



Social Sciences Spectrum

A Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, HEC recognized [Y-category](#) Research Journal

E-ISSN: [3006-0427](#) P-ISSN: [3006-0419](#)

Volume 05, Issue 03, 2026

Web link: <https://sss.org.pk/index.php/sss>



Check for updates

Unveiling the Visible and Invisible: Psychoanalytic Dynamics of Magical Realism in Stephen King's *The Outsider*

Tayyaba Afzal¹ Maleeha Zahid² Samra Abdul Rehman³

Article Information [YY-MM-DD]

Received	2026-06-01	Revised	2026-07-04	Accepted	2026-07-24
----------	------------	---------	------------	----------	------------

Citation (APA):

Afzal, T., Zahid, M & Rehman, S, A (2026). Unveiling the visible and invisible: Psychoanalytic dynamics of magical realism in Stephen King's the outsider. *Social Sciences Spectrum*, 5(3), 429-440. <https://doi.org/10.71085/sss.05.03.591>

Abstract

This research explores the psychoanalytic dynamics of Stephen King's *The Outsider* (2018). Relating this psychological mindset of characters to Magical Realism the research unearths the secrets in investigating the nature of truth of a murder investigation. This research work incorporates the theory of psychoanalysis to explore horror and fantasy as contingent terms in the novel. The novel as a magical realist text connects the two realms in a remarkable manner and without any ambiguity. The normalization of supernatural elements residing at the core of the novel will be explored in this research. The mundane investigation in the novel is based upon the elements of natural and supernatural death, which exist at the rudimentary level of the text. Thus, binaries of Realism and Magical Realism as the core components of the novel will also be explored in this research.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Magical Realism, Outsider, Horror, Fantasy.

¹ English Teacher (Internee), Government Girls High School, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

² Lecturer, Department of English, Green International University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

³ MPhil English Literature, Kinnaird College for Women University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

Corresponding Author: Maleeha Zahid, **Correspondence through:** maleeha.zahid@giu.edu.pk



Content from this work may be used under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share-Alike 4.0 International License](#) that allows others to share the work with an acknowledgment of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal.

Introduction

The presence of magic in the world can be traced back to the age of literature which has been alive along with the humans. It is hard to trace back the history of literature but is not it all about word describing the world. A real world, its politics, its reality, its horrors, its progression, literature has been doing this for centuries. Literature has the ability to present reality in masked ways, these ways are sometimes magical like the world of Harry Potter or supernatural like in Hobbit but there is another way of presenting reality of life in coated with horror, fear and terror like in King's works. If the elements of magic, supernatural and gothic would be strip away then only a naked reality of the characters would exist.

In *The Outsider* (2018), Stephen King narrates about the murder investigation of a child Frank Peterson which follows multiple deaths afterwards in the novel. Ralph Anderson is the detective of this murder investigation who has ironclad proof against the murderer like fingerprints, multiple witnesses and even a match DNA. The suspect murderer is a local man, a town's baseball coach Terry Maitland. For detective Anderson, arresting Terry is a neat catch with solid proof. Tension arises in the novel when at the same time Terry Maitland equally has an airtight alibi to prove himself innocent and many miles away from the criminal scene. As tension arises and investigation proceeds, many cracks start to appear in the ironclad case. Furthermore, the more bit and pieces of information this investigation uncovers, the more things get weirder which are equally horrific and enthralling.

The unseen presence of truth and the seen presence of darkness demonstrates the true horror present in the novel which shows less fantastical ideas that are conspicuous in their nature and callous in their realistic nature through which the presence of unseen, the reality of seen is put into question. This research will investigate the concealed presence of truth and the vivid presence of darkness and brutality. The paper will also explore how the occurrence of these juxtaposed elements lead the investigation of murder while asserting multiple questions regarding the brutal act. The research would also unfold the paranormal subsistence of the character of Terry Maitland. Thus, giving the novel a sombre mood. All these aims would be explored by applying the theory of psychoanalysis as the novel has not been explored previously through this perspective.

By applying Jung's concept of collective unconscious that individual unconsciousness is the product of collective experience and how society plays a role in shaping the collective unconscious of people. Also, Jung believed that the unconscious was the product of collective experiences inherited in the genes and everyone has a set of truths based upon these collective experiences. This research will interpret the way in which Stephen King illustrates his characters' unconscious motives that penetrate their consciousness. The research also aims to trace certain truths about human psychology and the repercussions of supernatural elements upon collective unconsciousness of a society.

Literature Review

Literary works based on Stephen King's novels extend to a larger number of different perspectives, such as review articles of both his novels and their movie versions, for literary criticism. King's works have been the center of students as well as critics' perspectives. These perspectives can be listed from Eco criticism to Psychoanalysis, Marxism to Feminism, Realism to Structuralism. Others have explored Magical Realism aspects in King's novels like in *The Shinning* (1977), *The Stand* (1978) and *It* (1986) as mostly there is a supernatural aspect present in King's works. This supernatural presence in Stephen King's novels puts his works in the sphere of Magical Realism

where boundaries of supernatural and natural world are crossed as writes Wendy Faris in her work *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (1995): “the co-existence of the natural and the supernatural is a hallmark of Magical Realism; fluid boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead are traced only to be crossed... Metamorphoses of the living and the dead are traced only to be crossed... Metamorphoses are a relatively common event, a collusion of two different worlds” (172,178). As most of King’s works are based on the concurrency of supernatural and natural attributes, so Magical Realism is an essential part of King’s novels.

King’s other works are explored through the lens of Magical Realism which connotes King’s vast dimension of writing. As IR Burnett says exploring King’s several works under the lens of Magical Realism, for instance in *the Gunslinger*, an epic, tracing the colliding boundaries of fantasy and reality, “King has a way of using protagonist as a mean of exploring flawed world long forgotten set in a fantastical land with a edge of America in it.” (n.pag) Here IR Burnett reveals that through characterization King shows the strong ties of reality and fantasy. A real-life protagonist in a fantastical world is a way of Stephen King designing his work in a dimension of Magical Realism.

Giving the summary of the epic, *The Gunslinger*, IR Burnett hints a world that seems like our own but there exists something extraordinary in a form of magical elements. This existence of magical elements is laid for innocent sufferers’, “Magic exists only in the dark variety, in the form of curses, charms, prophecies and hungry, ensnaring traps laid for unwitting victims.” (n.pag) such elements of magic can be traced in almost all the works of King. Stephen King’s way of overpassing the boundaries of fantasy world and a realistic world make his works falls into the genre which trace “gritty authentic tale and legendary myth” as IR Burnett categories. King’s works are magical realist text, “his works demonstrates a special understanding of Magical Realism and its potential for creating a powerful, terrifying world which lingers to the real world along with telling a wonderful and captivating mythical story” (n.pag) as IR Burnett depicts, King is a pioneer of postmodernism; demonstrating a world of reality and fantasy colliding together.

The co-existence of natural and supernatural worlds can be traced in Stephen King’s recent novel *The Outsider* (2018). This novel also has aspects of Magical Realism in it, by which phenomenon this novel crosses the boundaries of Magical Realism through the presence of a fable creature El Cuco in the novel who bridges the gap between the natural and supernatural worlds and adds to the tension and suspension of belief in the collective unconscious of the characters. There are many other aspects of this novels which are explored by different critics as Victor Lavelle, who explains the basic plot of the novel and the unique characteristic of Stephen King as a horror fiction writer, “King is an industry and has been for my entire reading life. He could easily churn out monsters in *Maine* tales until his life ends, and he’d remain well compensated for it.” (n.pag) This gives us a basic knowledge of King’s ability of using supernatural in mundane situations of life. Further he explains King’s ability to show certain tales, which are named as different parts of the world whether you are in Maine or Mexico, Texas or Oklahoma, King has used these certain tales to comprehend universal anonymities to which we all belong as “Holly Gibney muses at one point: ‘Everything can happen,’ she said to the empty room ‘Whatever it is. The universe is full of odd niches and cracks’”. (n.pag) This review explains King’s own knowledge of this world and his longing to discover the things which are unexplained in common life.

Niall Alexander has reviewed by exploring the hybridity of King’s best efforts and not so best efforts, according to him the book falls in between both which makes it a hybrid in nature. He explained King’s art of showing the difference and satisfactory story standpoint, “King is being

successful in creating a rewarding return” (n.pag) Further, Alexander revealing the two important divisions of the book in which King is being successful in connecting both natural and supernatural halves of the novel, “it’s a tale of two halves, both of which work very well” (n.pag) as the novel itself is designed in this regard. King has kept the first half of the novel strictly to the natural world, where only a murder is committed and the murderer has been arrested for it with a little tinge of supernatural world, like the nightmare of a child who sees a man with straw eyes. Niall Alexander has called this phenomenon a “secret sequel” (n.pag) to the supernatural aspects which appeared in the other half of the novel.

Comparably, Michael Berry has reviewed by exploring King’s skill of blending two genres, crime fiction and horror fiction, “The hefty new novel from Stephen King is a skilful blend of classic crime fiction and the author’s trademark horror twists.” (n.pag) blending the two genres by a murder case investigation and a supernatural murderer to produce engrossing novel. According to Berry, mixing these two genre King has created a “Big, complex and inventive, it’s a well-honed continuation of his interest in the intersection of crime and horror fiction, demonstrating his consummate skill with both.” (ibid) though it cannot be levelled with King’s ability of using a single genre in his writing.

Slaughter has also explored the female presence in King’s this novel. Like the importance of Jeanie in Ralph’s life. She from the beginning has been his rock as she has the power of making Ralph listens to what others have to say. For example, she is the one who put the idea of two Terry in Ralph’s mind. Also, that there is something supernatural about this case which helps Ralph later in the novel to accept the presence of El Cuco as a real culprit. Slaughter has also drawn the connection between Jeanie and Holly character. As she claimed that Jeanie’s inquiries set Ralph in the long run before the one of the women that could help him capture the real the child murderer. This woman is none other than the character of “Holly Gibney” (King 242).

Through Slaughter, readers know that Holly is a borrowed character from *Mr. Mercedes*, the Bill Hodges Trilogy. Her entry in the novel is the reason of pacing up the investigation as through her character King reveals the folklore of El Cuco and the innocence of Terry Maitland. As according to Slaughter, Holly proves to be the woman propelled to put an end to the vile forces by unveiling the truth of supernatural presence in the investigation of a simple murder. This shows her woman power of standing alone against all the people who do not believe in the supernatural and are ready to laugh at her. But as shown in the novel she remains stand tall and proves to be a strong woman on her own.

Having discuss the different reviews upon King’s novel *The Outsider* (2018), I have found a gap for my research. Thus, taking the lenses of psychoanalytic study, this research will further explore the presence of the vivid and the concealed elements that are portrayed in this novel by using the dynamics of Magical Realism.

Research Methodology

This research uses the method of qualitative analysis to explore Stephen King’s *The Outsider* (2018). This work has been analyzed to explore the nature of truth through seen and unseen realities present in a magical realist text using textual analysis reflects- as this research will explore, that consistently truth is not what your consciousness believes and what can be seen in objective reality- sometimes the truth is not in front of your eyes but present there behind the familiar faces. This research will explore this existing conscious belief of a society present in the novel through Jung’s theory of collective unconscious.

Taking language as a tool of exploring the perceptive of different characters especially Ralph, this research investigates the effects of seen and unseen upon the collective unconsciousness of people. Through the intertwined exploration of Magical Realism and Jung's collective unconscious, this research has explored the nature of truth that truth is not what your consciousness believes and what can be seen in objective reality. This research will explore the existing conscious beliefs of a society present in the novel through Jung's theory of collective unconscious.

Carl Gustav Jung was a renowned psychiatrist and the founder of analytical psychology. Jung used specific terms like "archetypes" (Jung 1991) to explain the collective unconscious which shapes the patterns of a society. According to Jung, the collective unconsciousness is shaped by instincts, archetypes, signs, behavioral pattern, thinking and experiencing. Further, Jung takes "archetypes" (*ibid*) as an important part in explaining the collective unconsciousness. In Jung's own words, describing archetypes, "a symbolic formula functioning whenever the concept of the conscious is either yet non-existent or altogether impossible," it's a positive "instinctive vector, a pointed trend, the one, which forces birds to build their nests and ants to erect anthills" (Jung 65), he simply puts that archetypes are inborn instincts which shape the persona of individuals in a society and are basically important in shaping our experience of certain things in a society.

As Jung believes that these inborn instincts are transformed traits from their ancestors to people and these traits are the main factor in shaping people's behavior pattern, possible reactions, and psychic structure. Thus, for Jung collective unconsciousness is put into focus where archetypes are stored. To Jung, archetypes are the basic part of human psyche, and if we view them as some instinctively replicated the stereotypical forms shown as fairy tales, myths, delusions and hallucinations as Jung claims that "...while interpreting the myths anything but the soul was appealed to..." (Jung 10), proven that human mind is not a clear slate with nothing on it as it is believed by Jung that human psyche is shaped by the hereditary beliefs and thought patterns of their ancestors. Magic and myths have believed to be the communal element of all cultures and eras. According to Jung, these experiences of myths and magic are imprinted hereditary experiences of all mankind. Connecting these points to Magical Realism but then simply put to Jung magical elements are collective rather than individual experience.

Further, exploring the psychoanalytic dynamics of Magical Realism in Stephen King's novel *The Outsider* as taking the book of Elizabeth Wright *Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal*, "Magical realist fiction is particularly receptive to psychoanalytic in query because it explores and transgress boundaries while at the same time playing with the fusion of a variety of worlds, staging both transformations and dissolution, a constant challenge to representation (67,68)." This paper will explore the fusion of both natural and supernatural worlds through the dynamics of Magical Realism.

The research objectives of this paper include extending psychoanalytic study of Magical Realism explored through the investigation of a child's murder in the novel. Exploring the reality of beliefs that put in question what you constantly see and believe and the modern beliefs of a society that supernatural things do not exist, and they are only part of fairy tales. People's struggle to get in terms with the presence of supernatural in a mundane investigation of a case is to be explored in this paper. This paper takes on the psychoanalysis dynamics of Magical Realism of the concerned novel into deeper connotation of supernatural experience, collective unconscious of people in a society and the nature of truth of seen and unseen realities through a murder investigation. The secondary data is collected from various sources. The main source of secondary data is articles, different books on psychoanalysis and magical realism and different interviews of the author. For

this study, secondary sources have been taken from websites, journals, and magazines etc. Also, this study has incorporated data from previous research papers.

Effects of Supernatural Elements on Collective Unconsciousness of Characters

If language reflects unconscious mind of a person, is rather a great source of understanding the unconscious thoughts in a society. Stephen King has penned the existing thought patterns of a society through different characters present in the novel. Character of a detective, Ralph, who thinks himself responsible for bringing justice to the child, Frank Peterson, murdered brutally. As King's most of the novels, this novel is also written in an omniscient narrative voice which tells us the thoughts of Ralph and other characters.

As in the novel, Ralph has distinguished the wrong in arresting Terry Maitland even though he consciously believes that arresting Terry publicly is the right decision, "Arresting him at the game had been strictly Ralph's decision" (King 13) but at the same time Ralph has started to feel guilty about his decision of arresting Terry at unconscious level, "There was no reason for Ralph to feel guilty at the reproach of a man who had raped and murdered a child, but for a moment he still did." (29) Later, by the turn of calendar, Ralph's unconscious thoughts transformed into reality which helps him in understanding and shaping his conscious mind in accepting supernatural world.

Ralph started to know more about the holes which start to appear in his ironclad case and as well in his conscious beliefs. He starts to unravel the mistakes; he made deliberately trusting himself the right man to bring justice and in ignoring the unseen elements about this case. Eventually, all his conscious beliefs and truths about this case tumble when two Terry appear at different places at the same time. For example, when Terry explains his reasons for being at the Cap City on Tuesday at the same time the murder committed, and the eyewitnesses claimed to see him at Flint City. Terry was at Cap City to listen to his favorite mystery writer "Harlan Coben" with his multiple colleagues, (67) shakes Ralph confident of arresting the right guy, "He could not remember ever having been so completely blindsided" (69). After hearing Terry's story of claiming an alibi, Ralph instantly regrets his decision of believing his conscious mind that tells him to arrest the culprit instantly, "Ralph's thoughts were whirling around in his head like loose paper caught in a draft" (69) from this point onward Ralph starts to question his conscious mind which makes him believe that fingerprints, DNA match and eyewitnesses are enough to call a man, a father, a husband and a famous coach, a murderer, a rapist, a sociopath and a monster.

Through Ralph's character, King has revealed the collective unconscious of people living in a society. Like Ralph, after seeing the child killed so brutally instantly believes an innocent man to be a murderer which shows us that how people in a society are quick to believe what they saw with their eyes. The collective unconscious is built through many factors law, family, society, and education. These all factors like Jung claims effect our conscious mind. (Jung 1991) These factors have built Ralph's perception about Terry even though at unconscious level, he believes Terry is someone he trusts as he has trained Ralph's son in the past, "Because the man who raped Frankie Peterson with a tree branch and tore open his throat coached my son for four years, two in Peewee and two in Little League. He had his hands on my son, showing him how to hold a bat, and I don't trust myself" (12) that's why Ralph refused to arrest Terry himself because he hated that he has trusted Terry in the past with his son and somewhere in his unconscious mind he still does not believe Terry capable of such deeds.

Like the society, Ralph is bound to believe what he sees with his eyes and what his conscious mind believes is the truth,

Ralph stared at Terry, again looking for guilt and seeing only worry, anger, and bewilderment—the expression of a man who has been arrested for something he hasn't done. Except he had done it, all the evidence said so, and the DNA would put the final nail in his coffin” (69, 70)

Ralph refuses to acknowledge what his unconsciousness is telling him but like many others Ralph's unconscious mind is also a slave of collective unconscious build by a society which forcing him to believe what he sees, not what he believes.

Stephen King has penned what a person believes is not always a truth. As this is the way the society-based opinions born, a detective, Ralph, believing what he sees. This is how the society has taught him to see the truth, “I should have brought him in for questioning. But Jesus Christ, I was so sure!” (85) because he does not do what his unconsciousness was telling him to do. As “Jung believes that unconscious of a person is the product of collective experience” (n.pag) then Ralph unconsciousness is also a product of collective beliefs of the society. Ralph's wife also believes what Ralph did is the right thing as she supports his husband in arresting Terry, “Honey, you got him. You got him... (85) not only Ralph's wife but many other people who support Ralph's decision as they gather around the court to abuse Terry verbally, “...sawhorses, were the reporters, the camerapersons, and a small crowd of lookie-loos... Several of the latter were carrying signs. One read, EXECUTE THE CHILD KILLER. Another read, MAITLAND YOU WILL BURN IN HELL. (144) through this King has showed us the collective unconsciousness of a society which build the consciousness of people living in a society. As all these people like Ralph believe what they see, is the truth. They can see the evidence proving a man a child killer but what they cannot see is the respect and reputation of a man earned from many years' work as a city famous coach, “He never did anything but good for this town, and they all hate him” (145) Terry's wife these words show how much society is controlled by what they see is the truth regardless of signs pointing towards other way.

Jung believes that collective unconscious is the most contributive to a person's personal unconscious, “The form of the world into which [a person] is born is already inborn in him, as a virtual image” (Jung 188) as Ralph like other people, is trying to assure himself that the arrest and humiliation Terry must face is the way things are supposed to be, “—a kind of uber consciousness set in, as if his mind was trying to reassure itself that everything was just as it always had been: up was up, down was down,...” (146) which tells us how the personal unconscious of Ralph is the result of collective unconscious which has built his conscious belief that he is doing the right thing.

However, the death of Terry from Frank's older brother, Ollie, hands puts a dent in Ralph's belief of arresting the right guy. Terry's dying declaration that, “But I didn't, he said” (154) takes Ralph towards the path which his unconsciousness has refused to believe, the path of unseen factor presents in a seen evidence case. The metaphor of “cantaloupe” Ralph uses for Terry's case is itself proof of his changing consciousness, “That's my Terry Maitland metaphor, Bill. The cantaloupe looked fine. It was not spongy. The skin was whole. There was no way those bugs could have gotten inside, but somehow they did” (163) just like bugs has gotten inside Ralph's ironclad case and has proven his consciousness wrong about certain things.

The things which belong to the supernatural world as Jung claimed that unconscious is the product of collective experience which shows us that the myth and magic present in this world is also a product of our collective unconscious. King has highlighted this factor in the novel by introducing several tales which different characters have heard from their ancestors. Like Samuels who has heard a tale from his mother, “Footsteps in the Sand,” (162) which is about a man who has

disappeared and his wife has only found his footprints on the sand that just stop, leading nowhere and like Yunel Sablo who belongs to an old Mexican family and has heard about the myths of Mexican boogeyman.

Furthermore, according to Yune's wife, the boogeyman who has tuberculosis was surviving "by drinking the blood of children and rubbing their fat on his chest and privates" (221) since he was recommended this by an old man for his survival. Unlike Yune, Holly has put a name to that boogeyman, El Cuco, she also tells the same story about the Mexican legend who has taken the face of a "Professor Espinoza" (324) and has killed a four-year-old girl in front of her mother. The real professor is being punished for what he has not done just like Terry has been accused of killing an eleven-year-old boy Frank Peterson. King has mentioned these all legends and myths in this novel to show how a man is the product of his society's beliefs and how they play a role in building the consciousness and unconsciousness of a person. These all beliefs are part of our collective unconscious which we inherit from ancestry genes.

There are people like Ralph and Samuels as well who refused to believe these myths and legends and only believe what they can see and what science can prove. Through these both types of people, King has traced the pattern of society which plays a part in building the conscious and unconscious beliefs of people, known as "collective unconscious". (Jung 1991)

The Subjective Approaches towards Perceiving Reality in *The Outsider*

The unseen presence of truth and the seen presence of darkness demonstrates the true horror present in the novel which shows less fantastical ideas that are conspicuous in their nature and callous in their realistic nature through which the presence of unseen, the reality of seen is put into question. When Ralph first heard about the possibility of supernatural world existing, he first reaction was irritated, "Oh, come on", Ralph said. "This is ridiculous". (320) He certainly did not have any perception regarding the possibility of anything supernatural about the case. For Ralph, Terry's case is clear as day, having all the seen evidences, eyewitnesses, DNA, and fingerprints. All these evidences show that the murder is committed by a human, not by a supernatural being. Holly was the first person who gave the clear answer which negates Ralph's denial of believing unseen presence in Terry's case,

Those murders were committed by an outsider. He uses our modern science— our modern forensics—against us, but his real weapon is our refusal to believe. We're trained to follow the facts, and sometimes we sent him when the facts are conflicting, but we refuse to follow that scent. He knows it. He uses it. (320)

Holly proves that all the seen evidences are there to fool us so that people like Ralph and Samuels deny the presence of unseen. Through the character of Holly and couple of other signs, King has revealed the presence of unseen which belongs to a supernatural world and Holly has named it as an outsider.

Correspondingly, Jeanie, Ralph's wife, accepts the presence of supernatural world and gives a positive reaction when Holly reveals the information about the Mexican boogeyman, El Cuco as she questions Holly, "Ms. Gibney," Jeannie Anderson said, "are you saying the murders were committed by a supernatural creature? Something like a vampire?" (320) instead of answering Jeanie, Holly shows them all a short film which shows the presence of unseen that belong to a supernatural world. This film shows as discussed before an innocent professor trapped by El Cuco in the case of murdering a four-year-old girl. At the end, only he saw the unseen presence in the court while the others were unable to see him, "There!" the real professor screamed from the

gallows. "There he is, there!" (325) as he was the only person who saw "the monster" (326) and who pays for the crime, he has not committed, with life, just like Terry. Through Holly, Stephen King has shown people who have accepted the presence of supernatural world and acceptance unseen is the part of their collective unconsciousness.

Like Ralph, Samuels also denies the presence of supernatural in the natural world as he mocks Holly's explanation regarding El Cuco. According to him, believing in supernatural is nuts and they are only part of fairytales, not truth, "Perfectly", Bill Samuels said. "I'll give you that. The only problem is that it's nuts. Out to lunch. If you believe in El Cuco, Ms. Gibney, then you are el cuckoo" (326) through this reaction Samuels has shown what his consciousness and unconsciousness believe. In his world, supernatural world does not exist. King has tried to show us that there are different types of beliefs exist in societies which are made for people. Alas! People has become the slave of the society and their set of truths. The truths which are the products of a society and people belong to that society refuse to accept any other truth. Through Samuels and Ralph, King has shown us that how it is very difficult to unlearn the truth which society has taught us, and which has become the part of our collective unconscious.

The truths about Terry's case proved by DNA, fingerprints and eyewitnesses are not as simple as they seem to be. Sometimes truth has layers. When these layers are uncovered, lots of lies start to appear which society has been feeding us as truths. In this novel, King has tried to show unseen truths which are not part of our consciousness. The nature of truths which tumble down the walls, you have created around you by believing what society has feed you as truths. Holly has weakened Ralph's determination of not believing in supernatural world by different but solid reasoning. After meeting with Holly, Ralph has started to question his truths by deeply thinking because all the explanation given by Holly has straighten things out about the Terry's case, which has also explained how Terry is at two places at the same time "Mad ideas that just happen to fit the facts. But it was impossible. That fit them like a glove. "Still impossible," he murmured, (342, 343) he is not ready to admit the truth because in the past he was confident about what he believed as the truth. Ralph's changing consciousness is itself the proof that the things we believe are not changeable or acceptable can be change or accept.

As the novel reaches its ending chapter, King reveals more about personal unconscious through the character of Ralph. At this point in the novel. Ralph's character perfectly falls under the definition of a person who is going through the stage "shadow" (n.pag) which Jung explains as a bad persona. It is a dark stage of a person's personality which helps the person in convincing that what he is doing is right like Ralph convinces himself that arresting Terry publicly is the right way, humiliating Terry is how it is supposed to be.

Ralph is walking through the door of shadow towards the unseen truth as he starts to have several dreams regarding Terry's death, "What sleep Ralph got was thin and broken by bad dreams. In one of them, he held the dying Terry Maitland in his arms, and Terry said, you robbed my children." (346) as according to Jung, dreams projects our unconscious thoughts. Ralph's unconscious is telling him what he did was wrong and what he believes is the truth is not truth anymore. These bad dreams stay remains with Ralph and Holly. For Holly, these dreams are the way of seeing the unseen world, "Dreams are the way we touch the unseen world, that's what I believe. They are a special gift." (465) which shows that not everyone can see the unseen, only those who believe in them. Through Holly, Ralph is also able to see the unseen at the end of the novel.

According to Jung, “once we walked the door of the Shadow, we discover the terror that we are objects of unseen factors. It is really unpleasant to know this since there’s nothing more disillusioning than finding out the truth of our inadequacy” (Jung 113) accepting that there is a supernatural creature between them and he is the real murderer not Terry, is something Ralph finds difficult to do. Even after so much explanation which make sense is hard to believe for him. In his changing perspective about this case shows his progression towards finding out the unseen factors hidden in the layers of this case, “He felt the wall of his disbelief beginning to crumble...” (353) with much convincing and solid proof by Holly, “The stains were there” (352) Ralph starts to believe the possibilities of having a supernatural creature among them.

Ralph starts to take all the previously heard myths into serious consideration and just like a normal human being who has a complete faith in the truth proven by facts, he simply denies what his unconscious mind is telling him to believe, “Ralph was thinking of an infested cantaloupe, and disappearing footprints, and something Holly’s dead friend had said: No end to the universe. He supposed it was a concept some people might find uplifting, even beautiful. Ralph, a just-the-facts man for his entire working life, found it terrifying” (359). He is terrified in finding out the unseen truth which will negate his sense of security, he finds in worshipping the facts his whole life. He is terrified in proving himself wrong about the supernatural world.

When Ralph, Holly and others go out of the Flint City to explore the truth and in the hope of saving the next target of El Cuco, Ralph finds himself in a war between his conscious and unconscious mind, “Thanks to her there was a war going on in his head...” (381), the war of what he thinks is the truth and what he does not want to admit is the truth. He does not want to admit what Holly’s claiming is the truth. Her theories about the true culprit are reality than fantasy.

No human being can know the world fully; we only know the part of it. The part we know become our whole world. Like Ralph, a fact base case describes his whole world of beliefs. For him facts are the only thing to discover the truth. Holly’s entry in his world tells him that he is wrong to claim that he knows the world because he knows how facts work. Holly is also a part of universe which believes that there is supernatural world, and everything is not facts base. Facts cannot explain everything and which they cannot explain, there fantasy can explain them.

Keeping all these in mind, through Magical Realism, King has tried to make sense of the different beliefs, exist in society that play a role in building collective unconsciousness and consciousness of people living in different societies. Ralph and Holly belong to different universe of beliefs. That is why, it is difficult for Ralph to believe something else than facts. Through the elements of Magical Realism present in natural world, Stephen King has traced the collective unconsciousness of people, living in a society. If we take out the elements of supernatural from King’s this novel, only the naked reality remains. The reality which is based upon truths which we are not ready to admit yet.

The truths which Holly tries to tell Ralph by giving him the examples of what people can do to others, not by accidents or natural disasters but consciously, “Not natural disasters or accidents, I’m talking about the things some people do to others.” (402) Like wars, battles, killing, massacre of people by people, Holly is explaining how people can be monsters than how they can be any different from El Cuco, “Listen to me. I know it’s crazy. But is the idea of El Cuco any more inexplicable than some of the terrible things that happen in the world?” (403) this statement of Holly has sum up King’s purpose behind writing 500 pages’ book.

As with modern technology, people are also started to evolve with them which also responsible for building their collective consciousness and unconsciousness that determines their nature of truth. King has not only shown one side of human nature which is determine in its own perception of truth of seen but there is hope of seeing things beyond the determine perception of truth. Like Ralph, who is able to step out of his perception of truth and is able to see the truth of unseen by encountering and killing El Cuco with the help of Holly and in clearing the name of Terry Maitland, "Thank you, Holly. Thank you for coming and thank you for believing. Thank you for making me believe. If not for you, he'd still be out there" (365) as Ralph himself admits that there are possibilities of not knowing everything as people cannot explore the whole universe, "I was thinking about the universe. There really is no end to it, is there? And no explaining it." (466) there are possibilities of unseen along with the seen facts as there is no end to the universe. There is always seen and unseen ways of knowing the truth and reality of people and things. Stephen King has shown the ways by unveiling visible and invisible aspects of reality that lay hidden, "Reality is thin ice, but most people skate on it their whole lives and never fall through until the very end. We did fall through, but we helped each other out." (474) only few people like Holly and Ralph, can see the reality who are ready to believe outside their society determine perception of reality.

Conclusion

To sum up the whole discussion, this paper focuses on the notion of finding out the nature of truth by exploring the elements of Magical Realism present in this text thus tracing the boundaries of two realms: natural and supernatural worlds. This specific study of the novel has been conducted from psychological perspective to explore the elements of Magical Realism. The novel has realistically portrayed people's demeanor while encountering with supernatural elements. This research has elaborated the ways Stephen King used such as supernatural antagonist to create horror, terror and suspense in the novel which makes this work a Magical Realist text. This research has also elaborated the notions of consciousness and unconsciousness to justify the process in which Stephen King's protagonist carry out thoughts regarding supernatural world. Furthermore, it also unveils the somatic and psychological notions that are governed by collective unconscious societal beliefs thus leading an individual to unpredictable ends. Taking psychoanalysis as the tool for investigation, the study not only explores the unconscious realms but also the conscious drives of human psychology.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

Funding

The authors did not mention any funding for this research.

References

- Alexander, Niall. "No End to the Universe: by Stephen King." *TOR.Com*. 22 May 2018, tor.com/2018/05/22/book-reviews-the-outsider-by-stephen-king. Accessed 25 May 2026.
- Berry, Michael. "A Killer Thriller Worthy of a King." *Portland Press Herald*, 27 May 2018. pressherald.com/2018/05/27/a-killer-thriller-worthy-of-a-king. Accessed 27 May 2026.
- Burnett, IR. "Neil Gaiman and Stephen King: The Power of Realism in Postmodern Fantasy." *The Artifice*, 27 August 2015. the-artifice.com/neil-gaiman-stephen-king-postmodern-fantasy. Accessed 23 May 2026.
- Faris, Wendy B. *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Duke UP, 1995.
- Jung, C. G. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Translated by R. F. C. Hull, 2nd ed., vol. 9, Princeton UP, 1968.
- King, Stephen. *The Outsider*. Scribner, 2018.
- Lavelle, Victor. "Stephen King's Reign of Terror Continues in a New Novel." *The New York Times*, 22 May 2018, nytimes.com/2018/05/22/books/review/outsider-stephen-king. Accessed 23 May 2026.
- Slaughter, Karin. "What Stephen King Gets Right—and Wrong—in *The Outsider*." *The Washington Post*, 22 May 2018, washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/what-stephen-king-gets-right--and-wrong--in-the-outsider. Accessed 24 May 2026.
- Wright, Elizabeth. *Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal*. Taylor & Francis, 1998.