

# An Analysis to the Author's Presence in H.P. Lovecraft's Short Story, The Outsider

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**Abstract:** The artistry of a writer creates literature. It comes in a variety of types and shapes. They also give the author some thought. The Outsider, a short fiction, demonstrates the author's presence. This study examines Lovecraft's biography to show how his presence in the short tale is shown through the characters, settings, and symbols. At certain points in the story, it demonstrates how the author employs his or her emotions or sentiments when producing his or her literary work. This paper also applies the biographical analysis method of the qualitative approach. The acquired data are examined using the Mimetic Theory of Eric Auerbach, the Expressive Theory of M.H. Abrams, and the Psychoanalytic Theory of Sigmund Freud. The findings of the study demonstrate that there is a relationship between the author and his literary work. Character, environment, and symbolism all serve as representations of the author's life. This study also suggests performing additional research on H.P. Lovecraft and the protagonist's physical characteristics and writing prowess. The application of historical-biographical analysis is another option. Researchers may also look into additional, harder-to-see symbols significant to the short tale but not readily apparent.

**Keywords:** author's presence, biography, h.p. lovecraft, short story, the outsider.

## 1. Introduction

Literature originates from the Latin "litera," which means "an acquaintance with letters." It is a collection of creative works that can be oral, written, or visual and that use creative language to accurately depict the feelings, ideas, and experiences of the human condition [21]. An online article written by Holly Landis about characters in literature and more, explains that characters are the people, animals, or beings, in a novel, play, or other forms of literature [10].

Short stories are a work of fiction that shows literary devices such as character, setting, plot, conflict, and theme. It contains only a few characters and often has one setting, plot, conflict, and theme [26]. Master Class states in Understanding Story Setting: 5 Tips for Choosing a Setting how the setting is considered one of the most significant elements serving as the backdrop of a story. Authors create the setting either to let the readers experience the story in a real-world setting or to let them go into a different dimension to experience what it feels like to be in another space [12].

Howard Philip Lovecraft or commonly known as H.P. Lovecraft is an American author who is considered as one of the most important horror authors of the 20th century for his frightening, horrific short novels and stories [20]. The dissertation, H.P. Lovecraft & The French Connection: Translation, Pulps, and Literary History implies that Lovecraft is a weird fiction writer. It is a genre of emulsified horror and science [18].

The Outsider is a short story written by H.P. Lovecraft in 1921 and published in *Weird Tales* on April 1926 [11]. It is a story that follows an unnamed protagonist who lives alone in a castle and has little to no memory of the events of their life. Pyy Järvinen's *The Social Outsider Generating Horror Through External and Internal Alienation in "The Outsider" and "The Music of Erich Zann" by H.P. Lovecraft*, analyses how alienation is portrayed in H.P. Lovecraft's writing, and how it generated a horror genre. One of Lovecraft's writings that is alienated as the central theme of the story is *The Outsider* [8].

This study is beneficial to literary scholars, literary teachers, and researchers. The scope of this study focuses on the short story *The Outsider* by H.P. Lovecraft. This study looks into the author's presence of H.P. Lovecraft with the help of Eric Auerbach's Mimetic Theory, M.H. Abrams' Expressive Theory, and Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory as the main theories. This study is limited to the characters, settings, and symbolism present in *The Outsider*.

The study investigates the author's presence in H.P. Lovecraft's short story, *The Outsider*. Specifically, it looks into the characters, settings, and symbolism. The study is supported by Eric Auerbach's Mimetic Theory, M.H. Abrams' Expressive Theory, and Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory.

The first theory is Eric Auerbach's mimetic theory, in his book *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, he states that time and people influence the author in his literary piece [24]. According to Joyce and Williams, literature copies the ever-changing events in society [3]. Mimetic Theory is used in the study as it looks into how the short story shows the author's presence and it specifically examines the characters, the settings, and the symbols that could be associated with the events in Lovecraft's life.

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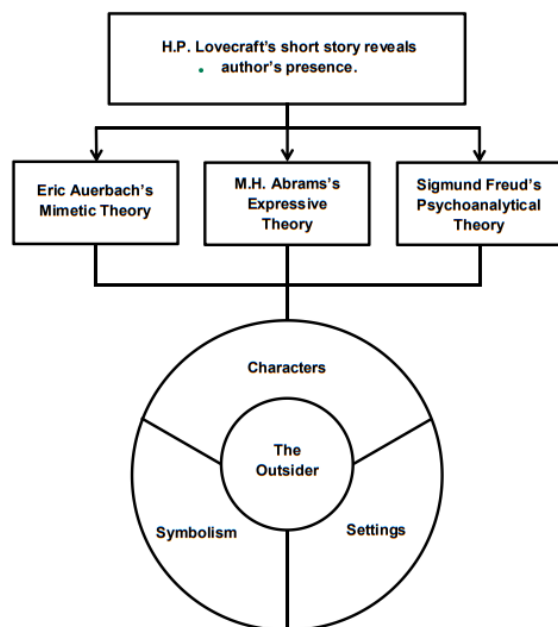


Fig. 1. Schematic diagram of the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study

The second theory is M.H. Abrams' expressive theory, it is usually used in analyzing the vision of the author's work and according to this theory, art was seen as a portrayal of the unique, individual feelings as well as the emotions of the artist [23 & 5]. M.H. Abrams calls it an expressive theory of art since the artist himself will become the major element of his literary work that generates both artistic product and the criteria by which it is judged [1]. In this theory, artists express their emotions and some of their works do have arguments, beliefs, and ideas about how the artist portrays their emotions in the work they have created [7]. The expressive theory will be of great use in this study to know if H.P. Lovecraft uses his emotions or feelings while writing his literary work. It will investigate the connection between his form of art and his life.

The last theory is Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory which argues that literary texts, like dreams, express the author's unconscious desires and anxieties and how a certain literary work is a manifestation of the neurosis of the author [6]. He uncovers what the authors are repressing which paves the way for the creation of the triad model of the mind: the Id, the irrational unconscious, the Superego, and the Ego [19]. Freud believed our childhood has a great influence on us when we become adults. Sigmund Freud focused on the importance of the unconscious mind, and the goal of psychoanalysis is to make the unconscious mind into a conscious mind [13]. An important Freudian terminology, dream work, is a process in which real-life events or desires are transformed into dream images. Dreams and literature often avoid making clear statements and tend to communicate indirectly [25]. Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytical Theory is a means of understanding a literary text by focusing on and examining the author's personality, life, experiences, and desires [2]. This theory is utilized in the study by looking into Lovecraft's biography to reveal his presence in the short story through the characters,

settings, and symbols.

## 2. Methodology

This research employs a biographical analysis, a type of qualitative research that is a strategy that carefully examines how the author's life and the literary work relate to one another [4].

The primary data source is HP Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories* in E-Book copy, published in 1999. The secondary data sources are taken from online articles, reliable websites, blogs, theses, and dissertations.

This study follows three phases. Phase 1. Characters, Phase 2. Settings, and Phase 3 Symbolism.

Phase 1 involves the crucial assessment and evaluation of a character in a literary work, which focuses on the application of Freud's psychoanalytic theory. During this phase, the central task is to identify the character's unique characteristics, which in turn can be associated with the author's personal experiences and life.

Phase 2 focuses on examining the settings of the short story, using Eric Auerbach's mimetic theory to connect them with the author's personal life. By considering the scenes, time, and place of the story, similarities between the author's experiences and the literary work are identified, revealing the author's presence within the story.

Phase 3 concentrates on studying the symbolism in the short story using M.H. Abrams' theory. Symbols in the story are examined and connected to their significance in the author's life, ultimately revealing the connection between the author's life and their work through these symbols.

This study is in a qualitative research design. It utilizes biographical analysis. The ethical principles are compiled to guarantee that all data is valid and the objectives of the study are clearly stated. It is not involved in any group which might affect the validity of the data in the study, and neither violates the rights of human beings nor harms animals. The sources of the data used in the study were acquired from the public domain where it is accessible for everyone to obtain a copy, thus, it does not violate any laws that protect one's intellectual property.

## 3. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the data in order to answer the sub-problems raised in the study granted through the literary method used.

### A. Characters

Table 1 presents the evaluation of the character through Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory.

The short story presents the main character as someone who is living his life, independently without the help of anyone. This characteristic mirrors Lovecraft's independence as he learns at a young age. At the age of 2, he becomes a rapid talker and is acquainted with the alphabet from his blocks and book pictures [9]. It shows the character's and Lovecraft's similarity in learning independently through the books he read.

However, in 1921, after his mother's death, he becomes a man of his own and is capable of making decisions without the

approval of others [22]. This exhibits another occurrence of independence Lovecraft and the character share.

Table 1  
Character analysis

Character	Characteristics	Author's Presence
Narrator	Independent	At the age of 2, he was a rapid talker and familiar with the alphabet (Joshi 30)
		Made his own decisions without the approval of others after his mother's death (Tyson 74)
		Produced the <i>Rhode Island Journal of Astronomy</i> at the age of 13 (Poole 64)
	Imaginative	Created other fictional names (Tyson 23-24)
		Written <i>Dagon</i> based on a dream (Joshi 292)
		Crafted some of his works based on his dreams (Poole 89-90)
		His dreams paved the way for the creation of his <i>Mythos</i> (Tyson 116)
	Accepting	In 1908 to 1914 he withdrew from society (Tyson 45)
		Acknowledged his lack of physical endurance (Joshi 321)
		Described himself having a weak heart, a parasomniac, and the victim of a nervous disposition (Poole 10)
		His failure to master algebra made him realize that he could never professional work in either chemistry or astronomy (Joshi 152)
	Persevering	Continued working despite the headaches and poor concentration (Joshi 351)
		Contemplated self-extinction for he never gave up his love of learning and uncovering mysteries (Poole 61-64)
Carried on to write astronomical books and <i>Principal Astronomical Work</i> (Joshi 155)		
Despite the changes in his life, he continues as though nothing has changed (Tyson 38)		

At the age of thirteen, Lovecraft begins producing his Rhode Island Journal of Astronomy which he publishes at least sixty-nine weekly newsletters [14]. His independence in creating and producing the periodicals demonstrates his ability to be self-reliant and portrays a resemblance to the main character.

Lovecraft's imaginative persona is visible in his creation of fictional names or pseudonyms. Upon his discovery of the Arabian Nights in 1895 and Greek mythology, he becomes passionate about all things in Arab and Greek. He creates the name Abdul Alhazred, a name he takes upon himself and the author of his *Necronomicon*, and Lucius Valerius Messala [22].

Similarly, Lovecraft displays being imaginative in his creation of *Dagon* with the use of his dream. He notes that a dream inspired his story. He further explains how he knows what the character does for he dreams of the incident and how he feels [9].

Furthermore, according to Poole [14], Lovecraft crafts some of his works based on his dreams. His letters between 1919 and 1932 indicate that he loses himself in a world of nightmares. He utilizes his time to go into the first of several productive periods of writing horror fiction.

Moreover, Tyson [22] states that Lovecraft's dreams pave the way for the creation of his *Mythos*. It is the ideal child of Lovecraft's dreams, visions, and astral projections. His dreams give the *mythos* their forms and impulse. This displays a similarity of the main character's characteristics to Lovecraft's imagination that has inspired the creation of his stories.

Another characteristic Lovecraft and the protagonist share is acceptance. From 1908 to 1941 he withdraws from society and lives as a hermit. He tries to make himself invisible [22]. His acceptance of being an outsider to society and his acquaintances

have motivated his withdrawal from society. However, with his withdrawal comes the creation of Lovecraft as an artist.

Lovecraft has also come to accept his lack of physical endurance. In December 1917, he notes that his questionnaire for his drafting in the Great War arrives. He discusses it with the head physician of the local board and is noted as "totally and permanently unfit" [9].

Additionally, Lovecraft accepts his poor health [14]. The main character similarly exhibits this acceptance at the end of the story as they accept being an outsider, a stranger in this timeline, and to others.

Lastly, the shared characteristic of acceptance is Lovecraft's realization of not working professionally in his dream field. His inability to master algebra made him realize that he could never work professionally in either chemistry or astronomy [9]. His acceptance of his limitations and shortcomings portrays the acceptance the main character shows in the short story.

The final characteristic Lovecraft and the main character share is perseverance. Lovecraft believes that he cannot be physically strong. He continues to work despite the fact that he often experiences poor concentration, and headaches [9].

In addition, Lovecraft was normally a curious person. He contemplates self-extinction for he never gives up his passion for learning and discovering mysteries. The urge to learn things makes him persevere to seek answers, and eager to learn about the things that interest him [14]. Just like the story, the narrator correlates to Lovecraft as never giving up only to reach their goals.

Likewise, Lovecraft carries on to write astronomical books and *Principal Astronomical Work* [9]. Similarly, the narrator of the story likes stars, light, as well as the moon, which has a lot to do with astronomy. The character wants to see the light so he searches for it even if there is no certainty that the character can reach the light and the moon, he continues to climb the castle with perseverance.

Despite the changes in his life, he continues as though nothing has changed. He continues to live and promises to earn enough money to buy back their family mansion [22].

These characteristics the character and Lovecraft share express the author's presence in the short story, *The Outsider*. The author's presence in the character shows that he is already literature in terms of letters at the age of 2. He becomes independent, following the passing of his mother. He publishes his *Rhode Island Journal of Astronomy*, *Dagon*, and *Mythos* at 13. He withdraws from society because he is ill. He understands that he cannot succeed in the fields of chemistry or astronomy as he struggles with algebra. Despite this, he still has a passion to learn and uncover mysteries.

### B. Settings

Table 2 exhibits on the analysis of the settings with the use of Eric Auerbach's *Mimetic Theory*.

The house that Lovecraft and his mother live in when his father dies is depicted in the short story as an old, dreadful castle [22]. As he gets older, he spends a lot of enjoyable time in the mansion. When his grandma Robie passes away in 1896, he recounts how it "plunged the household into gloom" and how it

was difficult for everyone to cope. His mother and aunts' somber attire frightened him [14]. In an article by Shlomi Ron [15], locations are significant in a literary piece for choosing the right setting in a scene sets up the mood to effectively present to the readers.

Table 2  
Setting analysis

Setting	Scenes	Author's Presence
Castle	I know not where I was born, save that the castle was infinitely old and infinitely horrible.	Lovecraft recalls how the death of Grandmother Robie plunged the house of 454 Angell Street into gloom and the mourning garb or "black attires" terrified him (Poole 38)
Library	From such books I learned all that I know.	The extensive Phillips library became Lovecraft's playground of the mind as he remained in 454 Angell Street (Tyson 26)
Observation Chamber	There was no light revealed above, and as my hands went higher I knew that my climb was for the nonce ended...no doubt the floor of some lofty and capacious observation chamber.	While he was young, he was given free access to the 13-inch refractor that was housed at Ladd Observatory in Brown University (Tyson 28)
Outside the Castle	Outside, across the putrid moat and under the dark mute trees, I would often lie and dream for hours about what I read in the books.	When he was small, his kingdom was the lot beside 454 Angell Street which has many trees, shrubs, and grasses (Joshi 80)

Additionally, the library reflects the expansive Phillips family library in their house, which serve as Lovecraft's mental playground while he lived at 454 Angell Street [22]. The library serves as a place of interest for Lovecraft and his main character. Literary Term's article discusses how settings depend on the idea of what the author wants the story to be [17].

Furthermore, the main character stumbles into an observation chamber as they climb the tower. The observation chamber also reveals Lovecraft's fascination with astrology. He has free access to a 13-inch refractor at Brown University's Ladd Observatory when he is still relatively young [22].

Moreover, the outside of the castle, where the protagonist frequently lays and daydreams for hours about what he reads in the books, makes reference to Lovecraft's childhood and his kingdom which is the space next to 454 Angell a street with lots of trees, bushes, and grasses [9].

Lovecraft recalls the fear of "black attires" and the gloom of the 454 Angell Street house due to the death of Grandmother Robie. The extensive Library of the Phillips household becomes his playground of the mind, and the lot beside 454 Angell Street became his kingdom. Lastly, at Brown University's Ladd Observatory, he is given free access to the 13-inch refractor. All of these show the author's presence in settings.

### C. Symbolism

Table 3 displays the study of symbolism with the help of M.H Abrams' Expressive Theory.

In *The Outsider*, the unnamed protagonist, and Lovecraft both rely on books for education, shaping their worldview without the guidance of traditional teachers. Only the books in the library supplied all their learning. Lovecraft also relies on his knowledge of books [22]. Both the protagonist and Lovecraft share the same source of education.

Moreover, the road in the short story symbolizes the journey of the protagonist. Lovecraft also explored the world before returning to his hometown, Providence [14]. Both Lovecraft

and the protagonist take the road as an interpretation of their journey.

Table 3  
Symbolism analysis

Symbol	Meaning	Author's Presence
Books	Source of education and inspiration	Books in the Phillips household supplemented Lovecraft's knowledge and inspirations for his stories (Tyson 26)
Road	Journey	Lovecraft explores the world and returns to his hometown (Poole 130)
Dream	Escape from reality	In his dream, he controls everything including the point of view which is why in his dream world, everything happens in his own accord (Tyson 66)
Monster	Self-image	He started to become morbidly self-conscious about his appearance (Tyson 42)
Light	Ambition	Lovecraft wants to be like Dunsany (Tyson 55)
Forest	Isolation	In 1917, he lived in almost complete obscurity, obscurity he could not escape even when he tried (Poole 10)
Mirror	Reflection	Lovecraft began to imitate the manner and style of the writers of the eighteenth century (Tyson 26)
Moon	Love for astrology	The discovery of astronomy affected his entire world view and the moon interested him the most (Joshi 98-99)

The main character would lie and dream for hours in the story. Similar to Lovecraft who would often dream in real life. He does lucid dreaming, he is aware of his dreams and that is why he can freely control the thoughts and actions within his dreams [22]. Both the character and Lovecraft escape reality through dreaming.

Lovecraft's self-consciousness about his appearance parallels the protagonist meeting the Monster in the story. Lovecraft is troubled by his persistent facial grimaces and spasms [22].

Likewise, the protagonist craves light. Lovecraft's interest in reading forms his ambition to be like the writers he read, imitating the manner and writing style of eighteenth-century writers [22]. It implies that the things he reads heavily influence his writing style and the things he wants to do.

Furthermore, Lovecraft's situation turns upside down the very first time he is separated from his mother. He does nothing for two full months. He says the absence of his mother is so unrivaled that it does not have the control to depress him.

Additionally, due to Lovecraft's love and interest in the writers, he begins to take them as inspirations in writing. His writing styles and skills are affected. It speaks of the techniques that he gets from those writers.

Lastly, his eagerness to learn and love astronomy lights up as he reads more books about it. His family supports his interest. His library contains numerous books on astronomy that he inherited from his grandmother.

These symbols represent concepts in Lovecraft's life. In Gloria Russell's [16] article, she explains that symbolisms represent a concept and authors do not explain them directly to the readers but are written to understand important concepts. Additionally, Wiehardt [27] added that symbols give writers a way to communicate in a poetic manner rather than stating it directly. It builds an atmosphere where the readers can feel the story's world. This goes with M.H. Abrams' Expressive theory which states that literary works project the thoughts and feelings of the author. Similar to how Lovecraft utilizes the

symbols in the short story to convey his emotions.

The symbols identified that point to the author's presence are the existence of books in Philip's home that added to his knowledge and provided him with ideas for his novels. Lovecraft travels the globe and then goes back to his hometown. He started to feel self-conscious about his appearance because he controlled everything in his fantasies. Lovecraft enjoys copying the literary techniques and styles of authors from the seventeenth century. He also discovers astronomy, which has a profound impact on his entire worldview.

#### 4. Conclusion

With the findings of the study, it is found out that the short story, *The Outsider* reveals author's presence of H.P. Lovecraft.

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