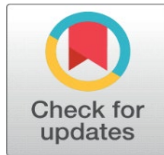


BELONGING BEYOND POSSESSION: PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP IN LOUISE ERDRICH'S LA ROSE

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ABSTRACT

Psychological Ownership is the feeling that the target object is one's own. It extends beyond material possession to include people, places, culture and memory. Erdrich's *La Rose* exhibits a complex narrative in which identity, restitution and the sense of belonging is comprehended through acts of extending, reclaiming and preserving. In *La Rose*, sense of self is asserted through the ownership and belongingness towards people and relationship. The paper, *Belonging Beyond Ownership: Mapping Native Identity and Psychological Rootedness in Select Novels of Louise Erdrich*, examines how the characters in the select novel, assert their identity and agency through the emotional belongingness with the people, family, ancestral ties, and cultural artefacts. Erdrich's novel *La Rose* gives a clear picture of the journey of finding and asserting the real self from a shattered and dismantled identity. This paper explores how the sense of ownership makes people efficacious, responsible and more attached to the target object and finally assert their self-identity.

Keywords: Belongingness, Identity, Ownership, Real Self, Rootedness

1. INTRODUCTION

Psychological Ownership, as a concept developed by Pierce, Kostova and Dirks, examines a state in which individuals feels as if the target object or a part of it is their own. This psychological phenomenon is not limited to any legal boundaries. It is not just legally owning the target object but emotionally becoming a part of it. In *La Rose*, Louise Erdrich constructs a powerful narrative around a tragic act of reparation – where a child is given away as compensation for an accidental death. Through this act and its after effects, Erdrich explores how the characters reclaim their selfhood, assert their identity and repair their relationships and communal balance by belonging and owning something psychologically, emotionally and spiritually.

According to John L. Pierce and his colleagues, psychological ownership arises when individual feel a sense of ownership or possession towards the target object. This feeling of ownership and belongingness make people invest their time, labour and their own self into it. Individuals even associate the target object with a sense of identity. Through this possession towards the target object, individuals aver and anchor their self-identity. Psychological Ownership exhibits four features of development (i) Self-efficacy, (ii) Self-accountability, (iii) Sense of Belongingness (iv) Self-

identity. The final stage of complete development is Self-identity. Individuals should keep their identity projectible and tangible to maintain their own agency in the society. Unlike the Western idea of possession, Native American concept of ownership is completely meant to be emotional, psychological, sacred and spiritual.

The most significant instance of psychological ownership in the novel is the transfer of *La Rose* from Landreaux and Emaline to Peter and Nola as a token of compensation and replacement for the accidental death of Dusty. Landreaux and Emaline decides to give their away child as they are rooted towards their cultural practices and rituals. The act of handing over their child to their neighbour shows that they are completely rooted to their traditions and rituals. Their rootedness towards their traditions helps them identity themselves as the real Natives of America. Even though *La Rose* is not any object of possession, all adults in the novel feel a deep and embodies connection to him. *La Rose* becomes the psychological and emotional bridge of restitution, reconciliation and reclamation of selfhood.

Emaline, even after handing over her son to Nola, never ceases to feel like she is his mother. She goes to Nola's house regularly to meet *La Rose*. But slowly she becomes an unwanted guest in the household of Nola. But *La Rose* heals Nola, repairs her and makes her to claim her lost identity. *La Rose* is not merely a child; he becomes a living symbol of emotional repair, cultural rootedness, ancestral continuity and healer. Nola who was burdened by the grief of Dusty's demise, exerts maternal psychological ownership on *La Rose*, to get back her identity as a mother. Nola who was completely disturbed by the death of her own son, slowly becomes depressed and begins to experience some psychological issues. Psychological and emotional damage can shatter one's own identity. Nola asserts her motherhood by claiming ownership over *La Rose*.

The novel intricately links psychological ownership to land and place. The family's connectedness towards their ancestral burial grounds shows it evidently. Land is never considered to be a commodity, here land is worshipped and respected. Land is seen as a sacred terrain, where both living and the dead lives. In this case, the target object is the land that they worship. The sense of belongingness towards the target object often turns out to an extension of self, reasserting the idea that both identity and land are closely-knit together. Landreaux's journey into the sweat lodge, and the family's care for burial grounds, claim their ownership through cultural memory and ecological unconsciousness. The family's care for the land they own shows their efficacious and accountable nature. Soon, they become emotionally attached to their land building a sense belongingness between them. Through the reclamation of their ancestral burial grounds, Landreaux and his family strongly assert their identity as a Native Americans.

La Rose inherits not just a name but a legacy. The name *La Rose* is passed down through generations, symbolising continuity and cultural endurance. The story of the first *La Rose*, a healer and spirit guide, functions as an ancestral narrative that induces purpose and rootedness in the present *La Rose*. Through story-telling, Erdrich explains how ownership of culture and history is passed down as psychological inheritance. By knowing, telling and embodying stories, characters lay claim to their lineage and collective identity. The oral tradition in *La Rose* becomes a tool for psychological ownership, echoing how oral traditions and the rootedness towards them affirms identity and relational belonging.

Psychological Ownership served as a tool for resistance and survival. For Native characters in *La Rose*, asserting ownership over their children, oral traditions and land is a form of asserting their own self. The novel explores psychological ownership as an act of survival, reclaiming one's own self and the identity. The characters' sense of ownership extends beyond individual ego. It is communal, inherited, and spiritually grounded. Louise Erdrich's *La Rose* is a profound meditation on ownership beyond material. Through the characters, she shows that psychological ownership is deeply human-rooted in relationships, memory, sacrifice and the desire to belong. The present paper, *Belonging Beyond Possession: Psychological Ownership in Louise Erdrich's La Rose*, comments on how the characters of the novel assert their real and true self through claiming ownership over another entity. The claim of ownership and the sense of belongingness make the individuals extend their self to the target object, being connected to what is their own.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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