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**Memory and Self Discovery: Trope of Journey in Camus's *The First Man***

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Memory and Self Discovery: Trope of Journey in Camus's *The First Man*

**A Thesis Submitted to Central Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in English**

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Ms. Sabita Subedi has completed her thesis entitled “Memory and Self Discovery: Trope of Journey in Camus’s *The First Man*” under my supervision. She carried out her research form January 2014 to January 2015. I hereby recommend her thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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This thesis entitled “Memory and Self Discovery: Trope of Journey in Camus’s *The First Man*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Sabita Subedi has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## **Abstract**

This research work tries to trace the memory and self discovery of the author in *The First Man* through the autobiographical aspect of the novel. Albert Camus presents the protagonist, a grown up man of forty named Jacques Cormery who is trying to find his childhood past in Algeria and to know the hidden reality about his dead father. The novel's flashback narration brings the memory of the protagonist as the ultimate search for self or identity. Throughout this memory of past poor childhood in Algeria without father of the grown up protagonist, the author has revealed his own hidden childhood and family history as his identity. There are two factors associated with life of the protagonist Jacques Cormery or the author. On one hand, the novel presents the story of the growth of the protagonist from a poor family from Algeria without father with his hard struggle into the sober and successful man as the personal self or identity and the other hand, the novel presents the identity of French-Algerian at the collective level. This research has found the search for author's self, identity and subjectivity through the autobiographical writing by turning back to his childhood and family history as the autobiographical novel.

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## **I. Introducing Albert Camus and *The First Man***

This research work tries to trace the memory and self discovery in Albert Camus' *The First Man* through the autobiographical perspective of the novel. Since the major character Jacques Cormery stands as the personal portrait of the author himself, this research through the memory of the author regarding his childhood memory and growth tries to deal with author's self discovery evoking his past and family roots. As the novel begins, forty-year-old Jacques Cormery goes in a search for information about his deceased father, Henri Cormery as if the author himself has been leading to dig out his past. As the autobiographical writing, Jacques Cormery is born in a small village named Solferino in the Algerian countryside in 1913 in the first section of the novel. The next section of the novel jumps to 1954, with Jacques as a forty- year old man. In this sense, the novel plays between past of the protagonist and his present. In present he is trailing back to the past in order to find who is actually and what the hidden realities about his father are. The forty- year old grown up man's memory reveals that Henri Cormery dies before his son Jacques Cormery's first birthday, leaving Lucie, Jacques' partially deaf and mute mother, to raise him. Henri dies in the war in France.

Adult Jacques Cormery first explores his father's grave site in a small village in France. Jacques Cormery lives in Paris and visits his father's grave. This visit deeply touches Jacques Cormery because he realizes his father died at twenty-nine years old, and now he is forty. He realizes that Henri Cormery hardly lived life. The novel goes through another discovery while Jacques travels to Algeria, back to the poor neighborhood where he grew up in Algiers and where Lucie, his mother still lives. Once he is back in the neighborhood, he has long sections of flashbacks to his childhood. In fact, most of the novel is about Jacques Cormery's childhood which

comes in the flash back form as a grown up adult returns to his past. In the midst of childhood remembrances, Jacques Cormery tries to get information out of Lucie and others about his father Henri Cormery. However, Lucie cannot remember all about her husband and the others have no answers which leads the novel to the exploration of hidden family 'self.'

As the author discovers, Child Jacques Cormery grows up in extreme poverty and without a father. He lives with his mother Lucie, the grandmother, who is Lucie's mother, his Uncle Etienne, who is fully deaf and partially mute, and his older brother Henri Cormery, who is hardly mentioned in the novel. He remembers the good times of growing up, such as playing games, swimming in the beach and causing mischievousness with the other neighborhood boys. The grandmother is the disciplinarian in the family and takes over the mother's role. Any time Jacques Cormery does something bad, the grandmother whips him.

The novel reveals that Jacques Cormery is intelligent and his teacher recognizes this. Jacques Cormery passes a special exam to enter lycee, an advanced secondary school in downtown Algiers. He attends and tries to fit in with classmates who have more money than his family does. Now, he becomes a sensitive young man, who observes the people and places around him, and the plight of the Arab-European relationship. He is also wild and vain and gets into trouble at school. In this sense, the discovery of past through the memory is major central line of the novel.

In the midst of his childhood memories, an adult Jacques Cormery comforts Lucie when terrorist bombs explode in the street. He also goes to visit Solferino, the village where he was born. However, no one knows of his family, in particular, about his father.

No one can help him in his search for Henri Cormery. Jacques Cormery grows into a sensitive, caring and mature young man by the novel's end. He leaves poverty and succeeds in France. He realizes all of his life experiences both good and bad, including being fatherless, shape him as a person. He is the first man. Although *The First Man* is a fiction, it is autobiographical in its nature. There is no need to be a clear demarcation line between creative writing and autobiographical writing because both of them can be fictional in nature as Gunnthorunn Gudmundsdottir writes:

Autobiographical writing clearly invites this kind of confusion and hence there is no intention here to differentiate between the 'purely' literary and 'purely' referential, rather to identify aspects of the fictional within the autobiographical. Fictionality here, therefore, can denote not only conventions in creative writing but also conventions deployed in autobiographical writing. (5-6)

From this point it is clear that even the autobiographical writing too expressed in fictional forms. Albert Camus' *The First Man* too could be marked as the creative writing or fiction with autobiographical elements. Through this autobiographical work, Albert Camus searches for 'self' through the memories of his past in Algeria and about his father with the imaginary character Jacques.

Major character Henri Cormery stands as the personal portrait of the author himself in *The First Man*. The search for family roots and culture in the middle age of the life of the major character in the novel stands as parallel with the life of Albert Camus himself. The parody between fictional character, events and incidents with author himself marks that the novel stands as the medium to discover 'self' of the author since the major character's search for his history through memory marks his effort to find his identity and self in the novel which itself is author's search for self or

identity or origin through the memory. Regarding these issues into the consideration, Daniel Just writes, “On both the personal and collective level of Jacques’ effort to recover his and his people’s memory, Camus poses a very non-temporal and non-historical moment of origin to which Jacques aspires” (81).

This research aims to trace the memory of past history, culture and family roots of Jacques Cormery’s medium of the exploration ‘self’ and ‘identity’ and tries to connect Jacques as the autobiographical persona of Albert Camus himself. In this sense, to include Albert Camus actual biography is relevant. Albert Camus was born in Algeria in 1913 as the protagonist of the novel born. Albert Camus is well known novelist, essayist, dramatist, and recipient of the 1957 Nobel Prize for Literature, is esteemed as one of the finest philosophical writers of modern France. The French existentialist philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote about him as “the latest example of that long line of *moralistes* whose works constitute perhaps the most original element in French letters” (173). From this point one could imagine the literary height of Albert Camus.

Albert Camus’ literary legacy includes three novels, namely *L’Etranger* (*The Stranger*) of 1942, *La Peste* (*The Plague*) of 1947, and *La Chute* (*The Fall*) of 1957, and a fourth unfinished one that was posthumously published as *The First Man* in 1995 which is remarkable for his childhood memory in Algeria. Albert Camus could be separated from his homeland Algeria though his literary carrier leads his to France. In this sense, Albert Camus is called Algerian French. His identity as the Algerian French is quite justified even from the novel *The First Man* since the author deals with the growth of his protagonist with the trans-cultural border between Algeria and France.

David Carroll, in a very carefully-worded reinterpretation of Camus in light of O'Brien's and Said's interventions, shows that some of Camus's later works, notably the short stories in *L'exil et le royaume* as well as the posthumously-published, and apparently largely autobiographical, *Le premier homme*, which was not available when Said and O'Brien were forming their impressions of Camus. They show a much greater ambiguity on the position of the "French Algerian" (5) vis-à-vis the Algerian people and space than had been observed by O'Brien and Said according to Ali Yedes in "A North-African Studies of Camus".

Observing the latest fictions of Camus, Carroll argues, ". . . throughout these later works by Camus one finds that the author seems to be dominated by the Algerian soil, by the very 'terre' that his supposed mother country had been dominating for the past one hundred years" (529). Carroll points to a 'cult of the land' between France and Algeria in Camus latest writings. There is a heavy influence of Algerian soil on Camus' characters and on the author himself. Carroll shows that Camus' depiction of French Algerians describes them by "their simultaneous rootedness and exile from their birth land," (531) and points to various descriptions of the Algerian landscape in Camus' writings. Carroll confirms through his examination of the Algerian land that possesses the French Algerians and Arab Algerians alike in Camus's fiction that it is an "imaginary place," (517) strongly rooted in the physical Algeria in which Camus was born and always attached by ties of family and concern throughout his career. Because the Algeria in question has an imagined side, Carroll argues, "It is in his literary texts that Camus presents . . . the problems associated with the multiple and most often contradictory, confused 'identities' of French Algerians" (531). Even another critic Wayne Hayes deals with Camus' Algerian French identity:

Being the people from the French colony Algeria, the political realities, the power relations between colonies and issue of identity are some basic features of Camus' writings. The suggestion that it is in Camus's fiction that his descriptions of political realities are the most clearly expressed. In prose . . . form, Camus mapped the frontier between individuals and the state, or, more specifically, between the individual and power. (4)

Camus's fictional works are based on the soil of Algeria, as well as its beaches, rocks, sunshine, and even architecture, all have a great impact on the manner in which Camus's French Algerian characters will interact with the space they inhabit and those with whom they share that space.

Keeping these issues into the consideration, it is much relevant to deal with his intentions to look at his past to Algeria. There is the link between textual descriptions of the Algerian space and its effect on various 'French Algerian' characters since the characters of Camus are shaped according this dual national identity. For Camus, Algeria was "an Algeria of infinite horizons and possibilities and intense sensations which is the site of a freedom more basic than any political or social principle or right," (533) as told by Carrol.

Similarly, Raymond Gay-Crosier, in an insightful study of Albert Camus's marginality in light of his Algerian birth and upbringing, shows that Camus lived and worked in the margins, leading to what he calls the author's "optique de séparé" (283).

Camus's work is particularly fascinating and useful for examining the worldview of the *pied-noir* because the main characters of Camus's novels, apparently in parallel to the author himself, are neither wholly French nor wholly

Algerian, but seemingly caught somewhere in the middle. Camus's detachment from absolute identification with any of the traditional identities associated with France and its overseas possessions. It lends Camus's prose its apparently flat affect, leading to characters accepting calmly, in a detached manner, fates and outcomes that the reader might expect them to vociferously protest.

This unusual point of view, both from France and Algeria, exhibited by Camus in his novels and here remarked by Gay-Crosier in letters from Camus's correspondence with Jean Grenier, will be important for this study of Camus's relationship with Algeria as it sets up the idea that Algeria was central to the development of Camus's fixation on boundaries and separation. Gay-Crosier posits, "Camus's physical and emotional marginalization, both in childhood and in adulthood, the results of political realities such as colonialism and physical factors such as tuberculosis, led to the major themes of Camus's works, namely the absurd, indifference, revolt, 'étrangeté' and exile" (283).

There is one-to-one correlation between biographical details and literary output of Albert Camus. It seems quite defensible here to accept that growing up in Algiers in the particular socio-economic situation and reflecting these aspects in literary writing means to discover the identity or self. Camus seems to have impacted at least what he would later choose as subject matter for his novels, all but one of which will be set in Algeria, frequently featuring prominently refers his quest for self discovery through writings.

Keeping these criticisms into the consideration it is clear that Albert Camus is a French-Algerians in general and his literary writings too shaped according to similar identity. Like most of his characters Jacques Cormery, the central character of *The First Man* too is grown up in similar social, political and cultural setting. Unlike other

characters of Camus from pure fictional novel, Jacques Cormery's life stands parallel as if it is the life of author himself since the novel is autobiographical. While understanding Camus and the cultures he describes in his novels, it is French-Algerian as Gay-Crosier reminds it as the "one aspect of the marginality" (283) and he further asserts his views about Camus, "Français d'Algérie cantonnés dans leur monde de colons" (283). For Gay-Crosier the identity of French-Algerian is, "the pseudo-military nature of the colonial presence also reminds us how insulated the French Algerians were from the majority they dominated in Algeria, and how limited was any communication between the (at least) two groups of Algerians" (283). Gay-Crosier notes the ignorance of the language and culture of the colonized on the part of the colonials, calling ironically into question the effectiveness of the "so-called mission civilisatrice" (283).

Camus's use of the Algerian landscape in his works, Gay-Crosier points out that Camus projected a spiritual and sentimental geography onto Algeria's physical features. It is interesting to note that the landscapes here serving as the basis for Camus's lyrical lessons are shown to be blasted and empty wastelands, which nonetheless are a rich source of poetic inspiration. The oxymoronic participatory solitude here evoked will be shown to be central to Camus's descriptions of Algeria and the various communities calling it home in his novels, as the actions of members of these communities, and even the very landscapes themselves will actively push the characters into isolation. The isolation, or solitude, actively sought out by Camus's characters and landscapes, will drive some of the most disturbing scenes in Camus' fiction, perhaps most notably with the shooting of an Arab on the beach. The expression of Algerian landscapes of Albert Camus in *The First Man* is major concern of this study as the means of self discovery.

Mona Fayad, in a study of Camus's "The Renegade" and Conrad's "Heart of Darkness," writes:

Camus's short story, and by extension his prose in general, in what Christopher Miller has dubbed 'Africanist discourse,' that is to say as representing Africa as Europe's repressed or dark side. Like Conrad's to England, Camus's relationship to France was quite marginal, resulting in his work being received as everything from colonial dogma to championing Algerian rights. Examining the specifics of the landscapes in these short stories . . . Taghasa, the village of salt in Camus's story, is 'removed from external referents in time and space' and that it represents for Camus a 'sterile wasteland' characterized by blowing sand, a sea-like expanse of sharp rocks, and knife-like mountains. (302)

Thus marginalized from the larger context, which is presumably still Algeria, the strange events of this tale can unwind without hindrance from the greater political realities of the real world. Nevertheless, Fayad states that Camus's text provides us with more rigid barriers between the Africanist 'other' and the self-identity of the protagonist.

Keeping above mentioned criticisms into the consideration, it is clear that Albert Camus, according to his birth and growth as well as according to his writing contends and characters could be identified as a French-Algerian. His childhood is connected with Algeria and his adulthood is connected with France. However, as an exiled author from Algeria to France, he frequently brings the references, place settings and characters fused with both France and Algeria. In *The First Man* Camus brings the similar character whose growth, nationality and identity is connected with both nations- France and Algeria. His central character goes to the childhood memory of Algeria into the history in order to seek his father and past. The novel *The First Man* too has dragged the attention of critics

since its publication as *Le premier homme* in French language. Connecting with Algerian politics and other uphill, regards his views:

Unlike the previous criticisms being starts with the sole existence of the being-in-itself, where being is independent from surrounding elements, whether it is the external world –prompting the being-for-others– or the being-for-itself. At the discovery of “being” and the realization of the external, the being-for-itself and the being-for-others start formulating, prompting the state of “being” to move away from the condition of in-itself. At that point, the separation causes a gap between the primary state of existence, the being-in-itself, and the other states. Sartre writes in *Being Nothingness*, “This space is what Sartre deems as nothingness because it is a negation of being.” (186)

In addition, the being-for-itself and the being-in-itself, despite the conflict, are lodged within the same dimension of being. One however, is projected to the outside world, the other remains completely isolated. The being-in-itself is the starting point of existence. This is the point at which the protagonist Jacques Cormery from *The First Man* begins his journey. He, in search for his individual and collective self or identity trails back to family history and in search for his father.

As one moves away from the being-in-itself, there is a longing for it and a wish to return to it. Both the protagonist and the author Camus face that issue, and there is doubt whether a return is possible as they move from one state of being to another. It seems impossible to remain in the state of being-in-itself, and at the same time, there is a great desire to do so. The protagonist’s wish to know the father and to find his own identity is the driving factor of his self, subjectivity and identity. However, the societies around them and the nature of their existence stand in the way.

This thesis focuses on identifying the process of finding self or subjectivity by trailing back to family history and past. Similarly, it deals with the motive of writing autobiographical novel in order to find the self or reveal the identity of author.

The self, the memory and the body are three interconnected elements in the search for identity. In this connection Williams says, “we have individuated various personalities by reference to character, attainments and (up to a point) memories, and without references to bodies” (17). The previous statement is contingent on the body being already identified and unchanging as he further asserts his views, “there has been no reference to bodies only in the sense that no such reference came into the principles used; but it does not follow from this that there was no reference to a body in starting to individuate at all” (17).

Therefore, if the body is already identified, then the three other factors come into play more than the physical aspect. One should also note that Williams was referring to identifying multiple personalities inside one person. This may also be the case in the novel, *The First man*. Given the frequent use of the terms “self”, “identity” “individual” and “subjectivity” throughout this paper, it tries to deal with search for self through the memory of family history both in personal and collective levels. About the individuality, Tuan says, “By individuality, I have in mind both physical character and inner reality-the existence of a world within each being” (308).

The individual is the vessel that carries within it both the physical side and the immaterial side that manifests in ideas and emotions. In this connection, Judith Butler says:

In other words, the individual is the amalgamation of both aspects of a human: body and soul. The individual is also a part or a component of the whole; the recognition of the individual depends on the existence

of the collective, which brings the term “identity” into focus. Identity is the projection of the individual to the collective. (22)

Similarly, for Satra, “Identity is the limiting concept of unification: it is not true that the in-itself has any need of a synthetic unification of its being; at its own extreme limit, unity disappears and passes into identity” (74).

In the projection of being, the infinite possibilities of being are compromised. Sartre argues that the concept of identity is unnatural; recognition limits being, which is ever-changing. While the duality of being is an expected result of the conflict between the being-in-itself and the being for-itself, the limiting of it happens only in the existence of the other as Sartre writes, “identity is the ideal of "one," and "one" comes into the world by human reality” (74).

Identity is not the unification of the natural duality that exists within, but it is a compromise to project a limited idea of being. However, the self is the opposite of identity as Sartre says, “the self refers, but it refers precisely to the subject. It indicates a relation between the subject and himself” (76). The self is a personal concept that does not factor in the collective, but allows the subject to exist beyond the scope of recognition. As Sartre puts it, the self refers to the subject, but at the same time it “does not designate being either as subject or as predicate” (76). While the identity dissipates the unity of being, “the self tries to restore it by giving the subject distance from recognition and reality” (77). From there, the conflict arises, between the identity and the self, at the same time, the individual holds all those factors within, while projecting a separate image to the collective. Meanwhile, the collective recognizes the individual in a different way, and tends to hold that recognition in relation with the subject, making it very difficult to change that projection. The

individual remains a constant in respect to the collective, despite the continuous conflict within, and the changing aspects of her/his being.

The body–self connection forms an important part of self-recognition. Yet, the recognition of the body’s experiences cannot be fully recalled. The essence of the experiences might leave some form of mark on the body as it ages and withers, but the intricate details of the experiences are lost within the folds of the memory. In this connection, Butler writes, “But there is also a history to my body for which I can have no recollection, and there is as well a part of bodily experience-what is indexed by the word "exposure"-that only with difficulty, if at all, can assume narrative form” (27). Butler alludes to that point, explaining that the former existence of the body is fragile, in so far as it cannot be put into a comprehensive narrative. It affects the self, but in an indirect way through the memory.

Butler also uses the term “temporalities” that Sartre uses to explain the stages of the self’s existence. Sartre believes that the self undergoes changes that cause the states of a “before” and an “after” (130). Sartre points out to a succession of temporalities, where the self constantly changes from a “before” to an “after”, each “before” or “after” is different from the one that precedes and follows it. Therefore, the final “after” is a completely different temporality from the initial “before”. While Sartre mainly addresses the self, Butler addresses the temporality of the body as well. However, the final result is the same, the unrecognizability of the initial existence, “my account of myself is partial, haunted by that for which I have no definitive story” (27). Also, through the persistent succession of temporalities, and the passing of time, the subject forgets as Sartre says, “time gnaws and wears away it separates; it flies. And by virtue of separation–by separating man from his pain or from the object of his pain–time cures” (130-31).

According to Sartre, the body's recognition is different from the recognition of the self. He writes, "The self is recognized internally, while the body is recognized externally" (303). In other words, the body, like the individual is recognized by the other in relation to external factors. At the same time, there is an internal relation between the self and the body that is not available to the other, "my body as it is for me does not appear to me in the midst of the world" (303).

The way the self sees the body is different from the way the world sees it; the self cannot see the body in respect to the world. In recognition of her/his own body, the individual is looking from the inside out, while the other is looking from the outside. The relationship between the self and the body is completely different from the relationship formed between the body and the other. At the same time, during the viewing of the body by the subject, the body –at the time– becomes the other; the individual experiences the object and its projection at the same time. Sartre writes, "The discovery of my body as an object is indeed a revelation of its being. But the being which is thus revealed to me is its being-for-others" (305).

The recognition of the body is an external experience, belonging to the external world. As the person recognizes her/his body, they become aware of its shape and its existence in relation to the other. The physical aspect of being becomes the gateway to the other, and how they perceive the individual. The body or the individual's appearance defines the relationship with the external world and the collective. Both the protagonist and the author of the novel *The First Man* go for the search for individual and collective self. Gardner writes about individual and self, "The fact that others are many amounts to nothing more than the contingent necessity, for each individual other, that it exists" (334). Thus, the multiplicity of an identity is a "contingent necessity" which is driven or sparked by the existence of the "other".

After the initial identification, there is a struggle between the being-for-itself and the being-for-others as the subject is confused as to which self is the “original” self. The original self is either identified by memory as in the case of *The First Man*.

The author in the book tries to find the individual and collective self and identity. About the connection of literary writing and self of the author Sartre writes:

We hope that our books remain in the air all by themselves and that their words, instead of pointing backwards toward the one who has designed them, will be toboggans, forgotten, unnoticed, and solitary, which will hurl the reader into the midst of a universe where there are no witnesses; in short, that our books may exist in the manner of things, of plants, of events, and not at first like products of man. (229)

Jean-Paul Sartre, a French philosopher born in 1905 was considered a defining pillar of existentialism. Sartre’s literary works such as *No Exit* and *Nausea* discussed the ideas of the self and the other. While Sartre refers to book and author as two separate entities after the publication of the book, this is not how a book is treated by the readers. His view of the author-text-reader relationship is quite idealistic. He explains that an author’s work is quite holy that it cannot be given a certain price.

Sartre’s view of literature is not connected to the realistic dealings of the literary world. He suspended both author and book in a separate world that occasionally gets visited by readers. On their visit, the readers are incapable of connecting to the real world, but become stranded in the book-author dimension. The suspension of the readers hinders them from making connections between the author in real life and the characters or events of the book. He puts authors on a pedestal so that their creations are beyond the productions of man, but pre-existing opuses of a

divine nature. He equates books with plants, something that human beings have come to find already created, and cannot be dubbed man-made.

However, Sartre's view is hardly applicable, and includes some great exaggeration. A book is the creation of man, and as anything created by man, it holds room for error as well as for interpretation. Implying that books should be thought of as suspended creations in their own dimension is not only unrealistic, but it also alienates the readers. In addition, Sartre wants to create gods out of authors; they bestow their wisdom on mere mortals, and the receivers are not to question or interpret. In a way, Sartre wants to eliminate the reader's perspective of the book. In his attempt to allow books to portray their messages without any influence from the authors or the external world, he managed to exclude the reader's experience altogether. Reading is no longer a personal experience, but a didactic one.

Roland Barthes, a French theorist and philosopher born in 1915, helped shape the theoretical aspect of semiotics, and he was concerned with the breakdown of writing and reading. His work, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, details the stages of a lover's psyche via the writings of others, hence achieving some kind of neutral writing. Barthes believed that the removal of the author can be achieved through a different mode of writing, and not through severing the relationship between author and text. Through neutral writing, the reader is capable of deriving her/his own perspective, uninfluenced. However, the mere presentation of neutral writing can be regarded as influence, the quotations used, the type of authors, etc. These are all factors that can influence the reader one way or another, even if unintended.

However, Barthes was realistic in his view of the author-text relationship as Barthes writes, "The Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a

*before and an after*” (145). The author becomes a part of her/his book as readers try to find her/him within the text. Barthes argues that this practice enriches the book as it gives it a “past”. The book has two sorts of existences or identities; one pre-publishing and one after. The personal relationship of creator and creation between the author and the book ends as the book becomes a public affair. Barthes is more realistic in his analysis, referring to the change in both author and book after publishing. Keeping these author text relationship into the consideration, this research work aims to trace Albert Camus’ search for self, identity and subjectivity through his autographical novel *The First Man*.

## **II. *The First Man* as the Narrative of Self-Discovery**

*The First Man* as the autobiographical novel of Albert Camus there is a central character named Jacques Cormery, similar with author himself, who undergoes through the search of his past and late father as if the protagonist is searching for his inner self through the memory of past. The novel tries to trace the memory and self discovery of a French-Algerian while the major characters trail back to his childhood memory in Algeria and visits frequently there in order to search for his identity though he is currently adult grown up man. The protagonist seems as if a clone of Albert Camus himself so protagonist's search for his roots and identity itself is author's quest for self, the self of French- Algerian sub cultural people marginalized from main stream French people and culture. The novel discovers the 'self' of the author in two ways. In one hand it captures the struggle and growth of a poor French-Algerian boy who himself is portrayal of author Albert Camus. On the other hand it is the discovery of the collective self of entire community of French- Algerians.

*The First Man* is the text Camus was working on at the time of his death in January 1960 is shown to be an instructive test case for two reasons, thus even the socio-historical context of production of the novel too captures the search for French-Algerian identity of author. The novel has three parts. The first part of the novel is "The Search for the Father," which is based on the search for witnesses that knew the narrator's father who had killed in 1914 at the Battle of the Marne, supplemented by inter-textual sources on prewar Algeria, the settler generation of 1848 in particular. Similarly the part two, "The Son," is a mixture of self-contained chapters on family life, childhood games, schooling, and so on, and an account of the narrator's progress, in the present of the narration, towards self-awareness as 'the first man.' The last part of the novel is an "Appendix" of notes, references, and reflections that suggest

something of the raw material used and the multiple directions in which the novel might have developed. As it stands, the unfinished text is more autobiographical than fictional, and it is primarily from this angle that the issue of self discovery is addressed.

The motive of this research is to briefly look at the interplay between the lives of fictional characters in the novel and author himself in order to trace how the identity of French-Algerian is revealed in the text as the exploration of self of the author and his community. As is widely known, Camus' involvement in Algerian politics began long before 1954; his most famous attack on government policies appeared in 1939 as a series of newspaper articles entitled "Misère de la Kabylie." In fact, starting in 1945 he became France's most high-profile spokesman in favor of a just, liberal colonialism, and if he always felt ill-at-ease in Paris cultural circles, it was largely because he valorized his 'colonial' identity above all. This identity constituted the motivating force behind a journalistic stance on matters Algerian grounded in the authority of the insider and designed to inform, correct, and reshape metropolitan French views. In order to trace the collective identity of French-Algerian in the novel, the reference of Camus' political affiliation is mentioned here. Both the search for personal and collective self in *The First Man* is discussed in the research.

*The First Man* through the autobiographical perspective of the novel could be regarded as the growth and existence or search for self of a poor French-Algerian boy. It is the story which captures the growth of the boy to a matured adult who while trying to trace his family origin, roots and migration discovers his personal, family and collective French-Algerians' 'self.' Thus, the exploration of 'self' of 'identity' through the memory is central line of the novel. Through the memory of Jacques Cornery about his past childhood in Algeria, the author reveals his and his cultural

self. Memory, here, becomes the medium of self discovery that evokes past, family roots and cultural identity.

As the novel begins, the author reveals the journey of Jacques Cormery's parents to a small village named Solferino in the Algerian countryside in 1913. Jacques Cormery's father is transformed there for his service. Since Algeria is French colony, there is French rule in Algeria. The very first paragraph of the novel lands the story in Algeria as Camus writes, "Up above the wagon rolling along a stony road, big thick clouds were hurrying East through the dusk . . . strait to the continent, had come apart on the Moroccan peaks, had gathered once again in flocks on the high plateaus of Algeria, and now at the Tunisian frontier, they were trying to reach" (3). With the clouds of the sky which were moving to East, the author symbolically refers to the migrated French to their colony Algeria which lies to East from France.

Author gives the actual images of stony road and wagon through which the protagonist parents are travelling to Solferino a village of Algeria. He describes their journey and actual portrayal of protagonist mother, "On a second seat, wedged between the first seat and heap of old trunks and furniture, sat a woman who, though shabbily dresses, was wrapped in a course woollen shawl" (4). The author gives the images of Cormery couple moving to Solferino. There is a man named Arab who has come to take them in station. The next page gives details regarding Cormery's journey to there. The author even gives the details of year and time in order to reveal actual family history in fictional form:

It was a night in the autumn of 1913. Two hours earlier the voyagers had left the railroad station in Bone, where they had arrived from Algiers after a journey of a night and a day on the hard third-class benches. In the station they had found the wagon and the Arab waiting

to take them to the farm located near a small village, about twenty kilometers into the interior of the country, where the husband was to take over the management. (6)

Author reveals that Croery couple, due to transform of the husband to this remote village, have moved there. As the moment while the couple reach there, the Lucie (wife, later known as Catherine) is ready to give birth.

The author reveals the incidents as, “She was bent double, her face in her arms. ‘Lucie,’ the man said. She did not move. The man touched her with his hand. She was weeping silently. He shouted, stressing each syllable and acting out his words: You are going to lie down there I will go and get the doctor!” (7). It is the beginning of the novel. It is a rainy night in the autumn of 1913 in the Bone area, a young couple travelling in a cart to their new home, a little whitewashed house on a farm which the man is to take over. The woman is shivering and is about to give birth. Helped by an old Arab servant, the husband lights a fire in the cold, empty house, settles his wife on a mattress near the fire and goes to find a doctor.

Author reveals the incident of the birth of the boy. When husband returns, the baby, a boy, is already born and the neighbour who came to help comments, “This one's had a good start - born in the middle of a move” (13). This is how Albert Camus, alias Jacques Cormery in the novel (after his paternal grandmother), was born. The birth is further explained:

At the moment, the wife lifted her head and saw her husband. A marvelous smile transfigured that exhausted beautiful face. Cormery went over to the mattress. ‘He came she said under her breath, and she reached out her hand to the infant. ‘Yes’ said the doctor. ‘But stay still’ the wife gave him a questioning look . . . ‘What are you going to call

him?’ the owner of the canteen called out. ‘I don’t know, we haven’t thought about it.’ He looked at her. Since you were here, we’ll call him Jacques.’ (14)

Thus, the first chapter of the novel gives the details to the move of Cormery couple to their new place and home. It captures the incident of Jacques Cormery’s birth and naming parallel with Albert Camus. Thus, the part one of the novel titled as “In Search of the Father” begins with the details of protagonist Jacques Cormery’s birth.

The second chapter of the same part directly moves forty years ahead. It further reveals the fact that same Jacques Cormery is in search of his father while he is grown up to an adult man. He is in the France and as the chapter begins is waiting train at Saint- Brieuc, “Forty years later a man standing in the corridor of Saint- Brieuc train was watching with an air of disapproval as the villages and ugly houses of the flat cramped countryside that stretches from Paris to the channel marched past under the pale sun of an afternoon in spring” (16). Here, Jacques Cormery is in journey to the spot where his father had died forty years back. He is in hurry as Camus writes, “The traveler immediately stood up, effortlessly lifted his suitcase . . . he left rapidly and hurried down the three steps of the carriage” (17). The only intention of Jacques Cormery is to find out the grave of his father as Camus writes, “He found the chambermaid in the lobby, asked her where the cemetery was” (18).

The novel is narrated in flashback technique. In the first section of the novel, Jacques Cormery is born in a small village named Solferino in the Algerian countryside in 1913. The next section jumps to 1954, with Jacques as a man. The reader learns that Henri dies before Jacques' first birthday, leaving Lucie, Jacques' partially deaf and mute mother, to raise him. Henri dies in the war in France. While Jacques Cormery runs for the search for information about his deceased father, Henri

Cormery author leads the novel in flashback. He does so in order to dig out his past. The novel plays between past of the protagonist and his present. In present he is trailing back to the past in order to find who is actually and what the hidden realities about his father are. As the search for father, Jacques moves to cemetery. In this connection, Camus writes:

Then he entered the cemetery and went to the caretaker's house. The caretaker was not there. The traveler waited in the barely furnished little office, then noticed a map, which he was studying when the caretaker entered . . . The traveler asked for the location of those who died in the war of 1914. 'Yes,' the caretaker said. 'That's called the square of French Remembrance. What name are you looking for?' 'Henri Cormery,' said the traveler. The caretaker opened a large book bound in wrapping paper and with his dirty finger went down a list of names. His finger came to a stop. 'Cormery Henri,' he said, 'fatally wounded at the battle of Marne, died at Saint-Brieuc 11 October 1914.'

(18)

Jacques Cormery, thus gets the information of his father's grave who have died at 1914 at the Battle of Marne. It is the same year when Jacques Cormery was born. Now after forty years of the death of father, a son is revisiting the grave in order to trace the past of his father. The past of the father, for Jacques Cormery is his cultural and family roots and identity connected with his self and subjectivity.

Jacques Cormery's search for father means his search for family history. By finding out the father son aims to find his own identity and 'self.' On the other hand it is a narration of family history. The narration of family history is directly connected

with individual identity or self. Keeping these issues into the consideration, Mark Freeman asserts his views:

The idea of history as we have come to know it . . . The very relationship between personal identity and narrative- particularly insofar as narrative is thought of in ‘autobiographical’ terms- is itself the product of distinct, and indeed monumental, transformations in history . . . Acknowledging in other words, the obtained across the course of history, and acknowledging as well the relatively recent emergence of autobiographical narrative (at least in its ‘post-confessional’ phase, where the individual ego takes center stage rather than God) are trans-historical, that is universal. (284-85)

According to Mark Freeman, the family history in autobiographical writing is directly connected with ‘self’ and ‘identity.’ He calls it as the “historical dimension of the relationship between narrative and identity” (285). The narration of the story of search of the father after forty years who have died during the birth of son marks the search for individual identity or ‘self’ through memory. As mentioned by Mark Freeman, it is obvious in most of the autobiographical writings. Albert Camus too tries to seek his own identity or self through the story of Jacques Cormery’s search for father since there is similar experience faced by author and his character.

The forty years old grown up man’s memory reveals that Henri Cormery dies before his son Jacques Cormery’ first birthday, leaving Lucie, Jacques' partially deaf and mute mother, to raise him. Henri dies in the war in France. The story of Jacques Cormery is similar with author’s story. About the biography of Albert Camus, Herbert R. Lottman writes:

Albert Camus was born in Mondovi, Algeria on 7th November 1913, the second son of Lucien and Catherine Camus. His father worked as a cellarman and his mother was a cleaning woman. Albert lived with his father for just eight months, until the outbreak of World War I. Lucien was called up and was among the first to be wounded in the Battle of Marne. He died of his wounds on October 11th 1914. (55)

*The First Man* is completely autobiographical work of writing. Camus only gives the fictional names for characters. He even has mentioned the actual date of Jacques Cormery's birth with his own as well as about the death of father. This biographical writing itself bears the medium of search for self or identity. Regarding the search for subjectivity or self in autobiographical fiction, Mary Jean Corbett writes, "writing autobiography becomes a way of attaining both literary legitimacy and a desired subjectivity" (11). Albert Camus too searches his self or subjectivity by writing the autobiographical novel *The First Man*.

Adult Jacques Cormery first explores his father's grave site in a small village in France. Jacques Cormery lives in Paris and visits to his father's grave. This visit deeply touches Jacques Cormery because he realizes his father died at twenty-nine years old, and now he is forty. He realizes that Henri Cormery hardly lived life. The memory of the father makes Jacques Cormery feel that his father has lived again after his visit to the grave, "But, for him, his father was again alive, a strange silent life, and it seemed to him that again he was going to forsake him, to leave his father to haunt yet another night the endless solitude he had been hurled into and then deserted" (22).

The discovery of self is not limited within the memory of father who has already died during the year of his birth, but also through the childhood memory in

Algeria, the author tries to find his identity. The novel goes through another discovery while Jacques travels to Algeria, back to the poor neighborhood where he grew up in Algiers and where Lucie, his mother still lives. The title of the chapter “The Child’s Game” leads the novel to the childhood memory of Jacques Cormery as Camus writes, “A gentle swell was making the ship roll in the July heat. Jacques Cormery, lying half necked in his cabin, watched the fragmented reflection of the sunlight on the sea dancing on the copper rim of the porthole” (30). Similarly, the author reveals the poor life of Jacques Cormery’s family in Algeria.

Once he is back in the neighborhood, he has long sections of flashbacks to his childhood. In fact, most of the events in the novel are about Jacques Cormery’s childhood that come in the flash backs. In the midst of childhood remembrances, Jacques Cormery tries to get information out of Lucie and others about his father Henri Cormery. However, Lucie cannot remember all about her husband and the others have no answer which leads the novel to the exploration of hidden family ‘self.’ As the author discovers, Child Jacques Cormery grows up in extreme poverty and without a father. He lives with his mother Lucie, the grandmother, who is Lucie’s mother, his Uncle Etienne, who is fully deaf and partially mute, and his older brother Henri Cormery, who is hardly mentioned in the novel. The poor status of family is revealed as, “The three rooms of small apartment in the Algiers neighborhood were enveloped in a striped shade of the carefully closed shutters” (30). Camus, further gives the details of poor life as he mentions:

The child then turned back to the sparse whitewashed room, furnished with a square table in the middle, and, against the walls, a sideboard, a small desk that was scarred and spotted with ink, and on the floor, a small mattress covered with a blanket where, after nightfall, his half-

mute uncle slept; and five chairs. In a corner, on a mantelpiece of which only the shelf was made of marble, stood a small flowered vase with slender neck. (31)

The reference clarifies the childhood poverty faced by Jacques Cormery in Algeria. All these childhood experience of the central character of the novel is similar with author Camus' childhood. The family as Camus' family has been facing the extreme poverty. Even Jacques Cormery finds his father poor as he recalls the narration made by his mother about his father Henri Cormery, "I'm poor, I came from orphanage, they put me in this uniform, they dragged me into the war" (52).

Jacques Cormery remembers the good times of growing up, such as playing games, swimming in the beach and causing mischievousness with the other neighborhood boys. The grandmother is the disciplinarian in the family and takes over the mother's role. Any time Jacques Cormery does something bad, the grandmother whips him, "And his mother after a glance at the grandmother, would turn to him that face he so loved: 'Eat your soup,' she would say. 'It's all over. It's all over.' That was when he let go and wept" (42). Grand-mother is lead family member. Through the memory of central character Jacques Cormery, Camus recalls his own childhood memory of Algeria. The poor life without father, the family including grandmother, mother, maternal uncle and older brother actually are biographical truth of Camus himself. All these childhood experiences of Jacques Cormery are similar with the biography of Albert Camus, which Camus retells in his adult age writing as if he is searching his self, subjectivity, identity and roots. The relevance of the life of the protagonist with Camus himself makes the novel autobiographical.

Like Jacques, Camus faces the poverty in Algeria since is the son or widow and has been living with a family lead by grandmother. Similarly, like Jacques

Cormery, Camus has a brother, uncle and mother in family while all of them live together with grandmother. In *The First Man*, Camus writes, “The grand-mother had raised nine children in the bush, and she had her own ideas of upbringings” (31) which is similar with his grandmother. About the childhood of Albert Camus in Algeria, Herbert R. Lottman reveals:

Camus spent his childhood years living in a small three-bedroom apartment, on the Rue de Lyon in the working class suburb of Belcourt in Algiers. The apartment had no electricity or running water; the toilets were on the landing and shared with the two other apartments in the block. The household was run under the domineering hand of his maternal grandmother – a hand that carried a whip made from the neck ligament of a bull. Fierce, occasionally cruel, and prone to histrionics she ruled over the family living under her roof: her daughter Catherine and two sons Joseph and Etienne as well as Catherine's sons, Lucien and Albert. (65)

The novel as a documentation of Albert Camus’s biography deals with each and every actual happening of the author. Like Jacques Cormery, Albert Camus is genius in study. The novel reveals this fact as Jacques Cormery is intelligent and his teacher recognizes this. Jacques Cormery passes a special exam to enter lycee, an advanced secondary school in downtown Algiers. He attends and tries to fit in with classmates who have more money than his family does. Now, he becomes a sensitive young man, who observes the people and places around him, and the plight of the Arab-European relationship. He is also wild and vain and gets into trouble at school. In this sense, the discovery of past through the memory is major central line of the novel.

In the midst of his childhood memories, an adult Jacques Cormery comforts Lucie when terrorist bombs explode in the street. He also goes to visit Solferino, the village where he was born. However, no one knows of his family, in particular, about his father. No one can help him in his search for Henri Cormery. Jacques Cormery grows into a sensitive, caring and mature young man by the novel's end. He leaves poverty and succeeds in France. He realizes all of his life experiences both good and bad, including being fatherless, shape him as a person. He is the first man.

Although *The First Man* is a fiction, it is autobiographical in its nature. Major character Jacques Cormery stands as the personal portrait of the author himself in *The First Man*. The search for family roots and culture in the middle age of the life of the major character in the novel stands as parallel with the life of Albert Camus himself. The parody between fictional character, events and incidents with author himself marks that the novel stands as the medium to discover 'self' of the author since the major character's search for his history through memory marks his effort to find his identity and self in the novel which itself is author's search for 'self' or 'identity' or 'origin' through the memory.

When Jacques Cormery, the autobiographical forty-year old main character of *The First Man* goes in search of his father's tomb what Camus depicts is nothing other than a stoic attitude toward life. In some absolutely stunningly beautiful passages Camus' narrator reflects on the passage of time and what this all means to subjectivity. Upon realizing that his father, who died in World War I, was only twenty-nine years of age, the narrator writes of Jacques's encounter with time, "The course of time itself was shattering around him while he remained motionless among those tombs he now no longer saw, and the years no longer kept to their places in the great river that flows to its end" (21).

At this point Jacques not only begins to mourn the death of his father at such an early age, but he also confronts his own history and how the years have already robbed him of half of his life. Jacques's exile from "the deadly order of the world" pins him against an alien world from which thought offers no respite. This passage is a supreme example of Camus' firm grasp and clear exposition of existential concerns. There is even an existential quest within the search for father. Yet in exercising our freedom to live we remain in search of our essence as this is symbolized by all actions. However, by over intellectualizing this process what we end up with is nothing other than an abstract concept. Camus also saw that existential categories could not be intellectualized without simultaneously robbing them of their immediate reality. In *The First Man* the self or existence is connected with the search for family and cultural roots. While concentrating on his father grave, Jacques Cormery relates or finds his self as:

He looked at the other inscriptions in that section and realized from the dates that this soil was strewn with children who had been the fathers of graying men who thought they were living in this present time. For he too believed he was living, he alone had created himself, he knew his own strength, his vigour, he could cope and he had himself well in hand . . . world that had been with him for forty years, and still struggling against the wall that separated him from the secretes of all life, wanting to go farther, to go beyond, and to discover, discover before dying, discover at last in order to be, just once to be, for a single second, but forever. (21)

The references while Jacques Cormery is at the father's grave, Albert Camus gives the strong sense of self and existence as well as a continuous struggle in his forty years of

life in order to know himself. There are hidden secrets about his father which the persona aims to discover for just once but for forever. By discovering the facts about father, he aims to know who he himself is and what is his identity. In this sense, *The First man* is author's extreme quest for oneself by discovering father, family history and cultural roots.

To discover oneself through the memory, Albert Camus creates the fictional character, Jacques but brings all his personal accounts in the novel. This mode of biographical writing itself is the way to write oneself and to discover oneself as if the author tries to create his self and subjectivity. Due to the effort of the author to bring out his personal stories through memories in biographical writings, this mode of writing itself regarded as the ultimate way of searching for existential self. Keeping these issues into the consideration Jens Brockmeier writes, “. . . Object of autobiography aims to emphasize life as process, in contrast with views that focus on a more static picture of life, often expressed by categories such as ‘self-concept,’ ‘ego,’ or ‘I.’ . . . there a self, or one self at all” (247). The protagonist of the novel Jacques Cormery too has been going through the process of discover his life while Camus expresses his mentality to discover in front of his father's grave. In this sense, through the Jacques Cormery, Albert Camus himself is discovering his self through his biographical writing *The First Man*.

Jacques Cormery's arrival at the understanding that his life is always a process of understanding the hidden truth and to discovering oneself marks author's quest for his self through this personal writing. There is proper existential perception of life while the author tries to find his self and identity through the memory of father and family history. Both the protagonist of the novel and author himself are in the continuous process of discovering self through memory and history. After Jacques's

initial shock and horror to realize that he has now outlived his father by eleven years, it dawns on him that what separates the living from the dead is time, a relentless mystery that ossifies all human existence into non-being. The narrator explains, “He looked back on his life, a life that had been foolish, courageous, cowardly, willful, and always straining towards that goal” (21).

Hence to attempt to extract a ready-made epistemology from these vital moments is not only an exercise in intellectual futility, but it is also to rob life of its immediacy. Some critics have condemned Camus' thought to exist solely on a literary plain. In essence this manner of "demoting" his contribution to philosophical thought by only attributing to it a literary value misses the point of his thought altogether. Camus' philosophy, like that of other similar thinkers such as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Unamuno and Kafka, for instance, is centered around the encounter of the individual with the cosmos, and not necessarily with an attempt to amplify such findings for all men. Such criticism of his thought, of course, is ludicrous given the existential themes that he was concerned with. Camus' respect for individuality and personal autonomy came at a time in history when these notions were being attacked from many quarters. Another important theme that this novel develops is that of the loneliness of the writer. Writers, of course, do not monopolize loneliness. Loneliness is a central component in the role that subjectivity plays in human existence. But Camus was very concerned with loneliness from a very early age. However, his character tries to discover his self even in loneliness without father.

Even after Sartre finally admitted to Soviet atrocities he nevertheless refused to grant that these came about from a faulty and fallacious logic that fermented mass murder. For these two acts of valor Camus was never forgiven. In fact, it is easy to see that not only was he not forgiven, but also how he was savagely attacked. This is a

large component of what Camus refers to when he mentions the isolation of the writer. He became ostracized as a pariah. An indication of this sentiment can be seen in what the narrator of *The First Man* has to say of Jacques's friend Malan, "Yet he was immensely cultivated and J.C. admired him unreservedly, for Malan, in a day when outstanding men are so banal, was the one person who had his own way of thinking, to the extent that that is possible. At any rate, under his deceptively accommodating exterior, he was free and uncompromisingly original in his opinions" (24).

Another reason that makes Camus' moral courage even more commendable is the poverty from which he arose in his native Algeria and from which he eventually lifted himself. It is the autonomy of the individual. Having been brought up by his mother after his father was killed during World War I, Camus still managed to achieve a degree of dignity that refused poverty as a permanent condition. In this respect Camus can be seen as a working class hero. He represents the optimum ideal of the democratic process where the plight of the individual is left to its own autonomous devices.

From this poverty he also developed a strong sense of pride in remembering those who helped him. Camus' sense of loyalty is always a central aspect of his thought. This can perhaps be in keeping with his stoic and classical notion of honor. This classical respect for honor is displayed throughout *The First Man*. When Jacques Cormery is talking to his friend Malan, he thanks him for helping him rise above his poverty. Jacques says, "When I was very young, very foolish, and very much alone — you remember, in Algiers? — You paid attention to me and, without seeming to, you opened for me the door to everything I love in the world" (26).

And when Malan responds by saying that Cormery was gifted, Jacques immediately makes him understand that natural talent is often not enough for success. This is also in keeping with Camus' equation of freedom with limitation. Jacques tells Malan, "Of course. But even the most gifted person needs someone to initiate him. The one that life puts in your path one day, that person must be loved and respected forever, even if he's not responsible. That is my faith" (27).

It is interesting to note that Camus was always marred by the loneliness of this metaphysical exile. Following the notes to *The First Man*, the editors inserted two letters that Camus wrote to Monsieur German, his grade school teacher in Algiers. One letter was dated November 19, 1957 and offers a heartfelt appreciation for his old teacher because, as Camus writes, "Without you, without the affectionate hand you extended to the small poor child that I was, without your teaching, and your example, none of all this would have happened" (87).

But it is also correct to assume that his notion of revolt and exile was only exacerbated through the injustice that he received at the hands of ideological critics. This fact is easily ascertained in *The First Man*. In a poignant note of indignation and resignation to his fate he has Jacques say, "I've lived too long, and acted and felt, to say this one is right and the one wrong. I've had enough of living according to the image, others show me of myself. I'm resolved on autonomy, I demand independence in interdependence" (174).

Jacques Cormery from *The First Man* and, by extension, Albert Camus himself, is at most a culturally-impoverished space as the search for self. The space Camus aims to create the space of French-Algerian with its own. It is very specific because of the cultural in-between of France and Algeria. The central character Jacques Cormery, and, indeed, Camus by extension do in fact inhabit a particular

space, peopled by a particular group of men and women who, though of course isolated from classical French culture by various factors including the lack of steeping therein. They do have a culture of sorts of their own. This space is not total, but relative, especially when placed in comparison with a representative of more mainstream French culture. It could be interpreted as a total disconnect from culture is, rather, crucial to the defining of a sub-culture of French-Algerians. Camus's *The First Man* portrays this sub-culture as his cultural identity or self. In French term, the cultural group of French-Algerian is marked as "*pied-noir*" and Albert Camus' writing with the issues of this subgroup could be regarded as his exploration of cultural identity, cultural heritage and self.

A more subtle, and successful, reinvestigation of Camus and specifically his relationship with Algeria is available in a study of *The First Man*. Camus's Novel, thus, discovers the self of French-Algerians while he discusses Algeria. Constable argues that such silencing of dialog by shaming one side through effectively removing that side from an equation in which both sides have value, ultimately results, for Camus, in an inability to even discuss alternatives to the apparently looming, and bloody, Algerian independence from France.

Camus renegotiates and reconstructs of boundaries and barriers structuring relations between individuals and groups as the search for self. The troubled relationship between the various groups and individuals the relationship between France and Algeria as well as the growth according to dual social, political and cultural settings itself is Camus' or French-Algerians identity as mentioned in *The First Man* as the ultimate discovery of self. Major character Jacques Cormery discovers his self, cultural identity and roots by leading himself to his past memory to Algerian childhood while he has been living as an adult man in France.

Studying some key moments in *The First Man*, it is clear that Jacques Cormery's principal inheritance from his father is a strongly developed sense of identity. This identity is figured in the scene which recounts Jacques's father's traumatic reaction to observing the public execution of a servant who had viciously murdered the *pied-noir* family he once worked for. It is tied at its very root to the contentious relations between groups in Algeria, and hints at the possibility of a nuanced position on the part of the Cormery males. Young Cormery is convinced that he is to be executed. The cultural and family identity of Camus is reflected through the central character Jacques Cormery. Camus' development of identity is found in the fictional character of Jacques Cormery with one's own indignity to occur to the individuals, groups, or causes, one respects.

Camus, in *The First Man*, rethinks and reconstructs the relationship between self and other(s), the interdependence of self and other. Camus's metaphoric discussion of Franco-Algerian relations reveals his social, cultural and family identity in board level and in specific level it pictures the growth of Camus blended both in French and Algerian soil. Both the Muslim and *pied-noir* populations are forgotten by the French in France. However Camus' effort to bring these issues too is a form of exploration of own's identity.

The fact that metropolitan France, for Camus, was forgetting the two main populations of Algeria, shows that the author viewed France and the intellectual discourse of that country as engaging in the kind of shaming that he already indicated was responsible for a breaking down of communication between groups and a dehumanizing function that gets a new start from Camus' *The First Man*.

Camus is deemed to have been silent, and therefore complicitous, on the injustices in Algeria, Constable is able to conclude that his examination of the

function of shame invites a rethinking and nuancing of these positions. It is through taking into account also the ways in which affective responses of shame mark the self-conscious sites of ethical responsibilities in Camus's work. Camus's seeming nostalgia does not equate to an abdication of ethical responsibility in the shame-based worldview of Camus that he has articulated. Camus's positions regarding the need for communication and the difficulty for that to occur between the various groups invested in Algeria marks his discovery of self.

Camus and his work in the context of the French presence in Algeria, that community has been struggling to come to terms with the problematic politics of a writer whose novels, particularly are the part of their introduction to French literature. There are multitudes of approaches to the quest of better understanding what exactly Camus was up to, why his rare public pronouncements on Algeria always seemed to get him into trouble and why it is so hard to extract a coherent and not simultaneously reprehensible political position from Camus's literary legacy. The clearest expressions of the *pied-noir* worldview that Camus shared with his less rigorously intellectual fellow French-Algerians are available in his fiction as his cultural identity and quest for self. It is his social and cultural conscious of being on the public and political stage with the exploration of his identity or self.

Camus is able to more clearly express himself about his self or identity through *The First Man* in literary and political comrades. Therefore, it is through the fiction, apparently tied to some extent to autobiographical materials, that Camus produced. The relationship depicted between the *pied-noir* characters and the landscape they inhabit, and which seems to mirror in its physicality the social isolation of a people always between two cultures, two spaces, never quite fitting in with anyone or anywhere. It is Camus' attempt to discover his self.

Albert Camus in *The First Man* frequently describes Algeria as an island space, bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the North and by the sea of Saharan sand to the south. The image of the Algerian space has become Camus' self. Albert Camus reveals that the young Jacques Cormery would skip school "to go down to the harbor to swim or to watch the large masted sailing ships, while dreaming of islands" (113) and he sat his friends on the ground in a neighborhood park to explain Verne's application of geometry" (114).

Thus the novel with the personal growth of the author brings the collective self or identity of French-Algerian while the protagonist trails back to Algerian childhood in his memory. Jacques Cormery's poor childhood stands parallel with the poor childhood of author himself. The memory to Algeria is reflected in the novel as the means of collective social and cultural identity of author as the French-Algerian decent. The author through Jacques Cormery, frequently, remembers the good times of growing up, such as playing games, swimming in the beach and causing mischievousness with the other neighborhood boys. The childhood memory of Jacques Cormery itself is the memory of Albert Camus as the French-Algerian. The memory of Algerian childhood of the author is his collective social and cultural self or identity as the French-Algerian decent. The memory of past childhood life, family history, the socio-cultural aspect of Algeria makes the quest of self of both the individual and collective cultural self of the author Albert Camus is revealed through the memory of the past in his autobiographical novel *The First Man*.

### **III. Autobiographical Narration as the Means of Self Discovery**

Albert Camus presents the protagonist, a grown up man of forty named Jacques Cormery who in order to find his childhood past in Algeria and to know the hidden reality regarding his dead father in his autobiographical novel *The First Man*. The novel in flashback narration brings the memory of the protagonist as the ultimate search for self or identity. Throughout this memory of past poor childhood in Algeria without father of the grown up protagonist the author has revealed his own hidden childhood and family history as his identity. Keeping these issues into consideration, this research work has tried to trace the memory and self discovery of author in *The First Man* through the autobiographical aspect of the novel.

This research in order to trace the quest for 'self' basically deals with two factors associated with life of protagonist Jacques Cormery or the author himself. One, the novel presents the story of the growth of the protagonist from poor family from Algeria without father with his hard struggle into the sober and successful man. The growth of the boy and finally his search for father for his identity and self itself is the quest for individual identity through the memory of childhood past and lost father. Similarly, the novel on the other hand presents the identity in collective level since it is the social and cultural identity of French-Algerian people. Keeping these two aspects of individual and collective self within the autobiographical novel, this research has found the search for author's 'self,' 'identity' and 'subjectivity' through the autobiographical writing. This research has dealt that the autobiographical writing itself is medium to express personal identity and mode of creating subjectivity of the author. Since the major character Henri Cornery stands as the personal portrait of the author himself, this research through the memory of the persona tries to deal with

author's self discovery evoking the past cultural heritage as the autobiographical novel.

Author through the growth of Jacques Cormery presents his growth and while forty-year-old Jacques Cormery goes on a search for information about his deceased father, Henri Cormery it is relevant with author himself as if the author himself has been leading to dig out his past. In the first section of the novel, Jacques Cormery is born in a small village named Solferino in the Algerian countryside in 1913 like Albert Camus. The next section of the novel jumps to 1954, with Jacques Cormery as a man and he at this age searches his father's grave. For him or for the author, the father is his roots and family history which is his identity. There is not the presence of the father but only his fragmented memory based on limited accounts about him made by other people. Through the memory of forty years old Jacques Cormery it is revealed that Henri dies before Jacques' first birthday, leaving Lucie, Jacques' partially deaf and mute mother, to raise him. Henri dies in the war in France.

Adult Jacques first explores his father's grave site in a small village in France. Jacques lives in Paris and visits. This visit deeply touches Jacques because he realizes his father died at twenty-nine years old, and he is forty. He realizes that Henri hardly lived life. Jacques travels to Algeria, back to the poor neighborhood where he grew up in Algiers and where Lucie still lives. There is only the fragmented memory about the father but the protagonist's or author's being or self is connected with him. So, the novel tries to find the self of the protagonist or author himself through the memory of past or family history in individual level. Like the individual self of the author, the novel poses another self throughout its story. It is the collective self or identity of French Algerian.

The collective self or identity of French-Algerian appears in the novel while Jacques Cormery trails back to his childhood memory to Algeria where he had spend his poor childhood with his mother and grandmother without father. Child Jacques grows up in extreme poverty and without a father. He lives with Lucie, the grandmother, who is Lucie's mother, his Uncle Etienne, who is fully deaf and partially mute, and his older brother Henri in Algeria. He remembers the good times of growing up, such as playing games, swimming in the beach and causing mischievousness with the other neighborhood boys. The childhood memory of Jacques Cormery itself is the memory of Albert Camus as the French-Algerian. The memory of Algerian childhood of the author is his collective social and cultural self or identity as the French-Algerian decent. Both the individual and collective cultural self of the author Albert Camus is revealed through the memory of the past in his autobiographical novel *The First Man*.

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