

## The rebellious self's vision of the world in memoir literature

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### **Abstract:**

This research paper aims to introduce Algerian autobiographical narratives within their referential context, while attempting to highlight the workings of the writing system in Abdellah Rekibi's memoirs. The goal is to assess the extent of its credibility in portraying the features of the Algerian self and the degree to which its revolutionary tendencies are reflected in its struggle with the other, in order to assert its identity. The paper also seeks to examine how this vision of the world is embodied during the glorious November Revolution, which represents a turning point in the actual collective self-awareness and its pursuit of a viable consciousness that paves the way for its rebirth.

- **The Problem:** The glorious War of Liberation was one of the periods that suffered from an unprecedented media blackout aimed at concealing the crimes of the French colonizer. Despite this, many Algerian writers emerged who attempted to present firsthand accounts and testimonies from those who lived through that era, in order to revive the revolutionary discourse. One such example is Abdullah Rkeibi in his book "Memories of the Algerian Revolution 1954-1958." This leads us to ask the following questions:

- How was the Algerian revolutionary spirit reflected in the memoir? And how did this contribute to consolidating national values and fostering a culture of belonging?

- **The Significance:** "Memories of the Algerian Revolution" is an important historical record, rich with revolutionary values and firsthand accounts. It preserves a vast revolutionary legacy that future generations can be proud of, and which they should emulate, upholding the legacy of the martyrs.
- **Objectives:** This research paper aims to introduce Algerian autobiographical narratives within their referential context, while highlighting the mechanisms of the writing system in Abdullah Rkibi's memoirs. The goal is to assess the extent of its credibility in portraying the features of the Algerian self and the degree to which its revolutionary tendencies are reflected in its struggle with the other, in order to assert its identity.

- **Methodology:** This research paper will employ a structural-genetic approach to examine how the collective Algerian self's vision of the world is embodied during the glorious November Revolution. This revolution represents a turning point in the actual consciousness of the collective self and its pursuit of a viable awareness that paves the way for its rebirth.

- **Recommendations:** This research paper seeks to open a new avenue of research into Algerian autobiographical narratives within their referential context. These narratives document the November Revolution and Algeria's history of struggle, and they reinforce a culture of belonging and national values in future generations.

**Keywords:** Self, Revolution, Autobiographical Narrative, Memoirs, Consciousness.

### ***Introduction:***

The "I-Writing" (memoir) and the writings of the Algerian revolutionary discourse are intertwined in their referential dimension. They are closely linked, allowing for their understanding through the historical and cultural context of Algeria. Each addresses different aspects, but they are generally connected to the issues of identity, independence, and self-realization. Since both seek to chronicle an important period, this study attempts to examine one of the memoirs that depicts the details of the Algerian Revolution, namely the book "Memoirs of the Algerian Revolution 1954-1958." Based on the foregoing, we can pose the following questions:

- How was the Algerian revolutionary self reflected in the mirror of the memoir? And how did the latter contribute to consolidating national values and a culture of belonging?

This study will also employ a structural-genetic approach, which relies on an internal analysis of the text's linguistic system, starting from internal structures to generate social structures that reflect the external system represented by the image of the November Revolution during that period.

#### **1- The book "Memories of the Algerian Revolution" and First-Person Writings:**

This book falls under the category of first-person writing, a genre encompassing various forms of narrative that take the author's self as their focus. It is based on the explicit convergence of the three narrative elements: the author, the narrator, and the main character. Autobiography, personal diaries, confessions, self-portraits, and memoirs are among the most well-known examples of first-person writing (Al-Qadi et al., p. 345). Our book specifically belongs to the memoir genre, in which Abdullah Rkeibi focuses on "narrating external events rather than offering a subjective analysis. He assumes the role of a reporter or informant, keen to present specific events as witnesses, and to explain the action or statement after they have occurred. It differs from other forms in that its function is not limited to describing what he witnessed, but rather to highlighting his role in it or his stance towards it." (Al-Dahi, 2007, p. 13), where the self is embodied as a central axis and an integral part of existence in the book "Memories of the Algerian Revolution," which recounts its unique journey, but at the same time opens doors to a comprehensive understanding of reality and truth. These memoirs appear as a means for the writer to explore her true identity and the impact of events on her consciousness. They also serve as a mirror of the self, inviting the reader to delve into its depths and uncover the influence of internal structures of consciousness within the text and their social repercussions on the construction of identity.

(Al-Dahi, 2007, p. 13)

#### **2- The Mirroring Nature of the Memoir Text and the Vision of the Collective Self:**

Abdullah Rkibi, who broke with the general convention of memoirs by making the individual self the focus, stated: "I have focused on the collective, not the individual. It is the collective spirit that concerns me in these memoirs because it is the true spirit of November..." (Rkibi, 1985, p. 8). He presents us with a kind of attempt to obscure his own self at the expense of the collective self, embodying a nationalist tendency. He says: "The author of this book is not seeking fame or anything else, nor did he write it to please anyone or for self-fulfillment. Rather, he wrote it to record an experience he lived with the people during the glorious November Revolution..." (Rkibi, 1985, p. 6). Regarding his writing style, Abdullah Rkibi attempted to introduce a new approach, different from what was customary in autobiographical narrative texts. He says: "I chose a different method for writing these memoirs, not memoirs, as I avoided direct narration, even though I used the first-person

pronoun. I also did not mention titles as is customary...” (Rakibi, 1985, page 8). From the above, we find that Abdullah Rakibi tried to write his memoirs in a new style that aims to make the individual self its focus, and he also seeks to make his self cross a point of transcendence from the stage of describing the individual self to a higher stage in which the self is a mirror in which all the selves of the Algerians are summarized, who bear the concern of the nation, and the responsibility of liberating it from the oppressive occupier.

### **3- The Self's Vision of the World in Abdullah Rkeibi's Memoirs:**

Worldview is one of the most important points addressed by Lucien Goldmann in defining the foundations of genetic structuralism: “It represents the structure that expresses the consciousness held by society, which the text adopts as a value that transcends the individual's perspective, reaching a mental model imbued with an ideological character that reveals a socio-intellectual system that never stops at the level of individuals. It... is not linked to the individual but to the group, albeit through intermediaries, namely writers, thinkers, and intellectuals who convey the worldview of a particular class within the creative world they create...” (Bakri, 2021, p. 164). In this context, Abdullah Rkeibi connects the social structure with his memoirs, highlighting his role as a writer and intermediary intellectual who contributes to building society's worldview and reflects it through his literary creation. This embodies a dynamic interaction between culture and the social context.

**3-1- The Process of Comprehension:** This process involves studying the text as a closed linguistic system, dividing it into interconnected linguistic components. This means searching for the inherent structural meaning within the text, or within the work, and illuminating the semantic characteristics of the cultural impact. This signifying structure is then integrated into a broader framework to extract a worldview. This can only be achieved by interpreting the literary, artistic, and cultural work within its political, social, economic, historical, and cultural contexts, and by identifying patterns of consciousness (false consciousness, existing consciousness, and potential consciousness) (Bakri, 2021, p. 166). From this perspective, we will attempt to divide Abdullah Rkeibi's text into two main signifying structures, in what is called the process of comprehension. We will then attempt to interpret these two structures within linguistic frameworks to arrive at a worldview in Rkeibi's memoirs. These two main structures are:

- The first structure: The moment of the outbreak of the glorious November Revolution.
- The second structure: The independence of Algeria and the author's forward-looking vision.

**3-2- The Interpretive Process:** In this process, we will seek to interpret the structures established during the comprehension process, starting from external data. Interpretation, according to genetic structuralism, is broader and more comprehensive than comprehension. Unlike the previous stage, it focuses on approaching the text from the outside, considering the data that governs the group's thought, such as political, social, economic, historical, and cultural factors. The social data reflected in mental categories appear as literary structures within the text, which require comprehension. This comprehension, in turn, requires the interpretation of these social phenomena. Therefore, this integration between the steps of comprehension and interpretation is crucial in genetic reading. (Bakri, 2021, p. 167) Interpretation in this context is understood more broadly and comprehensively than mere comprehension. It is linked to approaching the text from the outside and understanding how the internal structures of the text are influenced by the external data that shapes the thought of society. This underscores the close relationship between mental categories and social reality, as the text translates these external data into its internal structures.

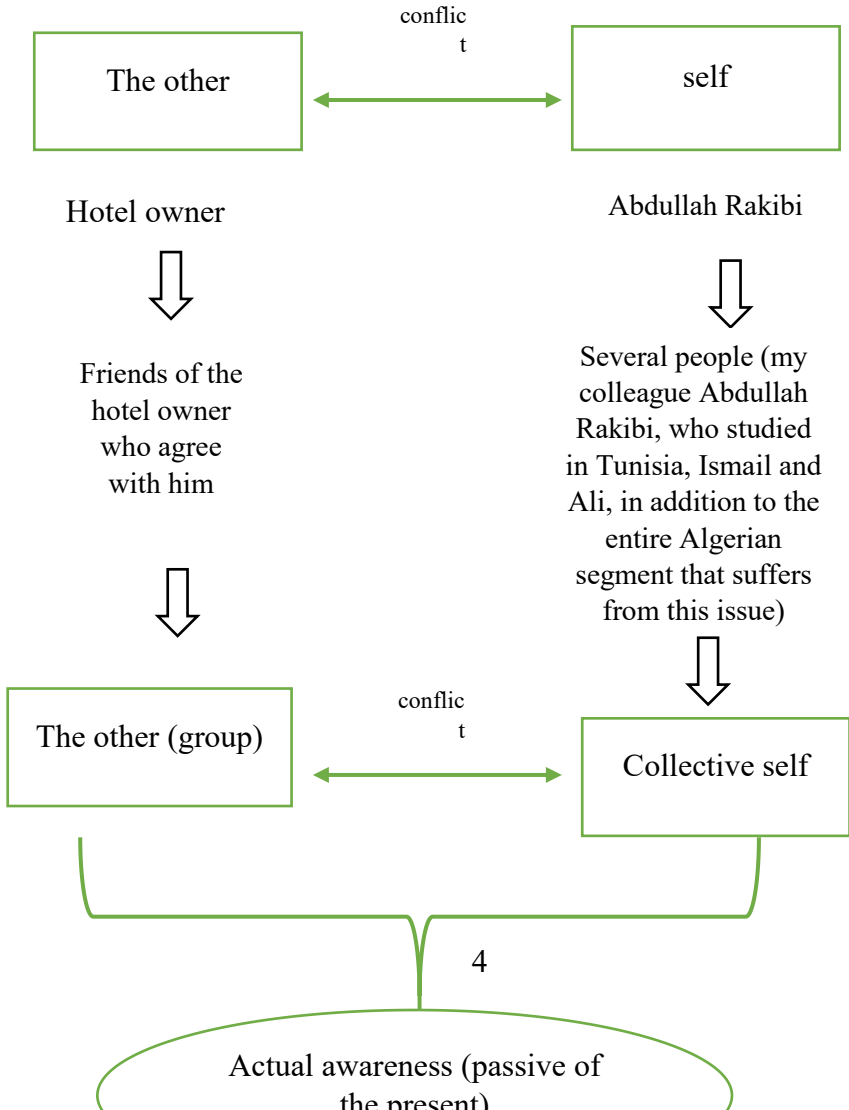
All of this is based on the importance of the integration between the two steps of understanding and interpretation in formative reading, where an accurate understanding of the

literary structures resulting from the influence of social and cultural data is crucial in the deeper analysis and interpretation of literary texts.

**4- Actual and Potential Awareness:**

Actual self-awareness is shaped by specific social contexts. This self attempts to create a dialectic based on the conflict between these two types of awareness. Actual awareness is that which is derived from the past in all its dimensions and circumstances, where each group tries to understand reality based on its social, economic, intellectual, and religious conditions. Potential awareness, on the other hand, is what a social class aspires to achieve after experiencing various changes. (Habila, 2007, p. 148) Therefore, Abdullah Rakibi attempted to express the internal conflict he experienced as a result of the harsh reality and the lack of a popular uprising in Algeria. This negatively impacted the self, manifesting as a state of frustration, pain, and despair due to the political and social developments. Abdullah Rkeibi describes one of the most egregious examples of the passive, subconscious consciousness he experiences when he says: “I suddenly remembered the conversation I had with the hotel owner and others when they mentioned that Tunisia and Morocco had revolted, so when would Algeria revolt?” (Rkeibi, 1985, p. 9). This question illustrates the real, moral struggle the individual experiences with his existing consciousness, which is based on the people’s apathy and subservience to the colonizer, and their lack of desire to revolt like their neighboring peoples (Tunisia and Morocco), thus creating within him a feeling of inferiority and inadequacy.

This struggle between the individual and his existing consciousness can be symbolized by the following diagram:



The observer of the plan finds that Abdullah Rakibi adopts an opinion that represents the opinion of a group, which is trying to struggle with the other who reduces the opinion of another group that is clinging to a negative actual awareness of the present, which is represented by the lack of a revolution in Algeria, and its placement in an inferior position compared to its neighbors Tunisia and Morocco. The struggle continues to reach its peak at the turning point that makes actual awareness possible, when the course of events suddenly changed. The writer describes this moment to us in his saying: "I took the newspaper and my eyes were fixed on the front page... The surprise stunned me... As I read without reflection: More than seventy incidents erupt in Algeria, I could not control myself, a slight tremor ran through me... A sweet, delicious shiver, I felt real joy and overwhelming happiness that I had never felt before... I addressed myself in delight: So Algeria has revolted." (Rakibi, 1985, p. 9) The writer depicts for us the moment of the self's triumph over the other and the realization of the miracle, as he describes it:

"I returned to the lines, devouring them and following the details while lying against the hotel wall. When I finished reading the news, I jumped up quickly, leaping down the stairs two at a time, to enter the room of my friends Ismail and Ali. I found them asleep in the room we three shared. I shook them violently, shouting: 'Get up! Algeria has revolted! What day is it?'" Ah, the first of November 1954... Wake up, you sleepers... Algeria has risen up...

She repeated the last phrase many times, then added with emotion: Move... Wake up... The miracle has happened..." (Rakibi, 1985, page 9). Through the above, Abdullah Rakibi attempts to describe the scene of the realization of collective self-awareness represented in (the writer and his two friends Ismail and Ali), which is the awareness of the knowing self "...which is neither an isolated individual nor a group without addition, but rather a very changing structure under which the individual and the group, or a certain number of groups, are included at the same time." (Goldman et al., 1986), and this vision of the self encapsulates the many perspectives that contributed to the realization of the potential consciousness embodied in the Algerian people's revolution of November 1, 1954. Abdullah Rkeibi continues to convey the image of self-restoration through the realization of this potential consciousness in the scene of Rkeibi's confrontation with the hotel owner after the announcement of the outbreak of the November 1st revolution, saying: "I decided to go to the hotel owner to respond to him and his companions' remarks. My companions tried to dissuade me, but I was determined. I was deeply hurt..." (Rkeibi, 1985, p. 11). This, if it indicates anything, demonstrates the profound impact that the other, coupled with the consequences of a negative, existing consciousness, has on the self, and the significant rift it creates in the wall of its dignity. Anyone observing Abdullah Rkeibi's style will find that it relies heavily on the technique of free association, which makes the monologue (internal/external) a kind of catharsis. This technique, he explains, "...is used in stories to present the psychological content of the character and their mental processes—without speaking about them wholly or partially—...and it should also be emphasized that it is concerned with all the contents and processes of consciousness." (Hemnfri, 2000, pp. 59-60). The monologue is thus considered a means of expressing the contents and processes of consciousness and a tool for exploring the

realms of the mind. Through this technique, Rkeibi reveals the thoughts and deep thinking of the self, which is aware of all modes of consciousness and explores all the psychological aspects of the characters. The monologue also allows for a deeper exploration of the psychological and philosophical dimensions of the characters.

Al-Rukaibi attempts to diversify his use of monologue by employing external monologue, which contrasts with internal dialogue that doesn't presuppose a specific participant but rather consists of the self speaking to itself (Hamanfri, 2000, p. 60). Therefore, the use of external monologue aims to focus on a detailed exploration of the psychological nuances of the other character (the hotel owner). This technique is effective in expressing the contradictions and internal transformations of the characters and highlighting their psychological dimensions more effectively. Al-Rukaibi continues, describing the scene of self-affirmation and the psychological contradictions of the hotel owner after elaborating on the external dialogue:

"We entered the room as a kind of challenge. I truly felt challenged... I didn't let him finish welcoming us but immediately asked:

- Have you read the morning paper?

- Yes, I read it...

- And what did you think?

The man understood my meaning and responded:

- You are men." "But yesterday you said: 'You have no leaders and no struggle, while we and Morocco have leaders and we fought...'

"I admit I was wrong." (Rakibi, 1985, p. 11)

Abdullah Rakibi departs from the pattern of self-recrimination, employing external dialogue to make the scene of self-reflection more prominent and to deepen the potential for awareness, which revealed contradictions in the character of the "hotel owner." This man, who had transformed from a mocker and detractor of the Algerian self, devoid of struggle and revolutionary history, into a humiliated figure admitting his mistake, continues Rakibi's digression:

"No, this is not enough.

"We are brothers... We wanted to urge you to resist colonialism.

I replied defiantly and proudly:

"And do we need to hear this from the likes of you? Our people know revolution and have never ceased it since colonialism entered our land.

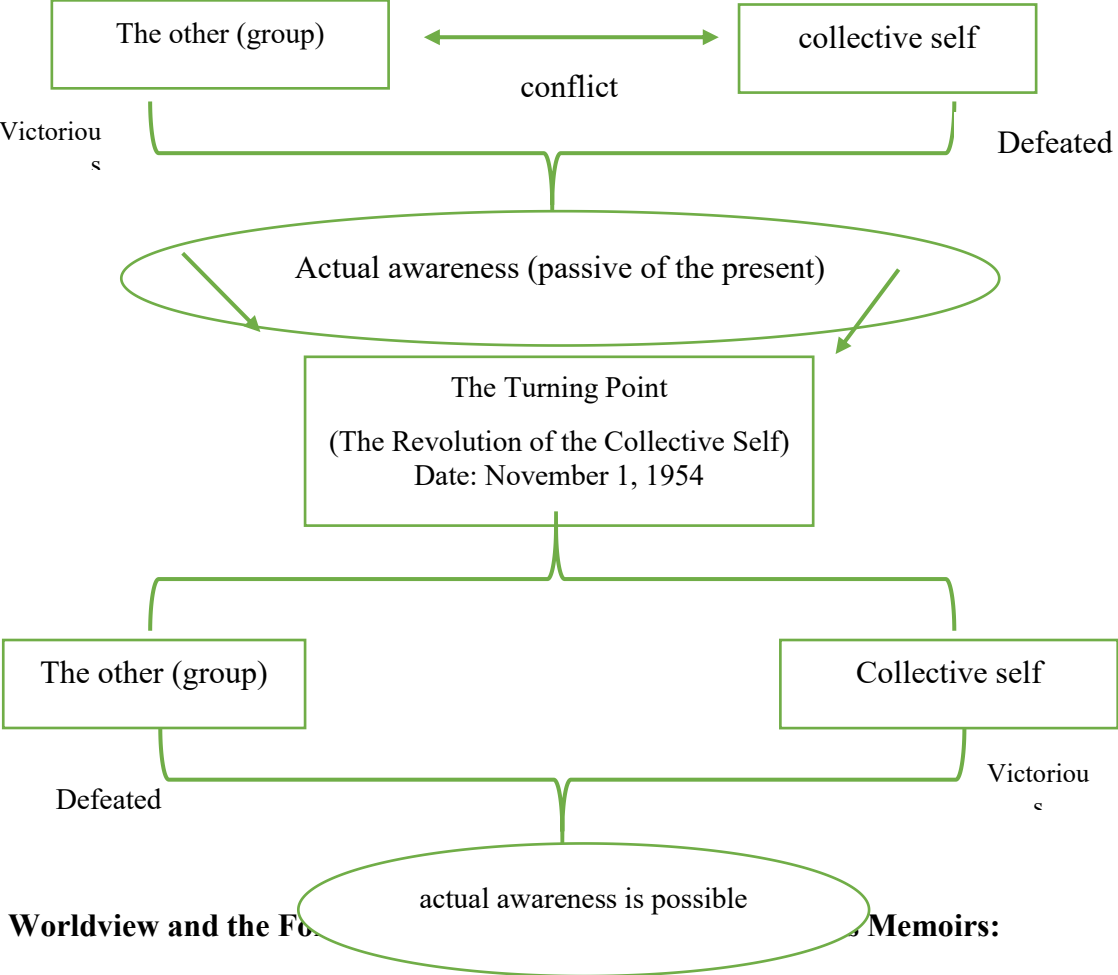
"We do not mean to offend you."

"Yesterday you hurt my feelings."

"I'm sorry, I made a mistake. Don't be angry with me."

Brother Ali grabbed my arm and pulled me outside without letting me finish what I wanted to say..." (Rakibi, 1985, pp. 11-12). Abdullah Rakibi employed the technique of external monologue to further deepen the stark image of the submissive other (the café owner) in contrast to the growing image of the rebellious self, proud of its history of struggle. The external monologue also contributed to accelerating the narrative process towards resolving the conflict (reaching a possible consciousness).

We can summarize the development of the turning point described by the author—from a passive, existing consciousness of the present to a possible consciousness that fulfills the aspirations of the collective, rebellious self—according to this model:



**5. The Worldview and the Formation of the Memoirs:**

The worldview is one of the most important structuralist-genetic theories, which “expresses collective, not individual, realities... It is a coherent and unified viewpoint pertaining to the entirety of reality, and it is the viewpoint of the intellectual system of a group whose members live under the same economic, social, and political conditions; the writer expresses the same system with a major vision” (Habila, 2007, p. 146). This means that the

worldview transcends the writer's intentions to something deeper and more comprehensive, to be an embodiment of the collective self's desire to change reality in all aspects. The worldview is "the basis of the group's vision, which the writer describes and transfers from existing consciousness to possible consciousness in the literary work. According to Goldman, it is a mediator between the group and creativity, greater than being merely a reflection of the worldview." (Habila, 2007, p. 146) Just as Abdullah Rkeibi's worldview was embodied, he was able to transform the collective self's vision from a bitter, actual consciousness to a potential consciousness representing the consciousness of the rebellious self striving to assert its identity.

(Habila, 2007, p. 146) Abdullah Rkeibi possesses a visionary outlook that encapsulates a comprehensive understanding of the collective, revolutionary self striving for freedom and independence against the oppressive French colonizer. These memoirs conclude in 1958, four years before Algeria achieved independence on July 5, 1962. This visionary perspective is evident in his personal experience of all aspects of the revolution and his active participation as an individual striving to achieve the collective goal (the entire Algerian people). As Rkeibi states in the introduction to his memoirs: "I focused on the collective, not the individual. It is the collective spirit that concerns me in these recollections, for it is the true spirit of November..." (Rkeibi, 1985, p. 8). His foresight regarding the success of this revolution is further demonstrated in the final lines of his memoirs, written during his trip to Tunisia for medical treatment after being wounded in Algeria while confronting the French occupiers as he crossed the Morice Line. He writes: "At that moment, I forgot my pain and sorrows and thought only of the fact that I was now..." I see my country's flag flying high at the borders, and I see my brothers welcoming me and my companions... I looked to the sky as I saw my country's flag defying everything, and joy and happiness overwhelmed me. I looked to the future with radiance and hope, and I believed that this beloved flag would fly high in Algeria from its southernmost to its northernmost reaches..." (Rakibi, 1985, p. 240). Abdullah Rakibi paints a picture that embodies a profound understanding of the Algerian Revolution and his serious participation in it. His worldview is revealed through his adoption of a forward-looking approach based on a comprehensive analysis of the collective self and the individual's role in achieving its goals. Rakibi's writing also demonstrates a deep immersion in the national spirit and the spirit of the revolution, highlighting the interaction of the living self with history, the suffering of its people, and their struggle against the other (the French occupier). His forward-looking vision is evident in his expectations of the revolution's success and the achievement of independence, and his envisioning of a bright future shining with freedom and independence, using the symbol of the flag flying throughout the country to emphasize the return of full sovereignty. For Algeria, across its entire national territory.

### ***Conclusion:***

In conclusion, based on the foregoing, we arrive at the following findings:

- The memoir serves as a mirror reflecting the revolutionary self, describing its struggle with the other and its endeavor to demonstrate the depth of its belonging and pride in its identity, despite its clash with the negative and oppressive reality of the present.
- In his memoirs, Abdel Rakibi was able to embody the pivotal point linking actual consciousness (the existing and negative reality of the present) and potential consciousness (the realization of the November 1, 1954 revolution), thus achieving a scene of self-rehabilitation that was countered by the erosion of the image of the other.
- The forward-looking vision of the revolutionary self was manifested in the realization of a possible future consciousness embodied in the independence of Algeria and the success of its glorious revolution, through its experience of all aspects of the revolution, its integration into the national spirit, and its interaction with history and the suffering of the Algerian people. • The writings of the self, in their referential dimension, which addressed the Algerian revolutionary discourse, are among the most important sources from which we can glean the obscured part of Algeria's revolutionary history, especially during the period of the November 1st Revolution. Abdullah Rkibi's memoirs, for example, contain messages for future generations aimed at consolidating values, patriotism, and a culture of belonging.
- Abdullah Rkibi was able to offer an analysis of the revolutionary self in its struggle with the other, using the technique of free association through a variation between internal and external monologue. This created an interactive dynamic between the self and the other, and this method proved an effective means of expressing the contradictions and internal transformations of the characters, and of highlighting their psychological dimensions more effectively.

### **Recommendations:**

- In this research paper, we have shed light on a little-known area in literary and critical studies, namely the relationship between revolutionary literary discourses and autobiographical narrative writings in their referential dimension (writings of the self). This is because most studies tend towards revolutionary literary discourses and their relationship with imaginative discourses such as the novel, short story, and theater, etc., neglecting many of the intellectual values that carry the culture of belonging and Algerian identity. Therefore, in this research paper, we sought to open the field for researchers to delve deeper into this neglected topic, and to study the relationship between revolutionary discourses and writings of the self from other aspects that this study has not covered.

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