

An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Character in the Novel *Fī Qalbī Unthā 'Ibriyyah* Based on Carl Rogers' Humanistic Theory

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Introduction

Meanwhile, Carl Rogers (1902–1987), one of the most prominent figures in humanistic psychology, believed that humans have the potential to realize their latent talents. This tendency towards self-actualization is the main force of human motivation. According to Rogers, a complete human is someone who can actualize their inner capabilities; and since this process has no end, humans can always achieve a higher level of growth and perfection than in the past. (Sultan-ol-Qaraei, 2007: 48).

In the field of literature, the novel is one of the most important genres in which character plays a fundamental role, because the actions and behavior of the characters are a reflection of social realities, and the author seeks to express his or her purpose through their depiction. One of these works is the novel "In the Heart of a Hebrew Woman" by Khawla Hamdi, whose character analysis based on the components of Rogers' theory is of particular importance. The reason for this importance is the remarkable similarities between the main character of the story, Nedi, and Carl Rogers' lived experience; both grew up in a closed environment mixed with religious prejudices; A space that, by imposing normative restrictions and control mechanisms, challenges the process of developing individual identity and realizing the authentic "self." Also, the prominent congruence of concepts such as self-concept, incongruence, and the tendency toward self-actualization with the personality structure and the path of development of the characters in the story doubles the analytical power of this theoretical framework. Hence, adapting the characters of the novel to the foundations of Rogers' thought allows for a deeper reading of the process of individual growth in the context of ideological and cultural pressures.

Methodology

This research adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology, grounded in an interdisciplinary approach, to analyze Khawla Hamdi's novel *Fi Qalbi Untha 'Ibriyyah* (An Hebrew Woman in My Heart). The study integrates academic perspectives from two distinct fields: literary studies (criticism and narratology) and psychology (Carl Rogers' theory of personality). Literary tools and concepts are employed to extract and examine the narrative dimensions of the work, while psychological constructs—specifically self-concept, unconditional positive regard, incongruence, and self-actualization—are utilized to analyze the profound psychological dimensions and the core themes of character development. Methodologically, the study proceeds by first extracting the characters' narrative actions and traits from the text, which are then mapped onto and interpreted through the components of Rogers' theory. The primary advantage of this synthesis over conventional, single-discipline literary criticism lies in its enhanced analytical power to decode behaviors and precisely elucidate the underlying causes of the characters' internal psychological transformations. Ultimately, this interdisciplinary framework facilitates a transition from superficial descriptive analysis to a deeper comprehension of the narrative's hidden layers, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of character dynamics.

Results and Discussion

The characters in the novel *In the Heart of the Hebrew Woman* undergo transformation in an interactive and reciprocal process, and their psychological development cannot be analyzed independently of interpersonal relationships. From Rogers' perspective, the formation of the "self" takes place in the context of communication experiences and the degree of receipt of "unconditional positive attention." Accordingly, the personality development of Ahmed, Nadi, Rima, and Jacob is not formed individually, but in a network of emotional, religious, and human influences; in such a way that each character plays a role in the psychological development of the other character. Rima affects Jacob with her acceptance and empathy; Nadi causes Ahmed to reconsider his identity assumptions; and Jacob, in the process of communicating with Rima and Nadi, comes to rethink the structure of his beliefs.

Conclusion

The transformation of the primary characters—Ahmad, Nadi, Rima, and Jacob—is a gradual, interactive process rooted in lived emotional and religious experiences. Ahmad's confrontation with the incongruence between inherited identity and new human encounters necessitates a reevaluation of his self-concept. Similarly, Nadi seeks inner coherence by navigating the

tension between her preordained identity and emerging perceptions, viewing her inclination toward Islam as a gradual reduction of internal incongruence rather than a sudden shift. Rima maintains a precarious equilibrium between faith, emotion, and individual identity during crises, while Jacob oscillates between a fixed self-concept and unfamiliar experiences, embodying a continuous process of self-redefinition rather than the “fully functioning person.” Ultimately, these transformations are driven by gradual interpersonal relationships and environmental shifts rather than external coercion. Through unconditional positive regard, mutual acceptance mitigates psychological tension and facilitates self-concept reconstruction. Consequently, the novel depicts identity not as a predetermined construct, but as a dynamic, malleable entity shaped through sustained interaction with human relationships.

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