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## Freewill versus Determinism in *The Old Man And The Sea*

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Freewill reflects in—“the capability to say yes when yes is needed, to say no when no is needed, and sometimes to keep quiet when nothing is needed—to be silent, not to say anything”.<sup>1</sup> When this happens with someone, one is supposed to work under the effect of freewill. However, determinism states that man is not free; he is bound to work under the effect of the circumstantial forces. It is usually understood to preclude freewill because it entails that humans cannot act otherwise than they do. It holds up that a person is forced to obey the external forces which are not in his command. Ernest M. Hemingway, the renowned novelist and Nobel Prize winner of 1954 for his magnum opus *The Old Man And The Sea*, adeptly projects herein the strife between freewill and determinism. Santiago, the protagonist of the novel plays an icon of freedom and freewill. He doesn't stoop to the hardships of life even though he is very old. The novelist wrote the novel when he was as old as of the aging fisherman. Like the fisherman, he gets deep into the human learning and lodges there to search for something unique, like Santiago stays in the deep waters from dawn to dusk in waiting for a big fish and this goes for eighty four days regularly. As though he returns empty handed, he never feels disappointed. Thus he continues to sail through the dark waters all the days farther and deeper in the sea and struggles against the rough weathers, and comes back home alone. He never yields to dejection. This shows that Santiago is a man who cannot submit to the adverse situations. He is neither excited for praise, nor upset from blame. These words of a great philosopher convey a prolific message to others thus: “When ye are exalted above praise and blame, and your will would command all things, as a loving one's will”<sup>2</sup>

When Santiago appears in the novel, he is sole person in the shack (small hut). A picture is seen hanging above the cliché in the shack. Santiago appears commemorating the woman in the picture from time to time. It seems that the picture relates to him close, may be of his wife. Later in the novel, he reveals his proximity to the picture as his wife. He leads single life, no child, no relative, and wife passes away and deserts him alone in the early days. All this shows that he is man deserted by destiny. Such condition of him is brought by some unknown force working upon him. The old fisherman is found calling up a boy named Manolin occasionally whenever he is in need for help. This boy learns from Santiago how to fish. He treats the old man as his mentor and guardian; therefore looks after him. The boy brings the old man food and coffee when the former gets tired and broken with the sea tiring strife. The boy helps the old man with small fishes as bait to catch. Someday he goes with Santiago to the sea, but when his parents find that Santiago is a "salao"<sup>3</sup>, i.e. unlucky for not catching a single fish for many days, they forbid him following the fisherman. However, the boy helps his teacher in other ways. The boy forbidden plays a determinant in the novel. The old man was happy till the child was with him. He was young with Manolin. Some critics say that Manolin represents the youth of the fisherman. The fisherman ever feels that he is so energetic and vital like the boy by his side that no fish can challenge him. As the boy is taken away from him, Santiago feels that the youth is gone away. He recalls him at the sea, “I wish the boy was here”<sup>4</sup>. Santiago for a moment gets into dejection, but soon recovers from it and mentions thus: “But, he thought, I keep with precision. Only I have no luck any more. But who knows? Maybe today. Every day is a new day. It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact. Then when luck comes you are ready.”<sup>5</sup>

Bad weather at the sea plays as the determinant to the old brave fisherman, Santiago. He is forced to stay at the sea in eighty seven teeth-biting cold nights. Sometimes, he appears to regret that he has come farther away from the shore in the sea. However, he realizes that he has come for defying determinants of the existence. It reveals that Santiago has sailed deep in the sea in order to show that even though he has turned old, he is not slave to the aging days. He is still capable to show his rival fishermen that he can catch a big fish, and prove his manliness and expertise, therefore he has sailed deep in the waters: "I wish I could show him what sort of a man I am"<sup>6</sup>. Hence, his ideology alludes to "But man is not made for defeat, ... A man can be destroyed but not defeated"<sup>7</sup>. He could not catch the fish for eighty four days, but he didn't lose courage. He doesn't forbid his will to catch the fish, the big one. Some literary artists believe that Santiago could survive if he went for the small fish. But that was against his self-respect. Throughout life, the old fisherman had been a hero amid his fishers' community. He is known for the deadly battles between the man and the sea, with all her lethal creatures and the giants. Moreover, he had won all the battles against these sea creatures amid the howling tempest. He was never prostrate to the conditions. It divulges that a man of such inclination cannot survive on the unearned fish. He must wade through dark waters and skid through the rough weathers in the search of the challenging fish; and this he does when he comes face to face with the sea giant, marlin.

Santiago hooks the marlin down in the deep water and feels it in his possession but his heart throbs for it. On one side, he feels proud thinking that he has proved his manliness and defied his rival fishermen but on the other, his heart aches for the fish. He thinks that a big sea creature whose heart beats aloud is in the lethal catch and is going to die soon. It shows that Santiago is conscious towards the nature. He thinks that when something roles out of the existence, it affects it. Similarly a big fish would affect the existence with its absence. Moreover, a big creature struggles for long when it is slowly killed and left for dying. This troubles the sensitive. Sharks defy the will of the old fisherman but he remains "fearless and confident"<sup>8</sup>. They come as the threat to his being. Santiago attacks them with harpoon and deeply hurt. But, in the battle, the harpoon is broken and now he is armless to fight the forthcoming battles. The wounded sharks sink rolling down in the sea as if they are going in their coffins. However, the challenge doesn't end here. During the battle against the marlin, he thinks of the people who would eat up the fish. He cries out and says, "There is no one worthy of eating him from the manner of his behavior and his great dignity"<sup>9</sup>. It reflects the battle going within the fisherman, and the same reminds the mental agony of Prince Helmet in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, when he thinks about "to be or not to be". Santiago finally catches the fish and gets assured, and then ties it around the skiff, and heads towards the seashore. The blood of the fish spreads in the waters, and thus invites the distant sea monsters for the food. Then big and dangerous sharks swim fast towards the source. Santiago fights them away and in the battle, he loses his last weapon made with knife tied to the ore. Now he is again armless, yet he fights away the monsters. The whole marlin is eaten up by the sharks and only carcass remains. The old fisherman shoulders the skeleton of the dear fish to the shore. This is the power of determinant that compelled Santiago to return empty handed at last. Nonetheless, he does not cry over his bad luck. He never stops preparing for the next fight. The novelist divulges here that life is a battle and one should be ever prepared to fight it. He opines that the dead don't care for the life, because they have no life. And life is a valuable thing whose value increases only in adversity.

Hence, Santiago faces many challenges in his voyage of eighty four days. He fights many battles within and without such as physical combat against the sharks and the rough sea weathers, and emotional battle against the commemoration of his dear ones as of only assistance, his pupil Manolin and his wife; sometimes against the existential disappearance of

the marlin: “Fish, I love you and respect very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends”<sup>10</sup>. When he says sighing “Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who.”<sup>11</sup>, it reveals mental agony of the fisherman. It unveils his deep love for the fish, and complies by the law of nature i.e. law of survival –one lives alive on the death of other. It shows the aching stress of the determinants on the old man. Above all, Santiago suffers a lot but never yields to the effect of the determinants. He backs up himself with “Be calm and strong, old man”<sup>12</sup>. He loses everything; but finally defeats the external forces by his strong will power. His love towards the nature shows that a person attached to existence can never be defeated by any force external or internal.

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