

**Ecce Homo, the Fisherman as Fisher of Man in
Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea***

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Introduction

There is a deep and embarrassing contradiction at work in *The Old Man and the Sea* (*OMS*) which allows us to embark on an endeavour of re-interpretation of the novella. As a matter of fact, most of the exegeses¹ of *The Old Man and the Sea* tend to reveal Santiago's single-mindedness towards the selling of his fish on the Cuban market to the point that they forget about the mystique of fishing and many other religious symbols informing Hemingway's novella. Our intention here is to invite readers to discover an unconfessed dimension of the text. We shall interpret the actions of the main character as genuinely oxymoronic: they consecrate the reconciliation of values that are utterly opposed. This coincidentia oppositorum is readable in Santiago's attachment to the material values that can help him be as great as Joe DiMaggio while he embodies, at the same time, without his knowing, the spiritual values that he openly neglects. He attains high spiritual values through his accumulation of permanent defeats. His fiascos serve to humanise him, criticise the ideology of the American Dream and to highlight the interest of the book for eco-criticism.

I Santiago, the modern Pilgrim Father and the gospel of success

Right from the inception, the parents of Manolin describe Santiago as a "salao" (*OMS*, 9), "the worst form of unlucky" (*OMS*, 9). The accumulation of bad luck accounts for their decision to send their child to a luckier boat, from where he may bring them a substantial financial support. For them, Manolin may someday emerge as a respectable fisherman by fishing on a lucky boat. The narrator further adds that the scars on Santiago's body were "as old as erosions in a fishless desert." (*OMS*, 10) These two inaugural pronouncements orient the characterisation of Santiago: he is engaged in a long-term unproductive quest for saleable material goods.

¹ Namely Carlos Baker in *Hemingway and his critics*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1961 and Sheridan Baker in her book entitled *Ernest Hemingway, an Introduction and Interpretation*, New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1967.

However, other explicit details provide information on Santiago himself; he lives in a shack; the kind of small houses in disrepair that are pervasive in Havana:

-“The shack was made of the tough budshields of the royal palm which are called guano and in it there was a bed, a table, one chair, and a place on the dirt floor to cook with charcoal” (*OMS*, 15)

-“What do you have to eat?” The boy asked.

-“A pot of yellow rice with fish. Do you want some?”

-“No. I will eat at home. Do you want me to make the fire?”

-“No. I will make it later on. Or I may eat the rice cold.”

-“May I take the cast net?”

-“Of course.”

-“There was no cast net and the boy remembered when they had sold it. But they went through this fiction every day. There was no pot of yellow rice and fish and the boy knew this too.” (*OMS*, 16)

Santiago is portrayed as a poor man, one old poor man among others. He does not have the means to satisfy such vital needs as those of living in a proper place, eating regularly; nor does he have the technical means to perform his fishing task appropriately since he sells some of them to make both ends meet; this is ascertained by the selling of the cast net.

All the same, the old man does not accept the status quo. He wants to improve his living standard by working hard, by dying trying harder to become the DiMaggio of fishing business. A close look at the structural framework permits to liken his predicament to the one inherent in any American’s quest: the dream of rising from rags to riches. It therefore goes without saying that the old man’s quest is just the hypertext of a deep matrix: the Grand Narrative of the American Dream initiated by the Pilgrim Fathers and perpetuated by the legendary stories of such successful men as Rockefeller and Ford and, in our case, of Joe DiMaggio and Dick Sisler. The old man is perpetuating the gesture of the Pilgrim Fathers; the scriptural matrix of their stories is based on the following minimal units: low social extraction, volition to better the quality of one’s life, having faith in the possibility of success, deciding to fight for the attainment of one’s goal, succeeding in rising socially.

In *The Postmodern Condition, a Report on Knowledge*¹, Jean François Lyotard shows that Grand Narratives are myths with a legitimating function. They legitimate the success of the happy rising few and entice the other citizens to follow in their footsteps. The master-narrative of the American Dream values equidistance to prosperity as long as the desiring subject decides to

¹ Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition, a Report on Knowledge*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.

work with determination to achieve his goals. The problem with such Grand Matrixes is that they are perpetuated with a quasi-religious devotion by those who adhere to them. How is this matrix decipherable in *The Old Man and the Sea*? To better understand the quest of Santiago, it is necessary to resort to the acting scheme at work in the text:

The acting scheme reveals that the man's quest is material oriented; indeed he develops a near-obsessive desire to catch the biggest fish that will make of him the fisherman of Havana. It is a conscious quest because he does it for his personal benefit. The endurance of the old man is amplified by his unshakable belief in the opportunity in store for him, despite his eighty-four fruitless days at sea. For Santiago, if DiMaggio, whose father was a poor fisherman, succeeded in emerging as a star of baseball, then he, too, will succeed. He doesn't simply admire the baseball star, he almost worships him.

As can be seen, the stories of social success are so much imbedded in Santiago's head that the archetypes he adores come from the sports magazines dealing with successful paragons of the American Dream. The papers Manolin reads to him are the source of his motivation. He vows a great devotion to Joe DiMaggio who became an all-time star in the New York Yankees Team. DiMaggio is a referential character in absentia that confers some form of realism to the fiction.

Born Paolo DiMaggio¹, he is descending from an immigrant Italian family of which the father was a fisherman. But, Joe DiMaggio made the dream of these Italian immigrants for mobility come true. As the narrator puts it: “They say his father was a fisherman. Maybe he was as poor as we are” (*OMS*, 22). Santiago reports the fact that the fishing activity of his star’s father is the talk of all Havana. Hence, we may assume that the similarity between them is a metonymic one. His adulation of the character in absentia amplifies the mystique of DiMaggio on the hero of the novella. Santiago does not love only DiMaggio; he also adores Dick Sisler who comes from a family of baseball players. Though Manolin makes it clear that “The great Sisler’s father was never poor and he, the father, was playing in the big Leagues” (*OMS*, 22). Santiago does not miss his cue: “When I was your age, I was before the mast on a square rigged ship” (*OMS*, 22). Here, the reply of the character makes us understand that because he is socially-disadvantaged, he “grants” himself surrogate fathers, as in a family romance, that make up for his own social backwardness and motivate his legitimate ontological quest, that of “becoming someone” in society.

Santiago’s passionate backing of the New York Yankees is explainable in the same logic. Just as he adores Joe DiMaggio and Dick Sisler so does he adore their teams. Adoration is also expressed in the superlative adulation of these two successful players. He over-celebrates the drives of Dick Sisler in these sycophantic remarks: “There was nothing like them. He hits the longest ball I have ever seen.” (*OMS*, 21) The old man wanted to invite him fishing, but he was not courageous enough to do so; hence his and Manolin’s regrets: “It was a great mistake. He might have gone with us. Then we would have that for all of our lives.” (*OMS*, 22) In these words, one can notice that the meeting with the loved star is as destabilising for the worshipper as is meeting a mysterious fetish.

Notwithstanding Santiago’s strangeness and his status of champion he could not talk to Dick Sisler when he saw him. This implies that, had he met the object of his adulation, he would have been blessed with fame and subsequent respectability. The “lions on the beach” (*OMS*, 25) constitute an animalistic replica for his main worshipped stars. Doesn’t the narrator reveal that “he loved them?” (*OMS*, 25) The quest for “stardom” makes the star the blessed beneficiary of favours that come to reward him for his efforts. The “star mania” of DiMaggio and Sisler transforms them into the heroes of the narrative of the American dream. These are narratives that the rising American bourgeoisie invented for itself to justify its exceptionality and integrate it in

¹ <http://www.joedimaggio.com/LifeStory.php?n=1> consulted on 8th/02/2008.

the collective consciousness of the other peoples.

The collective consciousness stands for collective representations that bind masses together. By adhering to them, Santiago marks his entry into the American society and reveals it as a flourishing society which is pregnant with opportunities for all. The fishing epics in which he participates is tantamount to the outstandingly successful baseball competitions of his idols. American communities are all bound by the spirit of an ordinary heroism within the reach of anybody. The sea Santiago crosses over and over again amplifies such a myth of origins because it is a border-space, a place of initiation into a star life within everybody's reach. It should not be forgotten that the Pilgrim Fathers are reported to have outlived the hardships of their voyage to America by boat. The sea is mystical for Santiago; it purifies and cures his hands.

The sea is under the empire of two paradigms. The first one is the paradigm of horizontality and the second one is that of depth. Horizontality is a metaphor for movement drive, a movement of separation from society to initiation and re-integration into society as a newborn individual; then the sea recreates a moving frontier since the American frontier is not as rigid as that of Romulus and Remus; it is rather predicated on integration and sharing. The sea cleanses the initiate from his past hindrances and misfortunes just as it did wash off the impurities of the Pilgrim Fathers. The depth of the sea is revelatory of its feminine traits: procreation, feeding; The fisherman's leaving the village for the sea appears as a rupture for a new start.

Havana is a rural space where the people overestimate the happy few who do well in fishing. They are fittingly overestimated and adored because the great majority is poor and so they alleviate their predicament in a symbolic identification with the fetishlike triumphant ones. It shows that the village is progressively becoming money-oriented and that the only values that are worth observing now are marketable and media-supported ones. Santiago does not realise he is taking his doubles from sports magazines which are types of written documents observing proper rules: celebrating the newsworthy, amplifying attention-grabbing facts on paper. It ensues that these magazines look for what is profit-making, since the most common means of mass-communication used at that time by professional communicators was the press and broadcast media. They created heroes by amplifying their legerdemain. This way, they grew to be so popular that the one-time ordinary men became unattainable stars.

A star is a celestial energy-emitting body which is visible at night; a star also shines by its own light. The underlying principle of stardom is then distance, light and self-creation. The worshipped star escapes his humanity to enter in the realm of godlike figures, of praiseworthy

bodies, owing to the blinding radiance he is assumed to spread out. Psychologist Otto Rank has already shown in his book *Don Juan et le double*¹ that self-creation is a divine privilege sometimes conferred to twins, heroes and stars. This provides them with immortality. The promethean media allocate part of this godly power to stars that finally turn out to be so distant from ordinary men that the latter can only attain them through worship. Therefore, fishing is a pretext to articulate a discourse on the divine nature of stars and their adoration by their former fellows. Santiago believes he will one day go through such a “star mania” process if he gets a good catch. Unfortunately, he will repeatedly and definitely fail. His story cannot be analysed on the basis of success but on that of failure. Santiago transcended his social insignificance when he made his most significant fiasco. He became an object of sizeable re-interpretative semantic attention by acknowledging his defeat and his “incapacity of becoming.” This will critically be deciphered on the basis of a biblical framework.

II “Ecce Homo,” the Gospel of Saint John (19: 5)

The failure of Santiago to become a worldly successful fisherman is not superfluous in the text. It is the means whereby the author talks to our modern capitalistic communities, to the model of societies in which all spiritual values have been replaced by material ones. Through Santiago, the omniscient narrator implicitly refers to modern societies and their technological rationality when he articulates such discourses:

“He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish.”

“For forty days a boy had been with him. But after forty days without a fish (...) the boy had gone at their orders in another boat which caught three good fish the first week.” (OMS, 9)

.....
“Eighty-five is a lucky number”

“How would you like to see me bring one in that dressed out over a thousand pounds?” (OMS, 16)

.....
“Do you think we should by a terminal of the lottery with an eighty-five?”

“Tomorrow is the eighty-fifth day.”

“But what about the eighty-seven of your great record?” (OMS, 17)

.....
“You’re my alarm clock.”

“Age is my alarm clock” (OMS, 24)

.....
“Before it was really light he had his baits out and was drifting with the current. One bait was down forty fathoms. The second was at seventy-five and the third and fourth were down in the blue water at one hundred and one hundred and twenty-five fathoms.” (OMS, 31)

“(...) each line, as thick around as a big pencil, was looped onto a green-sapped stick dip and

¹ Otto Rank, *Don Juan et le Double*, Paris: Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 1973.

each line had two forty-fathom coils which could be made fast to the other spare coils so that, if it were necessary, a fish could take out over three hundred fathoms of line.” (OMS, 30-31)

“He looked down into the water and watched the lines that went straight down into the dark of the water.Others let them drift with the current and sometimes they were at sixty fathoms when the fishermen thought they were at a hundred. /But he thought, I keep them with precision. ...It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact.” (OMS, 32)

.....
“Today is eighty-five days.” (OMS, 41)

.....
“But what a great fish he is and what will he bring in the market if the flesh is good.” (OMS, 49)

.....
The organising principle behind these statements, as can be seen from the lexical items we underlined, is the isotopy of chronometry. All the actions of the character are based on the arithmetic of tasks, time and actions with calculated results. This is an ekphrasis of a scientific, rational discourse that intends to regulate nature according to expected or desirable ends. This arithmetic discourse extensively prevails in the novella in a way that is question-begging. Santiago is old, but he is not illiterate; he does have a minimum of education that allows him to read papers. Why then does he act in a way that makes of him a one-track homo rationalist? Even his predilection for cost-cutting is not meanness due to poverty; it is an attitude that is suggestive of an “economic” proclivity. He lives according to ascetic-like principles, simply to minimise costs and maximise the profits that he may get with the sale of an eventual big catch. Consequently the Homo oeconomicus is a continuator of the tasks of the homo rationalist, hence Weber’s¹ thesis that American protestant ascetics and their chronometry of life justified their economic supremacy in that part of the world. However, how can we interpret Santiago’s permanent failures despite the precision of his fishing techniques and his perpetrating the same ascetic rituals that made the day of American capitalism?

We analyse his failure using the Latin biblical reference “Ecce Homo” which means “Behold the Man!” This expression was articulated by Pilate referring to Jesus, as the man who calls himself God: “Jesus therefore came forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And he saith to them: Behold the Man.”² Pilate who uttered these words did not look at Jesus with the eyes of a believer. He embarked on a pure humanisation of Christ that is iconoclastic.

1 Reported by Marianne Debouzy in *La genèse de l'esprit de révolte dans le roman américain 1875-1915*, Paris: Minard, 1968, especially in the passage on the gospel of capitalism on page 40.

2 *The Douay-Rheims Bible*, New York: Tan Books and Publications, 1984, the Gospel of Saint John (19: 5).

The quandary in which triumphant and proud Santiago finds himself when he has to choose between his survival and that of his marlin is tantamount to a deconstruction of the American Dream: the quest for material goods is but pure vanity. Santiago's marlin never reaches the market because it cannot be sold; therefore it is not valuable in capitalistic terms. It rather derives its value from a reconsideration of the American Dream by making the old man, not simply a fisherman in search for a way of becoming but rather by paralleling him with a fisher of Man, a critical figure of his time, that of Christ. Therefore one notices a shift of paradigm from the former unswerving materialism to some kind of symbolic, spiritual mystique. Here values are truly non-marketable and re-interpret the ontological problem informing the novella, the question of becoming for a reorientation of capitalistic society.

As a matter of fact, many quotations in the text are pregnant with biblically meaning. This is the rationale behind our comparing the character of Santiago to Jesus Christ, the crucified. Through the theme of crucifixion, two problems are pointed out: the ascension of Santiago to the dignity of a spiritual being and the humanization of society.

The assertion of the spiritualization of Santiago through his elevation to a Christ-like solemnity may sound inappropriate if reference is made to how the man portrays himself on page 65; he said: "I am not religious." By letting the protagonist say so in lieu of articulating the pronouncement himself, the narrator wants us to deduce that Santiago is a fake believer. He is only interested in his secular quest, that of becoming the DiMaggio of fishing in that little fishing village of Havana. As a matter of fact, the character is commendable for the appellation of spiritual being owing to some coincidence he does not make out.

First, he is a "strange old man" (*OMS*, 14) with an inner rejuvenating force that allows him to work out worldly physical miracles that an ordinary young man would be incapable of. He also has excellent eyesight which enables him to see from afar, even at night. What is more, he has an unshakable resolution and self-assurance as if he expected something. On the eighty-fifth day, he confesses this to Manolin: "I feel confident today" (*OMS*, 27) as if he knew something would happen that would change his life. His confidence in the certainty of his non-ordinariness lies in the following conversation with Manolin: "-He hasn't much faith." (*OMS*, 10) "-No," the old man said. "But we have. Haven't we?" (*OMS*, 11) Through this exchange, the old man is preparing the reader progressively to the acceptance of the prerequisite of faith as the means whereby any adherence to the plausibility of his exceptional nature is valid. Manolin, who identifies with him, only uses superlative expressions. Here are some flattering words from

Manolin to Santiago: “Anyone can be a fisherman in May.”(*OMS*, 18) “The best fisherman is you” (*OMS*, 23). This excess of eulogy gives Santiago the impression that he is above every single fisherman. It is only when he met his “doom” that he underwent his epiphany: he became more human and humble. The epiphany of the old man starts when he catches the marlin, whose size reminds him of his human fragility. Doesn’t he admit that: “Man is not much beside the great birds and beasts?”(*OMS*, 68) It is the confession of his limitations and the revelation of the necessity of assistance, whether it is physical or spiritual. Since Manolin is not there to help him, he resorts to God, Jesus Christ and Holy Mary. When Santiago is found in difficulties, he expresses religious aspirations as in the moment when the fish turns around his bait; he says: “God help him take it.”(*OMS*, 42) When the fish is caught but does not come into sight, Santiago says: “God let him jump.”(*OMS*, 53)

Other expressions from the old man himself will betray such a symbolic transformation even though it happens implicitly; Santiago swears to “make a pilgrimage to the Virgin of Cobre” (*OMS*, 65) if he catches the fish and says the “Hail Mary” on page 65 first, then on page 87. He adds the promise of saying “ten Our Fathers and ten Hail Marys” (*OMS*, 64-5) if divine interventions favour him with a victory over the fish. Clearly, Santiago is no more the “campeón” (*OMS*, 70) as he is given to calling himself. He is undergoing a metamorphosis, which could have been predicted since that non-religious character’s place of abode exhibits all the attributes of a monk’s house; not only does he hang “the picture in color of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and another of the Virgin of Cobre” (*OMS*, 16) on the wall of his hut, but all the paraphernalia within it are displayed according to a unitary logic. Isn’t that a denial of Santiago’s rejection of any aspiration to religiosity? This denegation is pivotal for it paves the way for the man’s transfiguration; he progressively grows to be more than a self-denied follower of Christ for he takes his share of Christ’s passion and metonymically “becomes” Him on the Way of the Cross.

III The Epiphany of the Crucified

The presence of the Virgin of Cobre, who is the patron Saint of Cuba, in the house of the old man together with that of Mary did not suffice to confer spirituality to Santiago, he had to go through an epiphany and empathy. It is worth mentioning that the Virgin is said to have appeared near the Cuban area of Santiago to persons that were fishing in the Bay of Nipe. It ensues that the name of the character repeats the setting of a religious miracle: the epiphany of the Virgin. If Santiago is credited with such a relationship, therefore his next impersonation of the passion of Christ will consistently be unsurprising.

The Christ-like metamorphosis of Santiago is discernible via the motif of crucifixion. While trying to defend his catch against the attacks of the two Galanos sharks, the old man voiced a cry or what the narrator reckons is non translatable because “perhaps it is just a noise such as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands into the wood.” (*OMS*, 107) It is worth adding that he had formerly been cut by the fishing rope while trying to control the underwater turns of the marlin. His intention was to make the fish emerge so he could stab it. The stabbed-dead fish is also an instance of crucifixion. Scripturally speaking, it is ironically this crucifying fisherman who will be crucified in return by the sharks. The recurrence of the motif is so pervasive that it touches most of the actants Santiago deals with: Manolin, Pedrico, and DiMaggio.

When Santiago returns from his fruitless fishing-battle, he offers his spear to Manolin whilst the latter asks Pedrico to look after the gear. The gear runs through the ocean just as the spear runs through fish’s flesh. They are both crucifixion symbols. The in-absentia actant of DiMaggio is said to suffer from a “bone spur”; the spur is a sharp instrument used by horse riders to prick a horse in order to make it move. It is as much a crucifixion tool as the sword fish that attacked the fisherman. It goes without saying that Santiago is surrounded with crucifixion signs.

However, on his arrival, he follows in the footsteps of Christ by acting out His passion; once ashore, Santiago shoulders the mast of the boat and goes uphill with it. He climbs with it until he gets exhausted and sits with the mast on the shoulder. This is semantically poignant: Santiago is symbolically “killed” as Jesus was crucified with two thieves of whom one refused to repent. The impenitent on his left was as indifferent to the call of Christ as Santiago’s left hand was to his prayers to control the fish¹.

When on the cross, Jesus in pain saw the Virgin, and said: “Mother, behold your son.” Like him, Santiago felt a strange taste in his mouth: “it was coppery and sweet (...) He spat it

into the ocean and said, “Eat that, galanos. And make a dream you’ve killed a man.” (*OMS*, 119) What is striking at this juncture is the word “coppery” which is the English equivalent for the Spanish word “Cobre” in the title of his patron Saint: “Virgin of Cobre.” The virgin was said to have appeared near a copper manufacture. Even the name of the character which is translatable by St James in English, may recall the story of St James, the miner, and stand for a lucky coincidence. This buckles the buckle of crucifixion because it prepares for the resurrection of the man. Santiago dies as a fisherman; his rebirth is perpetuated through Manolin and Pedrico that he “fished.” He therefore becomes a “fisher” of “Man.”

Indeed Manolin rebuilds the broken initiation links with the old man. He abandons his current master to complete his initiation with Santiago. He decides to side with the spiritualism of Santiago, and reject consequently any direct aspiration to success stories. Manolin does not find such spiritual purity of fishing in his master. He has faith in Santiago as a man who can work out fishing phenomena of an unfathomable enigma. He bears a religious name too, like Pedrico.

While the name of Manolin refers to Immanuel, one of the apostles of Christ whose name symbolises the presence of the Christ among his community, Pedrico’s is reminiscent of Saint Peter. He is the character who sees to it that the boat and the gear stay fastened to the rock. He is the rocky foundation of the heroic edifice. The values of Santiago therefore remain unchanged as long as the boat is looked after by his successors. It is noteworthy that the old man should be attached specifically to these two symbolic characters that complete the ternary logic of trinity just as the title of the book itself is organized in six words, that is, a multiple of three¹.

Another religious symbolism in the novella is the spiritualization of fishing which makes every living being a “brother” of every human and criticizes the fishing for killing’s sake; his logic goes beyond material preoccupations. He is a spiritual person that had been misled in the labyrinth of the American Dream. He stands out not as a fisherman but as a Fisher of Man. He serves as a model to be followed by others, the star in the sky that guides nighttime fishermen. We understand why his eyes are so good at night, why he orients himself thanks to their excellent quality and thanks to his capacity to decipher such useful celestial enigmas as that of the Orion he calls in Cuban “Rigel.” This designation refers to a constellation of stars which in Greek mythology is personified as a giant hunter. Consequently, we can say that the old man offers himself the right of entry to the world of renowned heroes of high values. Values that are not

¹ The action takes place in September, the ninth month of the year and the fish is 18 feet long. The figure three is pervasive in the novella

marketable, values that sustain life stimulate hope, dreams and faith and develop the spiritual dimension of Man.

Santiago's fish is a symbolical one; that's why its value is not measurable neither by arithmetic nor geometric standards of technical reasoning. The current atomization of social life and his self-exclusion from the community of successful fishermen are the consequences of his excess and Darwinian attachment to the American dream. The social life he misses in Havana is recreated in the better form of a cosmic fraternity; the one which portrays the sea as locus amoenus as opposed to the locus horribilis of young fishermen. Santiago's plight serves as a criticism for a rebirth of society. He calls for a society where man is no more a wolf for man. His defeat humanized him just as DiMaggio's bone spur stood for his Achilles' heel. These are ways of making them ordinary characters capable of human actions accessible to all. His locus amoenus or Edenic space is the sea, the beach. He makes it clear that the fauna at sea are his "principal friends on the ocean" (*OMS*, 29) This is curious, because it shows that the old man is a fisherman with a vanguard ecological consciousness.

He does not fish anywhere and any time for the reason that he is against overfishing. He chooses the greatest periods: "Remember we are in September," Manolin told him and he added in return: "the month when the great fish come." (*OMS*, 18) He also considers the sea not as a place of conflict and does not call her "el mar." (*OMS*, 29) Another important ecological point in his fishing technique is the use of environmental-friendly approaches; that is why he criticizes "the younger fishermen, those who used buoys as floats for their lines and had motorboats." (*OMS*, 29) The old man implicitly reproaches them with endangering the biodiversity by using up the sea fauna with their industrial fishing and thus confers the book an ecocritical intention. He believes this non-ecological fishing is Darwinian. He does not throw nets like young fishermen, he watches signs in the sky; the tunas and the "Man-of-war birds" (*OMS*, 33) are his guides and informants. He loves turtles because "a turtle's heart will beat for hours after he has been cut up and butchered" (*OMS*, 37) but he adds it is good for gripes and the eyes (*OMS*, 37). Contrary to modern fishermen, the old man has no mariner's compass. While the former resort to mariner's compass to navigate, because they do not want to go haywire, the charm of fishing for Santiago is ritualistic. Going fishing is venturing to get lost and becoming a liminal character in a space where there is no limit, then coming back ashore changed, initiated into the unfathomable pleasures of the sea.

Conclusion

The American dream is the ideology of success for all without discrimination. However, Santiago who staunchly and piously believed in it realizes that, given the way society is being transformed, he cannot succeed. One figures out that the small village of Havana is undergoing an economic change with the rise of industrial fishing, which is only restricted to those who have better means of production to afford boats and buoys. Mass-investment calling for mass-profits, the new generation has to overfish to thrive; consequently overfishing becomes the bone of contention with eco-criticism.

Fishing is therefore no more an activity for those who know its rites; what is more, people like Santiago are in the twilight of their era and are misunderstood because they clench to outmoded fishing values. Santiago's defeat excludes him from the society of materialists and orients him towards the spiritual values he formerly neglected. That's why it appears in our paper that Santiago is in another realm: the one that celebrates victory through defeat, life through death, resurrection through crucifixion. Sustaining brotherhood in lieu of religious fervour of gains preserves our humanity from the Machiavellian and Darwinian orientations of modern society.

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