

Character Types in the Tales of the Four Seasons

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Abstract

The Four Seasons Tales, published in 2024, are a rich source for exploring character types that reflect the impact of seasonal changes on human behavior. This study seeks to analyze and classify the character types within these tales, presenting a new model based on the interaction between nature and the psychological characteristics of individuals. The research focuses on how the four seasons shape the nature and roles of characters, and the extent to which they align with psychological traits known in personality science. This article examines character types in Muhammad Jibril's novel *The Four Seasons*, by analyzing the main character (the translator) as a rounded and complex model, embodying an internal struggle between a tired body and a reflective consciousness, oscillating between nostalgia and withdrawal. The article also highlights the role of secondary characters, who are used to perform framing functions without narrative shifts. They contribute to highlighting feelings of loneliness and aging, shaping the overall psychological climate in a style that does not sink into directness or declarativeness. The research uses literary and psychological analysis to study characters in selected tales, drawing on theories of literary psychology, such as Jung's theory of psychological archetypes, as well as studies that address the relationship between seasons and psychological changes in humans. The research relies on an analysis of literary models from different cultures to clarify how characters interact with their environment and the impact this has on their psychological and social development. The study highlights the importance of these archetypes in shaping the dramatic plot and the dynamics of interaction between characters, opening new horizons for studying the influence of nature on human behavior in narrative literature. The study also presents a new insight that can be applied to other studies to understand character archetypes in world literature, enhancing the literary and psychological analysis of folk tales in multiple cultural contexts. The research highlights the importance of classifications in understanding characters within modern novels.

Keywords: Literature, novel, character types, Muhammad Jibril, Tales of the Seasons.

Introduction

The novelistic character constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of narrative construction, serving as the vessel through which events unfold and the dramatic structure of the text is formed. The novel, as a literary genre that represents human life through diverse narrative perspectives, is grounded primarily in the existence of characters who move within a temporal-spatial framework



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and are subject to complex, interwoven relationships that reveal their psychological, social, and intellectual depths.

The character is “the locus of human meaning and the axis of universal ideas. It plays a central role in infusing the narrative with spirit, vitality, and movement, whether cloaked in ambiguity or illuminated with clarity. It thus becomes a source of radiance and brilliance for the story. At times, the character may even assume the role of the narrator or the narratee.” (Ishtar, 2005, p. 152)

From this perspective, analyzing character types does not fall exclusively within formalist concerns but is closely tied to deeper levels of meaning and the cultural frameworks embedded within the novel as a literary and aesthetic discourse. “The character is composed of a set of dispositions, inclinations, drives, and inherent forces, in addition to acquired traits and tendencies.” (Samia Hassan, 1983, p. 118)

Accordingly, the study of character types goes beyond classifying them according to outward attributes or narrative functions; it extends to examining their internal structure and the transformations they undergo throughout the narrative. This dynamic quality enriches the artistic fabric of the text, as each character is reshaped narratively in light of the conflicts, tensions, and interactions it reveals. Thus, the critic can interpret the character as a discourse in its own right, carrying unique interpretations and raising questions about identity, freedom, and the human condition. Understanding characters in terms of their typologies provides a vital entry point into grasping the deep structure of the novel and interrogating the literary representations of reality, culture, and humanity simultaneously.

Folk literature, in turn, serves as a mirror reflecting the interaction between humans and their environment, where cultural and social values are manifested through characters that form the narrative core of folktales. In this context, *Tales of the Four Seasons* offers a distinctive model that illustrates the influence of seasonal changes on human beings. The four seasons in folk literature go beyond a mere depiction of nature; they embody character types that interact with the environment and change in accordance with the season experienced by the individual.

These tales demonstrate how nature profoundly shapes human behavior—whether in the pursuit of renewal during spring, deep contemplation in autumn, or the harsh isolation of winter. It has been emphasized that the seasons are distributed across the Arab character, shaping dimensions of temperament and social interaction. From this standpoint, one can assume that the characters in *Tales of the Four Seasons* are not merely fictional symbols, but representations of psychological archetypes that change with the seasons.

Mohamed Jibril employs an elegant language imbued with metaphor and symbolism, transforming ordinary daily life into moments charged with meaning. His expressions intersect with an inner poetic rhythm that grants the narrative its own unique music, without sacrificing precision. Jibril relies on an introspective narrative construction that delves into the reflections of the central character, exposing existential anxieties and questions surrounding time, death, and identity.

This research addresses the concept of character from both linguistic and terminological perspectives, provides a brief overview of the author’s biography, and surveys the main milestones of the novel. A section is devoted to analyzing the principal characters, highlighting their role in developing the narrative structure and addressing essential issues, while also deconstructing the traits of secondary characters—both static and dynamic—and clarifying their influence on the flow of events and the reinforcement of narrative form.

Research Background

Mohamed Jibril's *Tales of the Four Seasons* is a recent work (published in 2024). As such, scholarly analysis of its character typologies has yet to appear in critical studies. Nevertheless, this field is a rich one, with extensive scholarship on earlier novels, including:

1. **Riyad Hassan Hadi (2017)** – *Character Types in the Novels of Maysaloon Hadi*, University of Al-Qadisiyah, Iraq. This research examined the character types in Iraqi novelist Maysaloon Hadi's works, highlighting the diversity of characters that drive and accelerate the narrative.
2. **Inas Shdeifat (2021)** – *Character Types in Simin Daneshvar's Novel Suvashun*, Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Mansoura University. The study focused on major and minor characters in *Suvashun*, analyzing their physical, psychological, and social attributes, as well as the significance of their names.
3. **Kariman Hamed (2023)** – *Character Types in Bahaa Taher's East of the Palm*, Ibn Khaldun Journal of Studies and Research. The research analyzed how Bahaa Taher depicted characters within the appropriate narrative moments.
4. **Mohamed Nabi Al-Ahmadi (2024)** – *Character Types in the Novel A Deliberate Mistake*, *Midad Al-Adab* Journal, Issue 37. This study explored the central role of characters as the narrative's core, reflecting the author's artistic vision and emotional expression.
5. **Mohamed Nabi Al-Ahmadi (2024)** – *Character Types in the Novel She Alone Does Not Die*, *Al-Iraqiya University Journal* (72-3). The article examined character typologies and their role in understanding self and others, referencing typological theories such as MBTI and Jung's four personality types.

As noted earlier, *Tales of the Four Seasons* has not yet been subject to critical research, since it was only published in 2024.

Author's Biography

Mohamed Jibril is a contemporary Egyptian writer and one of the most prominent figures in modern Arabic literature. Born in Egypt in the mid-twentieth century, he began his literary career in novels and short stories. His distinctive narrative style reflects the interaction between humans and their environment, drawing heavily on the symbolism of natural seasons to interpret psychological and social states.

His novels are part of the folk literary tradition, mirroring Egyptian cultural values while blending reality and imagination in a way that immerses the reader in events and characters. Among his most notable works is *Tales of the Four Seasons*, published on the Hindawi platform, where he reimagines character typologies and their relationship to seasonal changes in human behavior. In this work, Jibril combines traditional and contemporary literary approaches, employing symbolism and psychological elements to create a profound interplay between character and environment.

His writing style has left a significant mark on modern Arabic literature, and he is considered one of the authors contributing to the development of narrative and storytelling in the Arab world, securing a distinguished place within Arabic literary heritage.

Summary of the Novel

The events of the novel revolve around humanity's journey in confronting seasonal transformations that profoundly influence individual personalities. The narrative begins with the introduction of a central character embodying the relationship between the four seasons and human identity, where each season represents a psychological stage experienced by the protagonist.

In spring, renewal and optimism emerge: the character is filled with hope and new aspirations, initiating changes in various aspects of life. During summer, the character becomes more passionate and emotional, leading to impulsive decisions and occasional anger—a phase marked by vitality and intensity. With the arrival of autumn, reflection and nostalgia surface; the character revisits past choices and experiences, enriched by accumulated wisdom. In winter, the character enters a stage of isolation and deep thought, immersed in personal contemplation and self-correction.

The novel unfolds in a natural sequence blending psychological and environmental elements, reflecting the influence of the seasons on character development within social and emotional contexts. These seasons intersect with major events in the protagonist's life, where internal and external challenges converge, leading to psychological and emotional transformation in each phase. Ultimately, each of the four seasons contributes to shaping the character as a whole through its impact on behavior and decisions. Through *Tales of the Four Seasons* by Mohamed Jibril, several sub-themes emerge regarding the influence of the seasons on human behavior and personality. These sub-themes reflect the psychological and environmental dimensions the author highlights.

The Concept of Character: Linguistic and Terminological Perspectives

Linguistically: The term *shakhs* (person) in classical Arabic lexicons encompasses multiple meanings, ranging from the appearance of a body seen from afar to connotations of self-representation and raising one's gaze, imbuing the term with rich semantic and contextual dimensions. Ibn Manzur, in *Lisan al-'Arab*, states: "*Shakhs*: the human body and others; masculine, plural *ashkhas*, *shukhus*, *shikhās*. A *shakhs* is any body with height and visibility, used metaphorically for the self. In another narration: 'None is more protective than God,' meaning no *shakhs* (person) should be more protective than God." (Ibn Manzur, 1999, p. 51) Similarly, Al-Khalil in *Kitab al-'Ayn* defines: "*Shakhs*: whether human or otherwise, if seen from afar, its body constitutes a *shakhs*. Plural: *shukhus*, *ashkhas*." (Al-Khalil, 2003, p. 325) Al-Jawhari in *Al-Sihah* records: "*Shakhs*: the silhouette of a human or other being seen from afar. Plural: *ashkhas*, *shukhus*. A man described as *shakhis* (stout), and a woman as *shakhisa*. With the verb *shakhasa* (to rise): 'His eyes became fixed, wide open, without blinking.'" (Al-Jawhari, 1987, 3/1042)

Terminologically: Definitions of *character* in psychology and narratology vary between a structural understanding of individual behavior and an interactive conception of personality as a dynamic product of bodily, psychological, and social components. According to one definition: "Personality is the organized, integrated pattern of an individual's behavior, through which one feels distinct from others. It is not merely a set of traits, but a unified self in which even secondary features reflect the whole." (Nu'man, 1999, p. 155)

From a functional perspective:

“Personality is a primary source of human dimensions, shaped by tendencies and dispositions. It results from the interactions among its diverse aspects, as individuality seeks to assert its identity and develop unique strategies to adapt to life’s challenges. Regardless of definitional differences, two central aspects remain.” (Qasim, 1984, p. 14)

Narratively, personality is viewed as:

“A being with attributes, engaged in human actions. Characters may be primary or secondary (depending on their textual prominence), dynamic (if subject to change) or static (unchanging), consistent (when traits align with actions) or inconsistent, flat (two-dimensional, predictable), or round (complex, multidimensional, surprising). They can also be defined by their actions, words, emotions, or appearance.” (Gerald, p. 30)

Moreover:

“The character is the central axis that highlights the events, providing the first means of persuading the reader of the story’s importance and value.” (Abd al-Khaliq, 2010, p. 40) This diversity underscores the structural significance of characters in narrative, as they serve as essential drivers of artistic tension and development.

Main Character

At the heart of the narrative, the main character functions as the locus of tension and meaning, not a mere functional element. As Mortad notes: “It is the courageous, multifaceted venture, full of contradictions—loving and hating, rising and falling, believing and denying, doing good and evil—deeply affecting its environment.” (Mortad, 1998, p. 89) Such a depiction positions the protagonist as a mirror of the fictional world, where dualities intersect and transformations emerge.

The novel presents the self-narrator (*al-rawi al-dhati*), vividly describing protest scenes:

“Demonstrations poured from side streets into the squares. Chants rose: ‘Long live Mohamed Naguib. Let the army return to the barracks. Where is Khaled Mohieddin?’ The clash ignited between demonstrators and police. Protesters smashed lampposts inscribed with Nasser’s slogan: ‘Raise your head, my brother.’ Chaos spread in the streets: shattered shopfronts, broken signs, bloodstains, tree branches, stones, burned fabric, shattered glass, discarded tires, even flowers scattered from pots outside ‘Elite’ Café.” (*The Novel*, 2024, p. 23) This excerpt highlights the narrator’s internal perspective, emotionally charged and non-neutral, presenting not documentation but the immediacy of upheaval. As Ibrahim notes: “The main character dominates the narrative, capturing the reader’s interest and driving the events from beginning to end.” (Ibrahim, 2001, p. 157)

Secondary Characters

Secondary characters support or complement the main ones, often serving narrative, symbolic, or artistic functions. As Saleh explains: “Secondary characters usually act within the framework of the main character, helping to build relationships, describe others, and develop the plot.” (Saleh, 2015, p. 68) Examples include Kamel Abdel Rahim, who introduces skepticism and opposition, or Hanafi al-Jami’, whose volatile temperament underscores existential unrest. Such figures

embody narrative marginality while shaping psychological atmosphere. As Hilal emphasizes: “The role of secondary characters in escalating events is no less significant than that of the main characters.” (Hilal, 1973, p. 205)

Narrative theory defines static characters as unchanging, supporting the plot without undergoing internal transformation: “A simple character, fixed in emotions and attitudes, built around a single idea, predictable throughout the story.” (Dhia, 2010, p. 181) For instance, Farghali Abdel Moneim maintains a consistent ideological critique of political Islam, reflecting an unyielding worldview. As Isma‘il notes: “Static characters remain constant from beginning to end, with limited variation.” (Isma‘il, 2013, p. 192)

Dynamic Static Characters

Characters

In contrast, dynamic characters exhibit transformation and complexity: “A character of changing states, shifting moods, never fixed.” (Mortad, 1998, p. 89) Anwar ‘Isa embodies this type, vacillating between nostalgia and anxiety, renewal and withdrawal, worldly desires and spiritual concerns. Through intimate dialogue, he illustrates inner contradictions that enrich the narrative.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the characters in *Tales of the Four Seasons* are not mere narrative devices but semantic structures reflecting philosophical and existential meditations on time, identity, and being.

1. The protagonist (the translator) emerges as a round character, complex and conflicted, embodying the tension between bodily decline and intellectual vitality.
2. Secondary figures serve as flat or functional presences, creating atmosphere rather than driving transformation.
3. Coherence varies: some characters are consistent, others contradictory, reflecting the fragility of consciousness in moments of decline and aging.

Through this diversity, Jibril skillfully employs characters not only to advance the plot but also as platforms for philosophical reflection, making the novel a rich space for interpretive and psychological engagement.

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