"OUT TOO FAR": HALF-FISH, BEATEN MEN, AND THE TENOR OF MASCULINE GRACE IN *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

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The Old Man and the Sea seems to be enjoying a renaissance that may be due, in part, to its reputation as Hemingway's "easiest read" for students. Some of these students have grown up to become critics, who see the novella as an allegory suffused by metaphors and symbols. Other critical approaches to *The Old Man and the Sea* include ecocritical readings, feminist interpretations, an older tradition of religious readings based on Christian iconography, newer religious readings based on Afro-Cuban religion and Taoism, and even interpretations revolving around baseball.[1]

Is there a common ground in the novella's ever-diversifying reception? One may still say with some truth that Hemingway used *The Old Man and the Sea* as a means of revising his code of "grace under pressure" to consider how a man manifests this grace when facing defeat or old age. Drawing on post-humanist scholarship and rhetorical criticism, we argue that Hemingway articulated an ethic of heroic humility in *The Old Man and the Sea*. We explore this in three registers:

1) Santiago's dependence on the boy Manolin;

2) Feminizing the sea and a respectful engagement with a feminine presence;

3) Interspecies kinship—brotherhood between man and animals, as well as with nature.

The old fisherman whom Hemingway chose to embody a revised masculine grace spends much of the novella talking to a fish: "Half fish," he said…

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"I am sorry that I went too far out. I ruined us both" (*OMS* 115). The idea of going out too far, of getting in too deep or crossing beyond the boundary becomes an important trope in the novel. Identifying with Santiago's striving and loneliness in his Nobel Prize comments, Hemingway described great writers as seeking "something that is beyond attainment." A "true writer," like the questing fisherman of *The Old Man and the Sea*, "is driven far out past where he can go" (Nobel Speech).

The "tenor of masculine grace" in our title points to the rhetoric of manhood, but also to "tenor" as a "course of thought… running through something written or spoken" (Richards 96). Interpreting the tenor of the "out too far" motif running through *The Old Man and the Sea* evokes something of the emotional response that one has to music. There is an "amazing grace" at work in this novella, in which a man finds grace by learning to live within limits—those of nature and his own.

Having hooked a giant marlin that is towing him out to sea, Santiago voices the author's ethic of indirection and understatement: "I wish I could show him what sort of man I am… Let him think I am more than I am and I will be so." (*OMS* 64) Faced with overwhelming odds, the heroic man has to know how to feint, to infer more than he can show.[2] But humility has to be a cornerstone of mature heroic grace, as in the moment when a "beaten" Santiago apologizes to the marlin half-eaten by sharks. Santiago recognizes that pride made him go "too far out." Yet true men, even in older, revised form, will always test societal limits. In their mature years, they learn that there is a state of grace to be had in being beaten by a worthy opponent.

Part I—"The flag of permanent defeat"

Structurally *The Old Man and the Sea* is a three-part sea story: departure, journey, and return or entry to a new world. The story also loosely follows the three-part structure of a rite of passage: separation, the liminal or in-between phase, and re-integration.[3] On the novella's first page, the old man's patched sail is described as looking "like the flag of permanent defeat" (9), a simile suggesting that Santiago is a man of such scarce resources and bad luck that he is, for all practical purposes, a failure. Manolin's parents have drawn that conclusion. For the first forty days of Santiago's eighty-four days without a catch, the boy had gone with him, but then his parents required him to go to a boat with better luck (9). However, the same opening paragraph conveys something of the devotion and affection the boy has for the old man. Manolin continues

to help Santiago. And the relationship between the "failed" old man and his young apprentice signals that "permanent defeat" is not the only possible reading of the old man and his symbolic sail-flag.

Max Black describes metaphors as screens behaving like patterned pieces of smoked glass through which we look at the stars (41). Metaphors or symbols do not merely reflect reality: they select and deflect reality, causing us to focus on certain aspects of experience and tune out others. Considered as a screen, the "flag of permanent defeat" selects an interpretation: the old man now has neither the resources, youthful energy, nor the simple luck to succeed as a fisherman, "the thing that I was born for" (*OMS* 50). It seems to announce that he should surrender. But these socially-shaped interpretations are not the full story. The sail sets up Hemingway's interrogation of defeat and use of Santiago to embody a revised code of masculine grace.

The interpretation of this flag-as-defeat deflects other possible readings, which becomes apparent in the descriptions of Santiago, and his relationship with Manolin. The second paragraph describes the old man as looking nearly as worn-out as his sail: his face and neck are covered by wrinkles, blotches, and "deep-creased scars" (*OMS* 10). All this wear and tear is a sign of experience. Both the old man and the boy draw on their memories of this experience to maintain a positive outlook. Like good batters who don't worry too much about a slump, they know that their skills and the law of averages are in their favor.

Hemingway employs a narrative strategy in which a follow-up sentence "corrects our interpretation of the earlier one," William Cain notes (13). In the third paragraph, Santiago's eyes are described as "the same color as the sea… cheerful and undefeated" (*OMS* 10). There is a disjuncture between his sail as "flag of permanent defeat" and his "undefeated" eyes which revises our view of Santiago and reminds us of the need for humility on the reader's part.

Santiago's relationship with Manolin sustains his "hope and confidence" (*OMS* 13). These simple words speak volumes: "The old man had taught the boy to fish and the boy loved him" (10). Fishing has taught the boy lessons about being in nature and the power of faith. As the old man returns from eighty-four days without a catch, the boy reminds him of the time they went eighty-seven days without fish, only to have their luck turn. "I know you did not leave me because you doubted," the old man says. The boy responds that his father "hasn't much faith." "No, but we have," Santiago replies (11). This passage introduces the importance of loyalty and faith—not blind, but based

on memory and knowledge of the old man's skills. But now their relationship has undergone a sort of reversal. The boy has made enough money on his "lucky" boat to offer to go out with the old man again. Manolin helps Santiago haul his gear home and buys him a beer at the Terrace, which Santiago accepts gracefully as a natural offer "between fishermen" (11).

Santiago's relationship with his apprentice has gone beyond mentoring, and even mutual respect, to a form of dependence. At first he rejects the boy's offer to catch some sardines that will serve as bait. Manolin tells him: "If I cannot fish with you, I would like to serve you in some way" (*OMS* 12). The boy embodies an ideal once voiced by a priest: "When you love you wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve" (*FTA* 72). Manolin's service includes hauling Santiago's gear, catching his sardines (*OMS* 13), feeding him and serving him coffee (19, 26), indulging the old man in his fictions, and flattering him (17, 23). Above all, the boy nurtures the old man, instructing and chiding him as an adult child might nurture an elderly parent: "Keep the blanket around you… You'll not fish without eating while I'm alive" (19). His concern for the old man even includes self-reprimands: "Why am I so thoughtless? I must get him another shirt and a jacket for the winter and some sort of shoes and another blanket" (21). The boy's concern gives the aging Santiago's loss of independence an almost biblical resonance: "When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (John 21:18).

Hemingway foregrounds Santiago's dependence on Manolin in order to introduce us to the idea of humility as an essential component of mature masculine grace. After Santiago accedes to Manolin's insistence that he accept two (negotiated) sardines, we are told: "He was too simple to wonder when he had attained humility. But he knew he had attained it and he knew it was not disgraceful and it carried no loss of true pride" (*OMS* 13-14). The coupling of "not disgraceful" with "simple" hardly seems heroic, but the language is significant. Being conscious of one's attainment of humility without having to (or even being able to) analyze this "achievement" leads to the realization that such humility carries "no loss of true pride." This implies a rhetorical opposition between true pride and false pride. False pride clings to the notion that total victory is the only acceptable outcome of a confrontation. True pride recognizes that one can maintain dignity and grace—even heroism—in more equivocal circumstances, even while being beaten by a worthy opponent.

The necessity of humility is made evident in Santiago's relationship with his protégé Manolin, who all but tucks him in the night before his epic quest (*OMS* 24). Although we are told that the old man's hopes were "never gone," the presence and persistence of the boy clearly freshens them "as when the breeze rises" (13). The boy even reminds him of "what a man must do" (26).

Furthermore, Santiago tells himself to stop thinking several times. There is never any sense of discomfort with Santiago "going too far" into an indulgent interior monologue, nor any fear that he will act in a disgraceful way if he does continue to think. Hemingway seems to have found in Santiago a simpler man through whom he could philosophize about man and nature without the posturing of a matador, or the bragging of men with guns. Under the cover of primitivism Hemingway can don a different sort of masculinity—a further development in the long-term importance of Hispanic cultures for Hemingway's code of manly conduct (Broer; Capellán).

No sooner does Santiago say good-bye to Manolin and go out in his skiff than he begins the process of feminizing the sea and expressing kinship with its creatures. Intent on "going far out" into a domain beyond "the smell of the land" (*OMS* 28), Santiago talks about the sea "as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favours" (30). This motif of going far beyond land and the smell of human pollution indicates the ascendancy of an ecological ethic in Hemingway's thought (Gurko 18; Burhans 50). Hemingway's "entry into the natural" in his later work has been a subject of increasing interest, with Glen Love pointing to evidence of a shift towards greater ecological sensitivity "at about the time of the writing" of *The Old Man and the Sea* (209).

Santiago's reflections about a feminine sea arise during a critique of younger fishermen. Those who "had motorboats… spoke of her as *el mar* which is masculine. They spoke of her as a contestant or… even an enemy" (*OMS* 29-30). Santiago's view of the sea—"The moon affects her as it does a woman" (30)—is not mere poetry, but an ethic that guides the way he thinks about the sea and interacts with the creatures who live in her waters. This feminized approach is immediately apparent: Santiago works *with* the sea, "drifting with the current"—letting the current "do a third of the work" (30). As the big fish and the boat begin to move towards the north-west, deeper into the Gulf Stream, the old man immediately thinks of Manolin. "I wish I had the boy," he says. "I'm being towed by a fish and I'm the towing bitt" (45). The "champion fisherman" is being subjected to forces beyond his control, which will eventually "defeat" him. Thus the narrative is a commentary on the restrictions imposed by older

age and the need for humility that comes with "going far out" into later life.

Part One ends with Santiago saying again out loud, "I wish I had the boy," and reflecting: "No one should be alone in their old age" (*OMS* 48). But in observing and interacting with the greater community of life, Santiago will come to recognize that "no man was ever alone on the sea" (61).

Part II—To love and kill "our true brothers"

The second part of *The Old Man and the Sea* covers the battle with the marlin and develops a sense of interspecies kinship. It begins with the appearance of two porpoises and Santiago's declaration "they are our brothers" (48) and ends with the old man's ruminations about what it means to kill "brotherly" creatures (106). Reassessments of Hemingway's attitudes towards animals have extended a revolution in Hemingway studies. Ryan Hediger characterizes *The Old Man and the Sea* as "a critique of triumphalist hunting" (45). That claim is credible if we examine some of Hemingway's later writings on fishing and hunting. It is balanced by other recent criticism which recognizes that even though Hemingway extended his sense of community and interdependence to animals in *The Old Man and the Sea*, the novella remains "a theater of cruelty with a flesh-piercing array of images and terms that complicate the novel's renderings of nature's wonder" (Cain 120).

Hemingway broke new ground in *The Old Man and the Sea*'s representation of human-animal relations. In Santiago's humility, there is "a suggestion of St. Francis, in his response to animal life" (Wells 57). Yet exploring the implications of these dialogues between a beaten old man and a half-fish had to wait for the publication of Hemingway's narrative about his second African safari (1953-54) in abridged form as *True at First Light* (1999) and later in complete form as *Under Kilimanjaro* (2005). The late African narrative indicates the author's growing preference for observation over hunting, and his uneasiness about his prior attitudes: "The time of shooting beasts for trophies was long past with me" (*TAFL* 117). With the maturation of ecocriticism and posthumanist scholarship, along with an emerging awareness that Hemingway's attitudes towards animals were as complex as his attitudes towards gender, the time seems right to re-examine the expression of interspecies kinship in *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Santiago *is* a quasi-St. Francis, but one whose love for animals is often inseparable from an imperative to kill them. His ruminations do constitute a qualified critique of triumphalist hunting, but amidst near-constant butcher-

ing, bludgeoning, and stabbing. Cain's remark that Ernest was Dr. Clarence Hemingway's son and that "cutting was in his blood" is suggestive (119). But whereas in earlier Hemingway works the protagonists (matadors and trophy hunters) seemed to do most of the stabbing and shooting, in *The Old Man and the Sea* the inflicting of wounds is mutual. Through a shared, mutually imposed suffering, Santiago develops a deeper understanding of his brotherhood with animals.

Hemingway repeatedly pairs seeming opposites that inform one another. In addition to coupling love and killing, as well as the mutually inflicted suffering of humans and animals, he places the motif of "too far out" in conjunction with images of the shore. Santiago no longer dreams of people; neither women nor "great occurrences" have a place in his unconscious mind. Instead, he dreams about places and living creatures—the lions who "played like young cats in the dusk" on African beaches. Although the old man does not dream about the boy, we are told that "he loved [the lions] as he loved the boy" (*OMS* 25). In his dreams, Santiago resides in "the natural," where lions and a boy devoted to the aging fisherman represent natural grace—a state depending on an equilibrium between humans and animals.

The novella's second phase takes place in a largely non-human dimension. "Moving out too fast and too far" (*OMS* 34), the narrative locates Santiago so "far out" (41) that he imagines himself to be "beyond all people in the world" (50). The arduous consequences of having been "towed" out to sea are central to Hemingway's rhetorical purposes. Having Santiago beaten by nature allows Hemingway to observe the cost of going fully "into the natural," outside the social domain of the "anti-natural man" (Ferry xxviii).

This section of Hemingway's novella also ascribes an agency to animals beyond the ability of humans to control. Out too far, beyond human dominion, animals do not merely serve the needs of masculine displays such as trophy hunting. A man may seek "the big one," hoping it will enhance his (performative) masculinity. But the big one may have an agency which dwarfs that of humans. Engaging nature on its own terms entails a de-centering of human agency and purpose. Hemingway's narrative changes tenor as Santiago heads out into deeper waters.

The rhetorical pairing of humans and animals (or nature, writ large) is dominant throughout the middle of the text. But at first, Santiago expresses an almost Disney-esque anthropomorphism. Soon after he starts rowing in the dark the first morning, he muses that he is "very fond of flying fish" as his

"principal friends on the ocean" (*OMS* 29). He feels compassion for the "small delicate dark terns" who are "always… looking and almost never finding." Santiago's sense that these birds with the "small sad voices are made too delicately for the [cruel] sea" and don't have a fair chance against the stronger "robber birds" (29) is a premonition of what he himself will face.

A deeper level of interspecies kinship begins to surface as Santiago progresses further into the Stream. His first stories convey compassion for creatures of the sea that one must butcher. He "loved" the big green sea turtles, even though "he had gone in turtle boats for many years" (*OMS* 36-37). His identification is evident: "Most people are heartless about turtles because a turtle's heart will beat for hours after he has been cut up and butchered" (37). Santiago's reaction to the turtles is zoomorphic: "I have such a heart too and my feet and hands are like theirs" (37). Cain concludes that Santiago is no longer human here because to be human is to be unmoved by a turtle whose heart goes on beating even after dismemberment. Becoming "one of them," the old man is both not human and all too human in his determination to dominate and kill (Cain 120).

Santiago eventually discovers, under duress, a sense that the great fish is his equal, and in some ways his superior. But meanwhile a theater of cruelty is in full effect; no quarter is given in the search for the big one. There is the routine but gory detail of sardines "hooked through both eyes" to serve as bait (*OMS* 31). When the sardines secure bigger bait (an albacore tuna), Santiago "hit him on the head for kindness and kicked him" (39). Bait has no agency, although eventually, by the law of the food chain, Santiago's bigger bait will attract a bigger beast—one capable of fighting back and forcing Santiago to re-examine his killer's kindness.

Throughout much of the text, Santiago's compassion is that of the hunter who kills cleanly. The old man remembers hooking a female marlin, one of a mated pair. He "gaffed her and clubbed her," causing some apparent trauma for the male fish, who "stayed by the side of the boat" (*OMS* 49). "That was the saddest thing I ever saw with them," the old man remembers. Manolin is with him and "the boy was sad too and we begged her pardon and butchered her promptly" (50). Begging the pardon of an animal one kills for food is common to the ethics of indigenous hunting—an important part of Hemingway's worldview from 1951 on (Lewis 119).

But if Santiago is a secular Franciscan, he's a ruthless sort whose first attempt at dialogue with the marlin is: "Eat it so that the point of the hook goes

into your heart and kills you" (*OMS* 44). However, when the big fish forces him to come to terms with a superior force, the old man begins to recognize and respect the marlin's agency. This seems to dawn on Santiago when he realizes that he is being "towed by a fish" (45). At this point he still has not recognized the marlin as an equal and so he imagines that the exertions of the towing can only have one outcome: "This will kill him" (45). Soon he begins to "pity the great fish he had hooked" and wishes he could feed it (48, 59). But he squashes the impulse, thinking: "He is my brother. But I must kill him and keep strong to do it" (59).

The conceit that this ordeal can only end in the death of the marlin evaporates. "Fish," he says aloud, after the marlin has pulled him down the first time, "I'll stay with you until I am dead" (*OMS* 52). His respect for the fish grows into love, because of the marlin's own instinctual adherence to a code. But Santiago's love co-exists with a determination to kill—which is, after all, what the fisherman was born for: "Fish… I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends" (54).

Before the marlin has tired and surfaced, there are some pastoral moments. Santiago tells a warbler: "Take a good rest, small bird. Then go in and take your chance like any man or bird or fish" (*OMS* 55). This cross-species empathy puts birds, fish, and men on the same playing field.[4] But the marlin is first among equals, as the old man indicates to the bird: "I am with a friend" (55). When the bird leaves, the old man misses him, as he does the boy. But his loneliness vanishes when a flock of wild ducks flies over and Santiago "knew no man was ever alone on the sea" (61). The warbler and the wild ducks demonstrate that the shore and the deep are not in binary opposition.

Mutually inflicted suffering deepens Santiago's sense of kinship. His ability to take advantage of the fish is limited by his own pain. "You're feeling it now, fish," he says. "And so, God knows, am I" (*OMS* 56). This shared pain carves new perspectives in his thinking. Santiago speaks of "three things that are brothers: the fish and my two hands" (64). They are united by the line that joins them, and as they pull against each other, it cuts their flesh, making them "blood brothers" as well as competitors who inspire each others' valor. It is in this context that Santiago wants to show the fish "what kind of man I am." This desire to perform a proof of masculinity only arises when one respects or admires the opponent. After the marlin first surfaces and Santiago recognizes his great size, he offers this soliloquy:

> He is a great fish and I must *convince* him… I must never let him learn his strength nor what he could do if he made his run… But, thank God, they are not as intelligent as we who kill them; although they are more noble and more able. [63, our emphasis]

Convincing the marlin to submit to the fisherman's will involves a form of pretence. Having recognized that the marlin is more able and more noble (he lacks human deviousness), Santiago settles on a strategy: "Let him think I am more man than I am and I will be so" (*OMS* 64). Thinking here is relative, of course: it is anthropomorphism to suggest that a fish thinks in human terms. Yet this feinting is something practiced by all manner of animals, who puff themselves up, arch their backs, hiss ferociously, etc. to mislead their opponents into backing down. This is a cross-species sort of cognition, and in a sense Santiago is demonstrating that he is capable of thinking like an animal.

The more Santiago projects himself into the experience of the animals around him, the more he seems to want to shed his human skin and consciousness. He grows dissatisfied with his instincts as a fisherman. No sooner has he feinted in the hope of out-smarting the marlin, than he says directly: "I wish I was the fish… with everything he has against only my will and my intelligence" (*OMS* 64).

This line of thinking is elaborated. Thinking of the fighting cocks, but perhaps also of the sardines on the hooks, Santiago remarks that he could not endure the loss of both eyes and still go on fighting. This leads him to devalue human volition once again: "Man is not much beside the great birds and beasts. Still I would rather be that beast down there in the darkness of the sea" (*OMS* 68). Like John Muir, who wrote that "If a war of races should occur between the wild beasts and Lord Man I would be tempted to sympathize with the bears" (qtd. in Nash 26, 39), Santiago seems to want to take the side of the great beasts in the battle against man.

The old man's code does not allow for any outcome other than killing the fish, but he cannot fully respect himself for following his nature. Yet Santiago would respect himself less if he backed off. Once a hunter/fisherman wounds an animal, he has an ethical obligation to proceed to a clean kill. Santiago is humbled by the marlin's beauty, grace, size, and fighting spirit. But although the rhetoric shifts from respect to love, it never changes the nature of his will. "I'll kill him, though… In all his greatness and his glory" (*OMS* 66). He recognizes that this is "unjust," but then he falls back on Hemingway's article of

faith: "But I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures" (66).

In the book's famous quotation—"A man can be destroyed but not defeated" (*OMS* 103)—Hemingway apparently endorses values that his readers had come to expect from him. This may be a case of a writer meeting audience expectations. But a truer expression of Hemingway's evolution resides in Santiago's dialogue with the fish and his often mournful meditations on interspecies love and the tragic imperative to kill what we love. Thus the tenor of a Franciscan utopia—the flying fish as his "principal friends" (29) and the porpoises as "our brothers" (48)— acquires tragic undertones as Santiago recognizes the consequences of his "friendship" with the great fish: "I have never seen or heard of such a fish. But I must kill him" (75).

The mythopoetic language here resonates as Santiago's admiration for the fish collides with the implacability of his fisherman's code. The old man uses the conjunction "but" to join the seemingly opposed ideas of brotherhood and killing, while the omniscient narrator uses the conjunction "and"— a subtle distinction, resulting in a shift in the tone of the narrative. Regarding Santiago's compassion for the marlin's hunger, Hemingway writes: "Then he was sorry for the great fish that had nothing to eat and his determination to kill him never relaxed in his sorrow for him" (*OMS* 75). Here "and" places the old man's opposing feelings in co-existence rather than conflict, accepting the inherent tragedy in the human-animal relationship as natural.

Carlos Fuentes once commented: "We survive because we kill nature. We cannot escape this need and it damages our soul" (24). The remainder of *The Old Man and the Sea* reveals the damage to Santiago's body and soul from killing the part(s) of nature he most loves. His natural response to the dissonance between his compassion and his determination to kill is rationalization: the fish will feed a multitude of people. However, this leads to a sort of epiphany from which there is no exit: "But are they worthy to eat him? No, of course not. There is no one worthy of eating him from the manner of his behavior and his great dignity" (*OMS* 75).

Preparing to kill the marlin requires more killing. Santiago catches a dolphin and "clubbed it across the shining golden head" (*OMS* 73). Later he "pushed the blade of his knife into his head" and "gutted him with his right hand" (78). Inside of the dolphin he finds two flying fish, still fresh, a pair of his "principal friends on the ocean" inside another "brother" he has killed for food in order to remain strong enough to kill the great fish he loves most of all (29). This *fish-inside-the-fish* is an inexhaustible symbol. But as a starting point, we

might look at this evidence of the food chain as a commentary on "the way of all flesh"— the hunger for flesh and the need to kill nature inevitably creates ever more complex forms of interdependence.

The more the marlin exhausts Santiago, the more the old man attempts a sort of communion with the fish, desperately trying to make sense of the impossibility of separating love and death. As the marlin weakens and his circles around the skiff grow smaller, the old man himself is sufficiently weakened that he begins to contemplate his own death. He directs his thoughts towards the fish: "Fish, you are going to have to die anyway. Do you have to kill me too?" After reassuring himself with some clearly delusional hopes, such as "You're good forever," he returns to reality, again, in interspecies dialogue: "You are killing me, fish… But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who" (*OMS* 92).

The sense that the marlin's nobility is unmatched, and that the fish's beauty and valor give it a right to kill the fisherman, affirms Hediger's view of *The Old Man and the Sea* as a "critique of triumphalist hunting" (45). Once Santiago finally manages to kill the marlin, there is little if any expression of triumph. His first reaction is matter-of-fact and points to a new role for him as humble servant rather than triumphant fisherman: "I have killed this fish which is my brother and now I must do the slave work" (*OMS* 95).

Earlier, Santiago's compassion for the fish was paired with a sense of the fisherman's superiority. He "orders" the fish to follow his master plan: "How do you feel, fish?… Pull the boat, fish" (*OMS* 74). But after Santiago has lashed the dead fish to the side of his skiff and is limping back towards Havana, he wonders: "is he bringing me in or am I bringing him in?" (99). Santiago realizes that the great fish, even in death, is in a sense still "towing" him. Some pride remains, but he is full of self-reproach: "I am only better than him through trickery and he meant me no harm" (99).

After the sharks begin to devour the marlin's flesh, Santiago's self doubts become quasi-theological. There is no hope of returning to shore with his catch, yet he also feels it is a "sin… not to hope" (*OMS* 104-105). At this stage we begin to glimpse the Sisyphean nature of Santiago's "triumph" (see Eddins). Like Sisyphus, he feels that he has been punished for his pride. Now, Santiago's reflections on the inter-relationship between love and killing come into clearest focus—but expressed in an unanswered and perhaps unanswerable question: "You loved him when he was alive and you loved him after. If you love

him, it is not a sin to kill him. Or is it more?" (105). It might seem more of a sin to kill loved kin, as in the story of Cain killing his brother Abel. Santiago has reached such a level of identification with his animal brothers that the fisherman's code no longer seems adequate.

Headed back to harbor, facing an unwinnable battle against the sharks, Santiago tries to rationalize his actions. But the thought that "everything kills everything else in some way" brings little comfort. "Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive," he reflects, but then his self-assessment is brutal: "The boy keeps me alive… I must not deceive myself too much" (*OMS* 107). It is in this state of self-doubt, physical debilitation, and spiritual sickness over the waste of the great marlin's life that Santiago begins his concluding conversations with the half-eaten fish.

Part III—Beaten But Not Defeated

The final act of *The Old Man and the Sea* begins with crucifixion symbolism when Santiago sees the fins of the approaching *galanos* and makes a noise such as "a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood" (107). Santiago experiences a crisis of faith, feeling guilt and angst over having "gone out too far" only to lose everything. His losses include economic sustenance, a chance at glory, and implicitly, a form of redemption. His doubts are expressed in a monologue primarily directed towards his ruined fish. To the degree that his doubts are assuaged, it is coming to terms with what it means to be "beaten" and reconciling himself to his place amongst a community of fishermen.

As the novella draws to a close, Santiago obsesses four times each about his two main concerns—having gone out too far and having been "beaten." His thoughts are articulated in relation to the disappearing carcass of the marlin. As this final portion of the story begins, the sharks have begun to eat away the marlin's flesh. By the time only the skeleton remains, Santiago will have come to an attenuated understanding of what having "gone too far out" and being "beaten finally" mean. The attenuation of the marlin's flesh corresponds to the attenuation of Santiago's manhood.

As the great fish is reduced in degree and value, so Santiago must confront his own reduction in force. Thus his vision of what sort of man he is must be made fine. Making that vision finer does not mean making it less heroic, but applying it more narrowly to the contexts of actual life, and avoiding overreach, or triumphalism. This is indeed a less virulent vision both of masculin-

ity and of humanity's relationship to nature.

After the sharks have taken a quarter of the meat, Santiago feels disillusioned. He expresses his regrets to the fish: "I wish it were a dream and that I had never hooked him. I'm sorry about it, fish. It makes everything wrong" (*OMS* 110). He does not want to look at the diminished fish, but seeing that "his stripes still showed," he treats the dead fish as a confessor: "I shouldn't have gone out so far… Neither for you nor for me. I'm sorry, fish" (110).

Santiago becomes a suffering servant whose mission is to protect the dead fish's remains: he tells himself to "get your hands in shape to defend what is left of him" (*OMS* 111). His "defense" is quixotic: with his "blood mushed hands" he hits the attackers of his beloved fish "without hope but with resolution and with complete malignancy" (102). But after he breaks his knife on the next wave of sharks, he recognizes the finality of his situation, and uses the word "beaten" for the first time: "Now they have beaten me… I am too old to club sharks to death" (112).

Nearing the "glow of Havana" at end of the third day of his ordeal, Santiago gains a deeper appreciation of human community. He realizes that many people will have worried about him and that he lives "in a good town" (*OMS* 115). Coming home with both his great fish and himself in diminished form, the old man finds that a different rhetorical approach is required. His second mention of "too far out" comes as he adjusts to this loss of physical presence and force: "He could not talk to the fish anymore because the fish had been ruined too badly. Then something came into his head. 'Half fish,' he said. 'Fish that you were. I am sorry that I went too far out. I ruined us both. But we have killed many sharks, you and I, and ruined many others" (115).

Even that half fish inspires Santiago's imagination; he says "you and I," wanting to think of himself and the fish as a team. He fantasizes about having "fought them together." But knowing that more sharks are on the way, he envisions this exit: "I'll fight them until I die" (*OMS* 115). Again, there are quasi-religious dimensions to Santiago's experience: "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Santiago's ordeal has transfigured him to such a degree that he is willing to die defending his half-eaten friend.

His third mention of having gone out too far is self-directed, but the half fish dominates his thoughts. Wondering if he might have the luck to bring half the fish in, he concludes: "No… You violated your luck when you went too far outside" (*OMS* 116). This sense of having violated the natural order leads

to a more complete sense of having been beaten, which he expresses for the second time when the cold of night accentuates his stiffness and soreness from his wounds. With sharks coming now in a pack, "He knew he was beaten now finally and without remedy" (119).

The third mention of being beaten and the fourth reflection on going out too far occur after the sharks have finished off the marlin's flesh and Santiago is able to see the "lights of the beach colonies." Now that it was "nothing to get home" and both the fish's flesh and his own strength have been reduced to nothing, the old man's understanding of being beaten and going out too far have been attenuated. "It is easy when you are beaten, he thought. I never knew how easy it was. And what beat you, he thought. 'Nothing,' he said aloud. 'I went out too far'" (*OMS* 120).

One could interpret his "it is easy" to mean simply falling asleep in one's own bed (mentioned four times) when exhausted. But there is transitional thinking in the "I never knew how easy it was" sentence. Santiago contemplates his beaten state in an existentialist vein. Being beaten is "nothing," he thinks dismissively, as if to say, if I could do it all over, I would not change anything. Going out too far was necessary, under the circumstance, and seems to be in his nature; if being beaten follows from being willing to go beyond safe spaces, then it is nothing to lose sleep over.

The final mention of being beaten comes after Santiago has had a long sleep, when he tells the boy: "They truly beat me, Manolin… They truly beat me" (*OMS* 124). But the boy's correction continues the attenuation of the idea: "*He* didn't beat you. Not the fish." And the old man's response indicates that he has made finer distinctions: "No. Truly. It was afterwards." The battle with the fish was indeed a victory and he was only beaten by the sharks because he followed his nature, just as the sharks followed theirs. So there is no shame in the way the sharks have humbled or beaten him.

Santiago tells the boy "I missed you," and makes plans for fishing with him. But Manolin cries when he sees the old man's lacerated hands and when Santiago tells him that he "felt something in my chest was broken" (*OMS* 122-125). The young apprentice cries because Santiago is probably dying and he may also cry because the old man clings to his illusions while his way of life is ebbing away. Thus the marlin's lance, which Santiago passes on to Manolin, has great symbolic value.

Hemingway was skeptical about the critical reception of *The Old Man and the Sea*, famously writing to Bernard Berenson: "All the symbolism that people

say is shit." However, the next line of that letter is especially revealing: "What goes beyond is what you see beyond when you know" (*SL* 780). This does seem to point to a rather Taoist worldview. Santiago sees further than other fishermen and seeks the beyond because he knows a great deal about his world, and herein lies a final gloss on the "out too far" motif. "Too far" is a value brought to a variety of things—fishing or hunting, manhood, our place in nature, the claim of a writer to greatness, etc. But in the end, going far out transfers positive as well as negative values to human experience, attenuating the sting of defeat.

The tenor of masculine grace in *The Old Man and the Sea* radically revises human-animal relations in Hemingway's earlier works, such as *The Sun Also Rises*, where his treatment of the bullfight can be read as "a parable of manhood attained through sacrifice of the animal" (Wolfe 134). *The Old Man and the Sea* presents an attenuated manhood in which the killing of animals, while still an inescapable fact of life, takes place outside of human-controlled domains. The "sacrifice" is mutual, something on the order of an interspecies ritual. Santiago will not stop aspiring to fish, but the humbled state of grace he has achieved is a mature man's submission to a natural order in which humans cannot presume dominance. The humbling of a man already possessed of admirable humility implies that we should all be humbled before nature. Before our flesh fades away, we should recognize that humanity is not the center of the greater community of life. Our suffering is more endurable when animated by a greater love—a willingness to sacrifice for both human and non-human kin.

NOTES

1. For ecocritical readings see Susan Beegel, Ryan Hediger, and Glen Love. Feminist or female-centered readings can be found in Broer and Holland. Joseph Waldmeir represents those who note the "religious overtones" of *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway's "decisive step in elevating … his philosophy of Manhood to the level of a religion" (163), as does Philip Young, who saw Santiago as a Christ-figure crucified by the world (23). More recently, scholars including Philip Melling and Larry Grimes have looked at the influence of Afro-Cuban religion on the novel, while Eric Waggoner outlines suggestive parallels with Taoism. Harold C. Hurley has collected essays on the importance of baseball in the novella.
2. See Thomas Strychacz on indirection and knowing how to feint, especially 221-258.
3. On the tripartite nature of sea stories as a rite of passage, see Stephens.
4. For an analysis of this passage and more on Hemingway's "sympathetic awareness of [the] lives and anxieties" of birds, see Robin Gajdusek (177).

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