly in the analysis of Chapter 3 "The Inhuman: Life Beyond Death," of *The Posthuman* (2013). Central to this discussion is Braidotti's philosophy is a distinction between Bios (individual, human-centered life) and Zoe (the generative, transversal force of life beyond the human). This zoe-centered ontology rejects the idea of human exceptionalism and places human beings within a continuum of interconnected life forms. Braidotti (2013) emphasizes that "a focus on the vital and self-organizing powers of Life/Zoe undoes any clear-cut distinctions between living and dying (115). This study examines relationships that sustain life.

The study also draws on Achille Mbembe's (2020) concept of necropolitics as forms of governance that operate through the distribution of death rather than the management of life. While Foucault's (1978) concept of biopower concerns the regulation and management of life. Braidotti (2013) states that "Biopower and necropolitics are two sides of the same coin" (Braidotti 2013, p. 122). "In posthuman perspective the emphasis on the impersonality of life is echoed by an analogous reflection of death" (Braidotti, 2013, p. 131). Braidotti builds on Gilles Deleuze's (1989) concept of "becoming-imperceptible" to establish a nomadic posthuman ethics that move beyond the traditional human centered concept of individual. To become imperceptible is to let go the traditional idea of human as an autonomous, self-contained entity and to enter instead into a state of relationality and nomadic subjectivity as Braidotti (2013) explains, "Becoming-imperceptible is the event for which there is no representation, because it rests on the disappearance of the individuated self" (p. 137). Through the examination of these dimensions together this study contributes to the interpretations of *The Night Watchman* connecting the political threat to indigenous survival with a relational foundation of communal survival.

This research contributes to posthumanism and Indigenous literary studies indicating how modern administrative systems can act as necropolitical tools that use legal ways of managing or removing marginalized identities. The analysis of *The Night Watchman* (2020) in the light of Rosi Braidotti's theory of Critical Posthumanism provides a historical analysis and also proposes a new radical strategy for surviving necropolitical erasure in the modern world.

Review of the Literature

In order to establish the posthuman analysis of *The Night Watchman* (2020) by Louise Erdrich this segment critically analyzes the previous studies that have already been done to explore the current interpretations of novel and to identify a research gap that this research aims to fulfill.

Zhang and Tang's (2021) article "Nature. Animals. Non-Human: A Study of Community Consciousness in *The Night Watchman*" examines how Erdrich represents community consciousness through ecological interconnectedness. This study underscores how Louise Erdrich challenges anthropocentric worldviews by presenting a networked community where humans, animals, and spirits coexist

together as equal members. However, their study focuses mainly on the ecological perspective, paying comparatively less attention to the to the implications of termination policy for Indigenous political sovereignty and collective survival.

Similarly, Abbady (2021) explores how Louise Erdrich utilizes magical realism in the novel *The Night Watchman* to challenge colonial historical narratives and re-envision Native American history. Abbady positions Erdrich's use of magical realism specifically the presence of ghosts, talking animals, and unearthly powers not as mere fantasy, but as a postcolonial tool through blurring the lines between the rational and the spiritual. While Zhang and Tang (2021) emphasize ecological interconnectedness, spiritual and narrative dimensions are highlighted by Abbady (2021). Together these studies provide a foundation to explore of nonhuman and spiritual relationships in the novel.

He (2024) applies a feminist perspective to explore a radical representation of Native American women. Building upon the indigenous feminist insight the research highlights intersectional oppression faced by native women who are doubly marginalized both in patriarchal and colonial frameworks. Inspired by the ideas of Paula Gunn Allen and Simon de Beauvoir he emphasizes the gendered nature of colonial oppression and ultimately presents women as central to cultural survival and tribal identity in indigenous communities. This interpretation extends the discussion into the realm of gender and women's resistance in preserving Indigenous identity.

Farooq et.al (2024) examine the novel through French philosopher Louis Althusser's (1971) theory of state apparatuses, focusing on how Euro-American legal systems functioned as tools of oppression against Native Americans. This study looks at the colonial power mechanisms through an institutional perspective of political domination.

Lauria (2024) examines Indigenous refusal of state-imposed citizenship through the lens of "border positionality" and "irresolution". She argues that although Erdrich's characters engage with the US government to fight tribal termination in the 1950s, their struggle is not a simple struggle for recognition. Drawing on Audra Simpson's ideas, Lauria interprets it as a generative form of refusal which is inescapable and is contaminated by the nature of choices under settler colonialism.

Similarly, Hadji and Seghiour (2025) through the lens of ecocriticism and Eco colonialism explore that indigenous resistance in *The Night Watchman* (2020) as an ecological resistance rooted in a deep, spiritual connection to the land. Erdrich's narrative exposes the 1950s U.S. government termination policies functioned as a form of slow violence, a gradual administrative erasure that sought to sever the Turtle Mountain Chippewa from their ancestral territories. While Farooq et al. (2024) examined institutional oppression and Lauria (2024) emphasized upon political resistance to colonial domination Hadji and Seghiour (2025) focus on the environmental and cultural consequences aspects of settler colonial authority.

Existing scholarship on Louise Erdrich's *The Night Watchman* (2020), have deeply explored the novel through the lenses of historical realism, ecocritical and Eco colonial criticism and gendered struggle within the context of U.S. settler colonialism, however they overlook how the state's necropolitical governance targets not only legal status of Native Americans but relational, interconnected existence of Indigenous people. However, there remains a critical gap regarding the ontological nature of this resistance. There is a lack in consideration how Erdrich's collective narrative structure, Ojibwe epistemologies, multispecies interdependence, and spiritual elements align with Braidotti's concepts of the decentered subject, generative inhuman, and the impersonal force of life (zoe).

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative, interpretive approach to critically analyze Louise Erdrich's *The Night Watchman* (2020) through the theoretical lens of Rosi Braidotti's posthumanism and Achille Mbembe's necropolitics. The study examines how House Concurrent Resolution 108 (1953) sought to dismantle the sovereign status of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa.

The primary source for this research is *The Night Watchman* (2020) while the secondary sources include the theory, newspaper articles, interviews and other researches as well as critical analysis ideas and terminologies of other related theorists have also been applied for an in-depth analysis. The analysis draws upon two complementary theoretical lenses. First the study applies Mbembe's (2020) concept of Necropolitics to examine the threats imposed by the termination policy to the Indigenous sovereignty and collective existence. Second, through Braidotti's (2013) posthuman perspective the study examines the role of communal

relationships, spiritual connections, and interdependence in Ojibwe resistance to the termination bill. The analysis combines both theoretical frameworks for the interpretation of necropolitical governance alongside the relational practices that sustain Indigenous survival.

Discussion

In the present era, the nature of colonial warfare has evolved from overt forms of violence to more sinister, abstracted forms that obfuscate their destructive intent behind ornate language. After the Second World War, in the 1950s, America redefined its identity into a democratic, unified, and modernized global superpower. Within the political context, the Indigenous American tribes' sovereignty and reservation systems conflicted with the American ideal of a single national identity. The federal government, therefore, promoted an agenda aimed at dissolving tribal identity by dismantling tribal governments and ending the legal recognition of tribes as sovereign political entities.

House Concurrent Resolution (1953) passed in 1953, started the federal government's Native American "termination" policy (Erdrich, 2020, p. 90). It sought to abrogate treaties signed between Native tribes and the United States government. It also aimed to dissolve as soon as applicable, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, to abolish the federal supervision over American Indian tribes. House Concurrent Resolution 108 (1953) emerged as the modern instrument of this transition; it was a legislative weapon designed to finally "solve the Indian problem" (Erdrich, 2020, p. 80). Many tribes were affected by this policy, including the Klamath Tribe (Oregon), Menominee (Wisconsin), Flathead Tribe (Montana), Potawatomi Tribe (Kansas and Nebraska), and the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe in North Dakota, where *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich is set.

In *The Night Watchman* (2020), the House Concurrent Resolution 108 (1953) and the termination policy can be examined through what Achille Mbembe terms "necropolitics" a concept further elaborated by Rosi Braidotti as she propounds Mbembe's (2020) analysis of biopolitical management of survival as 'necro-politics,' i.e., the "administration of death." Within this theoretical framework, termination Bill functions as a necropolitical instrument rather than a legal reform the Chippewa community: "But at last we will be destroyed by a collection of tedious words. For the disposition of, for the intensification of, for the termination of" (Erdrich, 2020,

p. 93). The termination bill does not enact immediate physical violence; rather, it deploys the slow death of the Chippewa tribe by stripping away federal recognition, land rights, and access to essential resources. As Joyce Asignaik says, "They want to 'relocate.' That's fancy for 'remove.' How many times were we removed?" (Erdrich, 2020, p. 121). The question "how many times" highlights a sense of collective historical trauma and refers to a history of repeated displacements of Native American communities. The rhetorical question conveys exhaustion and anger, emphasizing that Indigenous people have endured generations of forced removal, land seizures and assimilation policies. This repeated exploitation also reflects Braidotti's critique of the humanist ideal of "Man," that reduced Indigenous people to the status of politically disposable objects and historically excluded large segments of humanity from full recognition (Braidotti, 2013, p. 26). Biboon, Thomas's father, profoundly articulates this dreadful feeling of dispossession as he says: "First they gave us this scrap, then they tried to push us off this scrap. Then they took away most of this scrap. Now, what you are saying is they want to push us off the edge of the scrap" (Erdrich, 2020, p. 118). The repeated invocation of the term "scrap" emphasizes that Native identity is treated as expendable. It exposes a systemic logic of erasure, where Native life is stripped of its land and inherent values and treated as remnants. However, for the Turtle Mountain people, this territory remains a vital repository of ancestral memory and continuous cultural life.

Erdrich represents administrative language as a bureaucratic tool through which the state can threaten Indigenous sovereignty without employing direct physical violence. When Thomas Wazhashk tries to read through the lines of the proposed congressional bill, he detects the violent intent hidden beneath its apparently harmless language. He sees through the language of emancipation and realizes that it is just a cynical way to make them disappear. He recognizes the existential threat embedded in this policy: "To define their unbelievable intent. Unbelievable because the unthinkable was couched in such innocuous dry language. Unbelievable because the intent was, finally, to unmake, to unrecognize. To erase as Indians..." (Erdrich, 2020, p. 79). The use of "innocuous dry language" is a strategic move by the liberal humanist state to sanitize the destruction of a people. Through the verbs 'unmake' and 'unrecognize,' Erdrich illustrates how sovereignty is not just a political status but an ontological one. This is a bureaucratic dismantling of which operates through the withdrawal of protections and recognition that support collective survival.

By dismantling the legal and social infrastructures of the Turtle Mountain Band, the Termination Bill represents a necropolitical maneuver because it seeks to ‘disallow life to the point of death’ (Braidotti, 2013, p. 115). It acts as a mechanism that intensifies the poverty depicted in the novel, i.e., a biopolitical regulation of Indigenous bodies for capitalist utility. Erdrich shows the Chippewa community living in scarce economic conditions, low-wage labor at the jewel bearing plant, food scarcity, a meagre lifestyle, whereas the state treated Indigenous people as commodities rather than a community, treating them as a labor resource. In the novel, this conflict is embodied in the jewelry bearing plant where Patrice works, as her factory job is physically draining yet indispensable—her wages support her mother and siblings, and the narrative repeatedly highlights her exhaustion and limited options, showing how “She couldn’t get sick. If she got sick... She would be fired. Life would go back to zero” (Erdrich, 2020, p. 20). Thomas’s whole life is also defined by quiet, persistent, and inherited poverty: “There were moments in the hunger he would never forget” (Erdrich, 2020, p. 16). Without federal protection, tribal land becomes taxable. Since the people are already in “thin, cold” poverty, they cannot pay the taxes, making their lives more and more unbearable. Thomas reflects on the cyclical nature of federal intervention, noting that when the government “remembered about Indians... they always tried to solve Indians” (Erdrich, 2020, p. 80). This is what Braidotti calls administrative Necropolitics, in the light of which the solution is not to help them but to manage their extinction as a legal entity.

The Termination Bill illustrates a form of legal ‘infrastructural warfare’. A contemporary warfare that involves the “destruction of all the services that allow civil society to function,” such as roads and electricity (Braidotti, 2013, p. 123). In this necropolitical framework, the targeted infrastructure is not merely physical; it also includes the legal and political structures that sustain tribal sovereignty: the treaty rights, federal recognition, and communal land status that sustain the Turtle Mountain Band. Thomas’s conversation with Eddy Mink highlights this: “But then you wouldn’t have any hospital. No clinic, no school, no farm agent, no nothing... By law you wouldn’t be an Indian” (Erdrich, 2020, p. 24). By unilaterally dissolving these legal structures, the U.S. government performs what Braidotti identifies as a ‘neo-colonial exercise’ (p.123). The bill effectively ‘de-territorializes’ (Braidotti, 2013, p. 123) the native community, stripping away the protective layer of the law to transform their ancestral home into a site of capitalist exploitation, as expressed by Thomas: “So this bill would break up our land and let the BIA sell it off. They’d probably take a nickel on the dollar for it” (Erdrich, 2020, p. 214). The government

looks at the reservation not as a home; they see a taxable asset. This maneuver demonstrates a sinister 'attribution of different degrees of humanity,' where the state deems the Indigenous existence as an obsolete category of existence that must be massacred administratively to make way for the 'global economy' (Braidotti, 2013, p. 123).

The U.S. government's justification for the termination bill reflects what Chomsky (2000) identifies as 'the new military humanism' (as cited in Braidotti, 2013, p. 124), a rhetorical strategy which Virilio (2002) describes as the 'logistical operation' (as cited in Braidotti's, 2013, p. 123) of erasing a tribe's legal identity. Barnes's statement within the text: "But I heard you get to be citizens. Don't you want to be a U.S. citizen?" to which Thomas answers, "We are citizens" (Erdrich, 2020, p. 213). By framing the dissolution of the Turtle Mountain Band as an act of 'liberty' and 'emancipation,' the state uses the jargon of humanitarianism to mask a necropolitical erasure aimed at the creation of a 'legal death-world' (Braidotti, p. 124) where Indigenous sovereignty is rendered obsolete. By connecting "termination" to "ex-termination," Erdrich exposes the bill as a tool for genocide. Senator Arthur V. Watkins, who is one of the key architects of this policy, a devout Mormon and a politician, introduces the Termination Bill in an attempt to help Indians assimilate into white society, as prophesied in Mormon scripture believing it to be for the best. Erdrich (2020) suggests that Native Americans were to give up their identity and accept assimilation disguised in the form of care. This quote encapsulates the essence of military humanism, as Watkins presents himself as an altruistic savior, yet the juxtaposition of violent imagery of crush and love unveils his colonial desire to consume and erase the Indian existence into a singular American identity.

The St. Jude's boxing match in the novel is a perfect demonstration of 'infotainment,' as Braidotti notes that necro-political modes of governance also circulate as infotainment in global media circuits. Wood Mountain's physical endurance becomes a source of entertainment for the white audience, a crowd that remains insulated from the legislative violence of House Concurrent Resolution 108 (1953). Erdrich describes the fighters as "circling like panthers" but this image of strength is weakened by their swollen eyes, split lips, eyebrows taped, snapped noses and aching bones and muscles (Erdrich, 2020, p. 285). The spectators consume that desperation as a display of bravery or sport, oblivious to the necropolitical forces at

play while Wood Mountain's broken body becomes symbolic of a larger struggle against a bill that seeks to break his tribe.

Ultimately, *The Night Watchman* (2020) portrays the Termination Bill as a curated framework of erasure, where the lofty words of the state function as the prototypes for a manufactured extinction. By contrasting the innocuous language of House Concurrent Resolution 108 (1953) with the raw, physical precarity of the Turtle Mountain people—from Patrice's exhaustive labor at the plant to Wood Mountain's broken body in the boxing ring—the narrative underscores the humanitarian mask of the state violence as a calculated strategy of disappearance rather than a path to progress. In this light, the Termination Bill is revealed not as a mere policy shift, but as the modern recurrence of an ontological war, where the law itself becomes the primary instrument for rendering Indigenous sovereignty—and the very category of the “Indian”—legally and administratively obsolete.

From the opening movements of the novel, Erdrich establishes a relational ontology that dismantles the fiction of the liberal autonomous subject by dissolving the boundaries between the human and the natural world. The most direct establishment of this ontology is found in the naming of Thomas Wazhashk, *The Night Watchman*, a character based on Erdrich's grandfather. By naming him after the muskrat (wazhashk), Erdrich suggests his identity is not an isolated liberal autonomous subject but is part of a multispecies lineage of persistence. Erdrich writes:

Last, the humble water rat. The Creator called on that one. Wazhashk. The little fellow dived down... The Creator unfolded Wazhashk's webbed hands. He saw that the muskrat had carried up just a little off the bottom. He saw that the muskrat had carried up just a little off the bottom. From that tiny paw's grip of dirt, the Creator made the whole earth. (p.172)

In these lines from chapter, The Beginning the narrative references the Ojibwe Great Flood story, where “it was a muskrat who had helped remake the earth” (Erdrich, 2020, p. 4). This mythical story describes a world engulfed by chaos and water, a state of destruction where the previously powerful and strong creatures fail to find a solution. It is the muskrat (wazhashk)—described as a “lowly, hardworking, water-loving rodent”—who successfully dives into the depths and returns with a handful of soil, which is placed on the back of a turtle to become the foundation of a new

world (Erdrich, 2020, p. 4). The story contends that the earth itself is a product of non-human labor, reinforcing a vitalist materialism where life is a self-organizing property shared across species, offering a vision of survival rooted in mutual dependence and shared vitality (Braidotti, 2013, p. 92). Erdrich proposes that Thomas is “perfectly named,” consciously aligning Thomas’ unrelenting courage and quiet persistence with the muskrat (p. 4).

In *The Night Watchman* (2020), Erdrich’s portrayal of Ojibwe epistemologies closely aligns with Braidotti’s notion of posthuman affirmative ethics through a shared rejection of human exceptionalism. “Because life is not the prerogative of humans only, it opens up a zoe-political or post-anthropocentric dimension” (p. 111) and an emphasis on zoe-centered relationality. Through Thomas’s recurring encounter with the owl, Erdrich profoundly illustrates a post-anthropocentric view as Thomas recognizes the owls not merely as birds but as active agents with a specific social and protective role. Thomas narrates, “There was a flock of them, snowy owls... I know they had come to keep me safe” (Erdrich, 2020, p. 427). By rejecting the superstitious interpretation of the owl (an omen of death), Thomas views the bird as protective kin, a participant in his own survival.

In the chapter entitled Iron Tulip, Patrice’s interaction with the dying dog in Minneapolis while searching for her sister Vera, the dog becomes an active agent having its own agency, a witness to the trauma Vera experienced in the city. Erdrich displays this through Patrice’s treatment of a dog as a spiritual guide. “You know where she is,” said Patrice. “I know you do. Please. I need you to help me find her” (p. 147). This scene shows survival through deep human-animal connection, multispecies interconnectedness and the solidarity of nature with humans in their shared resistance. Through the dog’s response, “She died on the end of a chain, like me” (p. 147), Erdrich captures a harrowing truth: both the Indigenous women and the non-human entities are exploited and treated as disposable bodies under a colonial, capitalist system. However, when the dog dies in Patrice’s arms, its death functions as a potent form of resistance and survival. The death doesn’t mark the end of the dog’s existence; instead, it becomes an active, though invisible, force within the “life-death continuum” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 132).

Within the context of the Turtle Mountain Band’s resistance, Erdrich presents Zhaanat’s character as an ontological anchor. By granting agency and intrinsic value to land, animals, stars and meteors, “(Because everything was alive, responsive in its

own way” (Erdrich, 2020, p. 190), Erdrich challenges the liberal normative subject that views nature as passive. Zhaanat treats land and animals not as resources to be taxed or sold but as active agents, non-human kin, “capable of being hurt in its own way, capable of punishment in its own way” (Erdrich, 2020, p. 190). Erdrich validates posthuman post-anthropocentric views through Thomas’s perception of trees as conscious, sentient creatures in the chapter *Old Man Winter* as he sits outside he feels, “the roots of the trees humming below the earth” and senses them having, “a last bedtime drink of the great waters” (p. 266).

Erdrich asserts: “Things started going wrong as far as Zhaanat’ was concerned, when places everywhere were named for people—political figures, priests, explorers—and not for the real things that happened in these places—the dreaming, the eating, the death, the appearance of animals” (p. 345). According to Zhaanat naming places after priests and scholars practically severs the relational connection between humans and earth by placing humans as the center of the world and rendering the nature as insignificant other. She prefers names based on real things i.e. dreaming, eating and appearance of animals which the novel presents as spiritual processes that connect humans with the natural world. Zhaanat’s realization that “animals didn’t come around to these locations stained by the names of humans. Plants, also, had begun to grow fitfully” (Erdrich 2020, p. 345) mirrors Braidotti’s concept of zoe-centered agency.

Wood Mountain and Thomas’s reflection on the interconnectedness of their existence with the past creatures in the chapter titled *Cradle to Grave* closely aligns with posthuman zoe driven subject: “We are connected to the way-back people, here, in so many ways. Maybe a way-back person touched these shells. Maybe the little creatures in them disintegrated into the dirt. Maybe some tiny piece from that creature is inside us now” (Erdrich, 2020, p. 322). In these lines, Erdrich has invoked a sense of shared existence and mutual dependence linking the existence of human beings to the people and creatures of the past, those who became the part of the land and are now a part of human beings. They see themselves part of a vital continuum (Braidotti, 2013, p. 135) where there is no distinction between living and dead, human and non-human. This supports the view “zoe-driven subject is marked by the interdependence with its environment” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 139). Wood Mountain’s sense of peace arises from his recognition that he belongs to a whole larger than himself, “Us being connected so far back gives me a peaceful feeling” (Erdrich, 2020, p. 323).

Throughout the novel Erdrich has portrayed Roderick's ghost as an active living character, possessing agency and power to tell truth as he tells Thomas that he took blame for Labatte, "Roderick told me he was there to save you. Told me you were stealing from the plant" (p. 165). Roderick is Thomas's school friend who died of tuberculosis after being locked in a freezing cellar multiple times as a punishment at the boarding school. His death serves as a haunting reminder of the trauma and necropolitical violence inflicted upon Indigenous children. In the chapter titled You cannot Assimilate Indian Ghosts Roderick refuses to forsake his identity even after being dead as Erdrich narrates, "Even as a ghost, Roderick was never going to be assimilated. You can't assimilate Indian ghosts. It's too late!" (p. 372). This emphasizes that death is not the end of life but a recomposition back into the generative force of zoe, becoming imperceptible (Braidotti, 2013, p. 137). Roderick's individual self has simply dissolved into the bigger, living world around him, "He flowed in, poked around...turned out the city was packed with ghosts, lively ghosts" (Erdrich, 2020, p. 440). He is no longer a vulnerable being that can be removed by the termination bill instead he becomes a part of vitalist zoe, a continuous flow of energy that continues to support the tribe's survival.

In addition, Thomas Wazhashk, the protagonist of the novel embodies this sense of becoming imperceptible by dissolving his ego-centered human self into a transversal, zoe centered individual fighting for the collective survival of his tribe. However, after learning about the Termination policy his focus shifts from personal to the Tribe's ontological survival. By reading the proposed bill over nights, writing letters, conducting tribal meetings and organizing a delegation to Washington D.C to testify against the bill, he undergoes a subjective transformation and his physical efforts and mental labor become a form of affirmative resistance. Erdrich highlights this, "Overnight the tribal chairman job had turned into a struggle to remain a problem. To not be solved" (Erdrich, 2020, p. 80).

In conclusion, the Turtle Mountain Band's resistance against House Concurrent Resolution 108 moves beyond the traditional boundaries of political activism, instead it is anchored in a radical enactment of zoe-centered ethics. Erdrich demonstrates that Indigenous sovereignty is ontological in essence by integrating the survival of the tribe with the vitality of non-human beings including the lowly muskrat, the owl, the talking dog and conscious nature.

Erdrich's narrative ultimately proves that colonial violence despite its necropolitical practices fails to terminate a community whose identity is rooted in its relationship to the nature as she mentions, "*The Turtle Mountain Band* of Chippewa was not terminated" (p. 444). By embracing a relational ontology, the people of Turtle Mountain Band do not merely survive a policy of extinction but they affirm a posthumanism mode of existence i.e. an enduring, irremovable sovereign existence.

Conclusion

The Night Watchman (2020) by Louise Erdrich presents Native Indigenous resistance through a posthumanist approach grounded in relational ethics of survival. The novel exposes how the government exploits both Indigenous communities and natural world by settler colonial strategies. Erdrich demonstrates that the survival of Turtle Mountain Band is embedded in their relational ways of existence which cannot be simply terminated through legislative action. Through Braidotti's posthuman ideas this study shows that the Turtle Mountain Band's fight against the 1950s termination policy was not mere political struggle but it was a deep, spiritual struggle to protect their sovereign status and connection to a living world. This thesis has explored that Erdrich's narrative not only critiques liberal normative system of colonialism that historically marginalized native Indians but also gives a new path for their survival and resistance through relational ontology. The novel portrays the termination policy as necropolitical because it threatens Indigenous political status, land security, and collective self-determination.

This study has applied the theoretical framework of posthumanism to *The Night Watchman* (2020), drawing on key concepts of Rosi Braidotti's posthuman theory. By examining the characters' deep connections to non-human kin and the living land, this study demonstrates that their resistance is an affirmative response to colonial violence.

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Article Information:

Received	9-Jan-2026
Revised	23-Mar-2026
Accepted	26-Mar-2026
Published	30-Mar-2026

Declarations:

Authors' Contribution:

- All Authors **Conceptualization, and intellectual revisions, Data collection, interpretation, and drafting of manuscript**
- The authors agree to take responsibility for every facet of the work, making sure that any concerns about its integrity or veracity are thoroughly examined and addressed

▪ **Conflict of Interest:** NIL

▪ **Funding Sources:** NIL

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