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The Place of Memory in John Burnside's *The Locust Room*

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the interdisciplinary ecocriticism in John Burnside's novel *The Locust Room* (2001). The article's main focus will be on ecocriticism and psychoanalysis as a conceptual framework. Using ecocriticism, the concepts of dwelling and ecoconsciousness will be applied as ecocritical concepts to analyse the environmental nature depicted in the novel. On the other hand, the concept of anxiety will be utilized to explore the psychological anxious feelings of the novel's protagonist, Paul. The protagonist's psychological anxiety develops throughout the plot. The cause of his anxious sufferings is the male-rape phenomenon which is common at his university campus. To get rid of his anxiety, the protagonist tends to live in alienation to escape rape, and he decides to live in natural settings alone with animals and insects. Accordingly, the study follows a textual analysis of the environmental settings to argue nature as an exit for the protagonist's anxiety. The interdisciplinary interconnection between ecocriticism and psychoanalysis will be elaborated by citing Cheryll Glotfelty's concept of ecoconsciousness, Greg Garrard's concept of dwelling, and Sigmund Freud's concept of anxiety.

Keywords: Alienation, anxiety, dwelling, ecoconsciousness, ecocriticism

INTRODUCTION

Burnside's *The Locust Room* (2001) is a series of narrative episodes telling the story of Paul. He is considered the main

protagonist of the novel throughout the events. Paul leads a peaceful life with his parents. He seems to be very close to his father. He loves his father because of the natural and wise characteristics that distinguish his father from other people. Yet, Paul does not have a good relationship with his mother because she is strict with his absences from the house. Gradually, Paul develops a strong affection for and

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interest in nature, especially environmental surroundings. Throughout the novel, he states that he learnt to love nature from his father. Paul's father becomes interested in sending Paul to the University of Cambridge for study, and Paul agrees to go. At the university hostel, he befriends many students, among whom is Clive. Afterward, Paul develops strange feelings. He becomes anxious when he hears of rape rumours at the university.

Paul's anxiety intensifies when he learns that his university friends have been raped. As the story unfolds, the real cause of his anxiety comes to be the feelings of guilt. Such feelings prove his repentance because he is the real rapist. In the course of the events, nobody knows who the real rapist is except for Paul, though there are serious investigations into the rapist's identity. Then, he is summoned to study practical courses in a locust room. He enjoys living with the locust room's animals, especially rabbits. When he finishes his courses, he returns to his home to find his father dead. Accordingly, his anxiety intensifies. He decides to return to the locust room to live in isolation and to enjoy staying in the gardens with the locust room's animals.

The Locust Room is primarily about Paul's anxiety. Accordingly, the novel could be classified as a psychological story situated in a psychic past that haunts a "social present, predominantly fantastic narratives" that "suggest that desire is structured and deformed within the family. Saturated with incestuous longings, these stories expose intrafamilial relations as

psychologically determining" (Moglen, 2001, p.7). Furthermore, the novel places a social emphasis on the realistic mode, and fantastic "narratives" that "had an intrapsychic focus. They (the novel fantastic narratives) mapped interior states produced by possessive and affective forms of individualism, and they exposed the anxious melancholy that the modern order of social differences induced" (p.7).

The psychological attributes of *The Locust Room* provide a vivid picture of how human beings can be affected by external realities that help or harm their psychological state. The novel's successive events provide sufficient examples of the protagonist's developing anxiety. The most important turning point in the protagonist character is his predilection to natural scenes, which he learned from his father. The events continue in different episodes, reaching a point where the protagonist recognizes his anxiety and realizes how he feels relieved when he is in environmental settings. The protagonist's encounter with other people makes him more anxious. Such anxiety could be "employed as a descriptive, informative, often explanatory way of tracing and communicating developments, processes or changes without necessarily raising expectations of interesting, surprising or unpredictable turns" (Hühn, 2010, p.2).

In *The Locust Room*, the apparent escape from anxiety is living in isolation. Paul grows to love staying close to natural settings, such as gardens, locust rooms with animals, and forests. The fictional expression of this alienation is solitude at

the novel's narrative level. A life of solitude refers to living without other human beings. This life is quiet and preferred by people who tend to be isolated by nature. Similarly, Paul prefers living in such isolation to avoid living with other people. In this manner, Burnside offers a story "grounded in real life and fashioned with a view that is "not the only kind we like to write and consume" (Swirski, 2007, p.2).

Therefore, the current article studies the protagonist's anxiety. It will first scrutinize the gradual revelation of the reasons behind his anxiety and how he becomes psychologically disturbed. For studying anxiety, this article will focus on two aspects. The first one is the problem of rape, in which the protagonist participates as a rapist. Second, the death of the protagonist's father will be studied as another reason behind his growing anxiety. However, the problem of rape will be highlighted as the main cause of anxiety. The theoretical application of anxiety will be explicated out of Sigmund Freud's concept of anxiety and some related psychological anxiety disorders.

Then, the article will turn to a discussion of the interdisciplinary relationship between psychoanalysis and ecocriticism. As such, two ecocritical concepts will be applied, i.e., Cheryll Glotfelty's concept of ecoconsciousness and Greg Garrard's concept of dwelling. The concept of ecoconsciousness will serve as a link between the concept of anxiety and dwelling. In this manner, ecoconsciousness will reveal the function of nature in *The Locust Room*.

On the other hand, the function of nature will be elaborated by using the concept of dwelling. This concept unveils the significance of the environmental setting of the novel. Furthermore, the application of the concept of dwelling will be further detailed by explaining the roles of ancestry, work, death, and ritual in the light of Garrard's concept of dwelling.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANXIETY

The protagonist's anxiety does not arise suddenly. It develops as he comes to realize that he is not at ease in his family life. At the beginning of the novel, he suffers from sleeplessness. He feels that he is somewhat upset, but he does not recognize the real cause of his anxiety: "By the light from the window, he [Paul] could tell that she [his mother] was dreaming; he had seen enough sleeping women to recognise the look of the dreamer on her face, and the faint blue tremors of attention that flickered beneath her eyelids" (p.1). In addition, he sleeps well in his room because he is still not psychologically "anxious". This is because of the negative relationship with his mother: "He had been in her room for some time, excited by the thought of what was to come, but comfortable and easy in himself, in no way anxious or troubled, in no way afraid" (p.1).

Paul's agitated feelings are quite related to a number of experiences he had undergone at some point in his life. Because of that experience, he develops a psychological disorder. In *Anxiety Disorders*, Stephen Stahl (2013) discusses the catastrophic

implications of anxiety. Stahl argues that “[A] basic assumption in the management of anxiety is the need for the patient to tolerate and accept the experience of anxiety, without catastrophizing about improbable dire outcomes, and without using avoidance as an escape strategy” (p.5). To complicate matters further, there is increasing evidence that there are critical periods during a “life span when we are vulnerable to the development of anxiety disorders” (Freud, 1979, p.21).

Similarly, in *The Locust Room*, the protagonist’s anxiety is connected to his family life. The family constitutes a basic refuge for his safe, happy life. This becomes more conspicuous when his father dies later in the story. Nevertheless, his present state is still influenced by his dependence on his parents, specifically when he was a child. Therefore, he remembers his perfect childhood to escape from thinking about the problem of rape in which he is involved: “and it was there in his memories of childhood, in the grey, early morning cool of his paper round, or the long drives with his father, out on the weekend, when they escaped from the suspended animation of the house, on their contrived fishing trips” (p.5). In addition, Paul’s close relationship with his family appears in his mother’s care for him: “His mother would stand watching him a moment, in her slippers and dressing gown, with that sceptical, careworn look on her face. She would wait a long time – maybe a minute or more – before she spoke, always quiet, but always with a note of suppressed annoyance, always on the verge of an accusation” (p.7).

Paul’s developing anxiety uncovers his agitated psychology. His childhood life is full of exuberant situations when he used to live peacefully with his parents. In this case, he recounts these beautiful moments as he remembers his previous life. Anxiety studies relate some causes of anxiety to the memories through which anxious characters recall their past experience. In this way, anxious characters may develop traumatic symptoms. This is because the “implicit memories are memories recorded without conscious awareness of the experiences behind them. Whether the memories of trauma are implicit or explicit, the trauma itself has a drastic pruning effect on neural networks of the brain, closing off pathways of security and reinforcing pathways of anxiety” (Freud, 1979, p.27). In addition, anxiety has symptomatic effects that play an important role in developing anxiety, whereby “in exploring what’s behind symptoms of anxiety, it’s important to remember the intricate connection between the physical body and emotions. Not all individuals who have physical symptoms of panic or anxiety have anxiety disorder” (p.27). Moreover, the symptoms of anxiety may refer to some aspects of psychological depression and “conceptualizations of pathogenesis of anxiety and depression may have a strong bearing on issues concerning the classification of emotional disorder” (Stein et al., 2010, p.27). The symptomatic indications of anxiety, moreover, are chronic (lasting for a long time), and they need much time to be overcome because “anxiety disorders tend to be chronic conditions” (Emilien, 2002, p.17).

The description of an anxiety disorder is similar to Paul's position in *The Locust Room*. He lives the early periods of his life with his family. When he grows up, however, he leaves them to go to university. In this case, he just remembers his beautiful life with his parents: "For a long time now, he had understood that he was immune to their world – that, unless he allowed himself to be caught, they [his parents] would never find him out" (p.4). When his parents lose him, they search for him to ensure that he is safe from any harm: "Naturally, they were afraid – and he came to see, as he learned to enjoy it more, to relax into it, that he even had a right to their fear" (p.3).

Paul's parents consider the value of their son. In this sense, Paul is strongly connected to his family: "he was a character they would have recognised on film, or in a book, but would never acknowledge in real life: a vivid creature, part man, part animal, but also something more, something indescribable" (p.4). Paul's parents' care absence would result in anxiety because "anxious" persons may have vulnerable characteristics that predate the onset of their anxiety "and play a part in its development" (Freud, 1979, p.14). For example, the relationship between Paul and his parents is strong enough. His happy life "predates" his anxious life at the university. As long as he stays with them, he develops his skills as a human being: "He was so good at this now, so skilled at his trade. He could cross a cluttered room in the dark and make no sound. There were times when he was sure he could stop breathing if he had to" (p.3).

The anonymity of the rapist is a main factor of Paul's anxiety. This is because anxiety appears in the form of "acute physical symptoms" (Stossel, 2013, p.2). In fact, he is the rapist but he hides this fact to avoid being summoned and trialled by the police. However, he appears anxious when he talks about the rape declaration in the newspaper. He discusses this problem with his housemate, Clive. This is the physical symptom of his anxiety: "He may have been afraid of Clive, and perhaps with good reason, which partly explained why he kept to himself so much. In fact, the shyness, the fondness for sweets, the way he talked put Paul in mind of a displaced schoolboy; in spite of his sallow skin and balding pate, it was hard not to think of Steve as an overgrown child" (p.17).

Similarly, Paul suffers from "negative thoughts" and holds certain negative beliefs because of his fear of rape. He is afraid of the notion of rape itself: "he had almost trusted in the notion – that what he was looking for might not exist, and even if it did, it might be wholly meaningless to other people" (p.27). His thoughts haunt him when he is alone: "when he was alone, he caught glimpses of that reality (rape reality); when he was with other people, it vanished. Together people constructed a narrative that did not include the fundamental, but made of the world what was needed for social life to continue. Paul wanted to go beyond that" (p.27).

In anxiety studies, fear is a psychological implication of anxiety because "fear is a normal healthy part of human experience.

It is an appropriate response to threats, challenges, and potential loss” (Freud, 1979, p.4). Furthermore, it develops “when anxiety persists and interferes with daily life, anxiety disorder may be diagnosed” (p.4). Therefore, anxiety interference goes through “panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, social phobia, substance abuse, and suicidal tendencies” (p.44). Anxiety disorder also develops because “anxiety is too intense” and “it can interfere with [physical] performance” (Antony, 2008, p.7).

Anticipating danger is normal in Paul’s life. He suffers from living alone after his father’s death: “Paul would be dispatched, alone, on the ghost train while his father waited, mock-anxious” (p.227). He recalls all this in memory: “But then, everything had shifted now. It was as if the solitude Paul had begun to learn out at the field station had quietly taken over his life” (p.250). He still remembers the good days at home with his father, and thus, he becomes sorrowful: “He felt an odd sinking, a shiver of something that came close to grief, as she turned and headed for the door, and the impulse to jump up” (p.260). After his father’s death, “his whole life changed” (p.264). In addition, he recalls all of what happened to him through a nostalgic memory: “he never stopped thinking about what happened” (p.264). Paul’s grievous state is neurotic, and he wants to live in nature to obtain some psychological calmness. The following section will describe the natural atmosphere in which he tries to live.

ECOCONSCIOUSNESS

Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) argues that ecoconsciousness is used by writers to “induce elevated states of consciousness within themselves, he suspects, and in their accounts of the phenomenon of awareness they are as much literary psychologists as they are natural historians” (p.xxxii). This state of consciousness had a psychological dimension “of alienation from nature” (p.xxvii).

The close affinity between nature and psychology is influenced by the environmental setting. In *The Locust Room*, Paul’s tries to find alleviation for his anxiousness in the surrounding settings. However, because he was previously alienated from nature, he could not cure his anxiety. Yet, he decides to go outside “where he could slip in and wait, for hours if need be, as still and silent as a hunting cat” (p.2). He also contemplates the surrounding “geography” to get rid of his disturbed inner feelings:

and he had assumed that every country had two geographies: a clear, weather-beaten coast-line, where things were constantly changing, the endless motion of the sea eroding and cleansing whatever it touched, the wind honing everything down to the bone or the bare wood, and that dark, still interior, where things lay still and rotted, like the fallen trees in the Den woods, that lay for years turning black in the rain and finally

flaking into great rancid pieces, or the huge tips of slurry and straw in the farmer's yards, that appeared never to diminish. (p.61)

Here, Paul begins to realize the necessity of psychological alleviation. The psychological needs for rest and alleviation reflected in "the facile sense of harmony, even identity, with one's surroundings" (Slovic, 1992, p.4). This harmony is found "only by testing the boundaries of self against an outside medium" (p.4). The self and the medium thus provide a "sense of correspondence with the natural world in general, or with particular landscapes", and the sense of correspondence with nature "does fluctuate, sometimes seeming secure and other times tenuous" (p.5). The landscape includes different natural settings where "there are many other environmental features that can also be related to quality of life" (Childs, 1983, p.210). These environmental features provide benefits when the "environmental quality continues to increase as a valued component of quality of life" (p.210). Such environmental quality is "relatively free of the distressing social disturbances" (p.210). It also has "a fair degree of plausibility and attractiveness" (Wilson, 1999, p.70). Environmental attractiveness, therefore, is "a form of dispute resolution and a basis in accordance with which people determine their behaviour" (p.72).

In the case of Paul, the environmental quality is relevant to his agitating psyche. This agitation is caused by both rape and

his father's death. He remembers the natural places where his father used to take him: "The Den proper was an old Pictish site – or so his father had told him, though there was nothing to mark the place as historically important – and consisted of a series of odd-shaped rocks with what seemed to be narrow steps cut into the stone and a few bleared carvings on the walls of the narrow passage that ran between the two largest outcrops" (p.61). For this reason, he prefers being alone with the environment to withdraw to this imagination:

Nobody knew what the purpose of the site had been, but there was something compelling about the place. Paul could easily imagine it as a place of sacrifice or pagan ritual, and – though he would have been hard pressed to say if it was a sense of sin that drew him in, or the possibility of something quite other, some sacramental moment, some dark and holy vision – he gravitated towards that central spot, which was always damp and moss-green, even in high summer. (pp. 61-62)

When, Paul goes through the woods, he notices the trails of other people who left the place. This is the notion of psychological consciousness: "Out there, you could find the ashes of a stranger's fire, still warm sometimes, amongst the autumn leaves, or sodden with two day's rain; out there, you might find a strange bone hidden amongst the bedsprings in a midden" (p.62). Being

in this place, he is “somewhere across a summer’s afternoon – somewhere close by, but not so close that you could trace it to its source – you might hear the small cry of a wounded animal that could just as easily have been a child; at such times, you would stop dead in your tracks, all of a sudden, and you would be aware that you were being watched, though no one else was visible” (p.62). Paul, in this regard, is conscious of nature’s blessing. Such blessing is great, even when there are no “relationships and interactions with other people” (Mustol, 2012, p.230).

As a result, the concept of ecoconsciousness is applied to analyse the sense of alienation in nature. To illustrate, ecoconsciousness provides a remedial insight into nature i.e., natural environment heals human anxiety (Mustol, 2012, p.230). In this sense, presumably, understanding the remedial function of nature helps people to appreciate nature and its integral presence in our life. Just so, my critical usages of the concept of ecoconsciousness encompass the awareness of nature as a remedial exit for Paul’s anxiety in Burnside’s *The Locust Room*.

In *The Locust Room*, Paul’s life necessities are gained from nature. Nature saturates his individual experience with the environmental surroundings. He remembers these surroundings in the following passage: “All his life, Paul had lived a street away from the shore and he had spent most of his time on the beach. He felt safe there, in that world of light and weather, and boats in the harbour, crowding against the walls, red and blue and yellow hulls with friendly names

– Shirley, Margaret-Ann, *Morning Star*” (p.60). He goes to environmental places to enjoy nature: “Inland, though, crossing the wide fields, or entering the darkness of the woods around the Den, it was different. It was only a three-mile walk – five miles on his bike if he followed the road – but inland was a whole other territory” (p.60). He also likes living in the woods alone: “When you were within their bounds, the woods seemed to go on forever. Paul was aware of the points at which they stopped: the old kilns, on one side, which had belonged to the estate, back in the old days, but were ramshackle and empty now, and the border where the wood met farmland on the other, towards the north” (p.62). He also loves being alone: “Now he enjoys solitude: “It was as if the solitude Paul had begun to learn out at the field station had quietly taken over his life” (p.250).

In the same manner, environmental places produce a sense of place. The sense of place is an ecocritical representation of ecoconsciousness. In this way, “it is not man who dominates nature, who shapes it according to his own needs” (Geyer, 1976, p.10); rather, it is nature that participates in shaping the spatial sense of place. The human needs for nature are the “manifestations of alienation and what place they should be assigned” (p.10). Here, nature is “purifying, innocent yet wise, the only real touchstone of what is good and right and beautiful” (Turner, 1996, p.42). The beautiful aspects of nature produce ecoconscious meanings that “seem powerfully to imply anticipation and preparation for future changes” (p.44).

Such future changes present “nature as the unreflexive, the unpremeditated, and thus distinguish it from human activity” (p.44). Psychological emotions, consequently, reveal “how the environment impacts upon the senses” (p.69). The individual sense of place has a fair relation with the “experience [of] the environment” through the senses (p.70). It is a compromising “relationship between symptoms such as nervousness, depression, sleeplessness, undue irritability...” (Cassidy, 1997, p.72).

These psychological feelings are experienced by Paul in *The Locust Room*: “when he was approaching a new place, he always knew the best way in, as if he belonged to that borderline of cool air at the window, to the half-life of greenery and rain in the almost imperceptible gap between the frame and the sash” (p.1). He is still close to silence and pure nature: “Silence. Stealth. That quality hunting animals possess, of moving silently in the night, aware of everything – aware, even before it happened, of the sudden rush of wings, or the quick magnetic glide of skin and bone through water or undergrowth”(p.3). In so doing, he wants to get rid of his anxious feelings caused by rape in his previous experience. Therefore, he compensates for these feelings by going back to his job as a photographer: “What he wanted was a photograph, not of the darkness itself – which he knew was impossible – but of the colours that darkness revealed: the gardenia of a lit street sign; the egg-yolk gold of a Belisha beacon: the shell-pink of street lamps, still burning in the milk-and-ash grey of the dawn” (p.9).

Paul’s life is a continuity between nature and the perfect life, which is “a pure place because humans live in harmony with a tamed version of nature, the wild becomes either the apex of purity because it is devoid of humans or the pit of terror because it is untamed by humans” (Van, 2008, p.34). In this regard, environmental places can be “viewed in terms of place/setting, and/or environment, all of which have taken on richer meaning” (Johnson, 2009, p.623). Such settings are “by nature interdisciplinary” (p.623). This interdisciplinary nature refers to “the relationship between culture and nature” (p.623). It also refers to “the relationships between living organisms and their environment” (p.623). This interdisciplinary nature will be discussed in the following section. It will focus on Paul as a human element and *The Locust Room*’s setting as a physical “organism” of nature. The analysis of dwelling, furthermore, will be pursued in terms of Garrard’s concept of dwelling.

THE SENSE OF DWELLING

The special feature of a dwelling is that it is the place where individuals tend to live. In *The Locust Room*, dark woods are the place where Paul loves to live: “It was the best part of his day; he was happiest in those first couple of hours, from the last of the darkness to the first of the light: in the faint, ice-blue intimation of a spring dawn, or the lime-coloured wash of a summer’s morning over fields and meadows, a light with no trace of white in it, no glare, no ordinary brightness” (p.10). In addition, he

wants to be secluded from other people and to live with animals: “Paul shook his head. He’d noticed a thin odour on the landing outside the new man’s room, reminiscent of animal pens, or damp straw” (p.14). He does not want to live with Clive and the other roommates because they remind him of the rape experience: “Paul walked to the door and knocked – he wondered if Steve could ever hear the conversations he had with Clive, sitting up here, directly above the kitchen – but there was no answer and reassured that he was alone in the house, Paul crossed the landing to his own room and lay down” (p.25).

Paul’s wandering state is the implication of the concept of dwelling. He longs for a calm place to dwell. He wants to be psychologically alleviated. In this regard, Garrard (2004) claims that dwelling “implies the long-term imbrication of humans in a landscape of memory, ancestry and death, of ritual, life and work” (p.108). Furthermore, dwelling is “a distraction from a necessary confrontation with the undiminished realities of suffering and injustice” (Thom, 1984, p.36). It is an “alienation from the natural world” (p.36). Such alienation “expresses a real need for protection from avoidable anxieties and therefore constitutes an oblique protest against the status quo” (p.37). The “craving” for relieved anxiety “must be satisfied through practical reforms that put an end to the real causes of terror and insecurity” (p.37). Consequently, the environmental implication of nature is that “the idea and idiom of ‘dwelling’” is “freighted

unavoidably with such connotations, which inevitably appeal to those who lack such subtlety and are not prepared to make such efforts” (p.39). These connotations are “measured in wild animals and birdsong, meditation and instruction” (Garrard, 2004, p.110).

Similarly, Paul’s life is an example of environmental dwelling. He longs to live in nature with animals to get rid of his anxiety: “It takes him a moment to realise where he is: instead of the usual sounds and smells – birdsong, a certain freshness of the air, the scent of cut grass – there is a city outside: a whole aching city, just beyond the tiny, high window of the cell” (p.147). He enjoys living in the glasshouse near the locust room to avoid the dangers of life caused by the rape. So, he decides to live close to environmental places: “Paul would keep the cases clean, tend the gardens, damp down the glasshouses where the special food crops were grown, and sow fresh seed when required” (p.162).

According to Garrard, ritual is one imbrication (elaboration) of the concept of dwelling (p.108). In *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, Catherine Bell (1997) argues that personal rituals are “reconciliation (penance)” for restricting sins (p.98). Persons with repentant feelings tend to get rid of their sadness by interacting with other people (p.98). Yet, these people may be a cause of sadness which sad persons try to avoid (Cole, 2004, p.125). These persons are prone to sadness and self-reprimanding because they commit certain sins which upset them (Schechner, 1993, p.228).

Hence, personal rituals relate to persons' behaviours. In *The Locust Room*, Paul tries to interact with other people, like Steve and Clive though he knows that he may rape them. Rape, here, is a sin which causes his sadness.

Other than personal rituals, Paul's psychological state is related to the environmental dwelling surroundings. The concept of dwelling requires psychological degrees that "have not simply added extra limbs to an unchanged critical core; rather, they have profoundly complicated and nuanced the core itself" (Mackenzie, 2012, p.16). Louisa Mackenzie adds that "the notion of the radical separateness of non-human nature and human culture continues to haunt some ecocritical practice and environmental activism" (p.16). Nature and its landscape "can continue to powerfully complicate a binary mode of thinking about nature" (p.20). Thus, dwelling is "a temporal landscape of long inhabitation" that coincides "with a known physical landscape" (Garrard, 2004, p.111).

The Locust Room abounds with dwelling scenes. It presents Paul's predilection to dwell in isolation and loneliness: "For now, at least, he was happy to be left alone" (p.163). This is because he has developed good relationships with the insects: "these huge, soft insects, unlike any Paul had ever seen, were lovingly tended by Tony [the locust room's owner], who was even more protective of their lit sanctuary than he was of the locust pods" (p.168). He spends all his time in the locust room and the surrounding garden: "On his second day at the insect

station, however, Paul was allowed to see them and, after an interminable lecture from Tony on procedures, and what to do if a single one of the creatures escaped" (p.168). Accordingly, he enjoys this style of living through remembering his past experience: "Paul was surprised at how strong and clear the memory was, how it tapped down to something deep in his mind, some area of separation and stillness that he had not been aware of till now, a sense, not of pride, but of something deeper and purer, a kind of aseity, a reservoir of affection, not only for Tony and his father, but also, more surprisingly, for himself" (p.170).

Therefore, nature is the key factor in the environmental implications of dwelling. Paul, for example, spends all his time in the locust room's garden: "after a few minutes of this nonsense, Paul got up and went out into the garden" (p.186). The garden is a reference to dwelling in a stable and calm setting. He walks around to look at the surrounding animals and landscapes: "And with a nod, Paul had gone, back out into the sunshine, past the tool shed, past the locked room where the rabbits lay, and away into the noise and heat and bustle of the city" (p.194). He wants to leave the cacophonous city life and enjoy nature. He loves the wind and the garden, which remind him of his childhood: "there was a cool sweetness under branches that always took him back to childhood, to afternoons he had spent in one of his hiding places, under a stand of sycamores out along the coast path" (pp.194-95). Here, Paul enjoys remaining isolated in the garden's surroundings

because he finds it suitable to mitigate his anxiety. His pleasure also becomes complete when he is alone with them: “truly happy when he was alone... not a hiding place, but dwelling, a refuge, a place of safe keeping for what Paul could only think of as the spirit” (p.211). So, the natural garden is a “refuge” from his anxious feelings.

The implication of dwelling is a refuge for psychological disorders because “every human being has an innate need to build and define place. These basic needs shape the relationships all people have with their place. These actions all come together in the term dwell” (Wolford, 2008, p.1). In addition, dwelling is evoked “to mark territory, and create a physical relationship with the environment” (p.1). In this regard, the place is a refuge in which the “environment accredits one’s ability to dwell with concrete elements” (p.1). Here, the environment is significant to him because “even when man has a physical place to rest and stay, there remains a need to leave or continue on a way, to journey, to search and find new interactions, a state that requires one leave a state of rest and enter into a state of unrest” (p.1).

It is the woods’ path that Paul often takes: “Now, as he followed the old familiar path along the railway line out into the woods, it began to snow. It had been cold in the night, the grass was streaked with hoar-frost, the puddles along the line were fretted and starred with ice, but this was the first real snow he had seen all year” (p.271). Paul enjoys walking through the path, which makes him happy because he does not feel

the fear of rape any more: “It made Paul want to laugh out loud, knowing that what really mattered was this fear [fear of rape], and the grace that came with it, when he surrendered himself to the world” (p.275). Now, he also feels happier, especially when he sees a fox in the woods. This is the notion of place dwelling that incorporates both place and animality in “harmony and balance” (Garrard, 2004, p.134). Harmony and balance represent Paul’s interaction with the woods, which is the spatial dimension of dwelling, and its animals, like the fox: “As he [Paul] stood quite still, gazing along the tracks to where the fox stood watching him, there was nothing to which he could truthfully say he belonged, other than to this world of silence and light, and this dangerous nostalgia for the other animals” (p.275). Now, the fox’s world (the woods) is Paul’s favourite place to dwell. It provokes the psychological nostalgia for rest: “The only way to inhabit this fox’s world was to become invisible in his own” (p.276). That is because “he was beginning to see that this quality – of estrangement, rather than alienation – was the best asset he had” (p.276). Thus, the woods, which is the natural environment, is Paul’s psychological escape from his anxiety.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored Burnside’s *The Locust Room* (2001). The study mainly focuses on the use of the protagonist’s memory. The protagonist goes through different stages during his lifetime. As he grows up, he becomes alienated from

his family, which represents a place of psychological stability for him. This psychological rest is disturbed when he leaves his family and goes to study. He develops anxious feelings because he commits rape. This protagonist's anxiety, thus, has been analysed in light of his growing unstable psychology. Accordingly, Freud's concept of anxiety has been applied to explore the protagonist's anxiety. Anxiety branches out of the protagonist's neurotic feelings caused by the problem of rape, which haunts him throughout the novel.

The protagonist's anxiety culminates in anxious feelings, which need to be alleviated. To argue for the proper alleviation of the protagonist's anxiety, two ecocritical concepts have been utilized. Glotfelty's concept of ecoconsciousness is used to determine the psychological dimension of ecocriticism available in *The Locust Room*. On the other hand, Garrard's concept of dwelling is used to analyse the novel's setting and its environmental function. These concepts are used to uncover the way in which the natural environment plays an important role in decreasing the protagonist's anxiety. Therefore, the novel's setting is analysed as a fictional representation of this natural environment. The setting's function, accordingly, has been emphasized as a proper escape from the protagonist's anxiety resulting from the problem of rape.

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