

**The Fear of Failure Leading to Social Alienation: A Comparative Study
between Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and Chinua
Achebe's *Things Fall Apart***

الخوف من الفشل الذي يؤدي إلى الاغتراب الاجتماعي: دراسة مقارنة بين "الرجل العجوز و البحر"
لأرنست همنغواي و "أشياء تنهار" لتشيناوا أتشيبي

Dr. Maafa Sofiane* ⁽¹⁾

Associate Professor, Department of Letters and Foreign Languages,
Faculty of Letters and Languages, University of Tamanrasset,
(Algeria)

sofianemaafa@univ-tam.dz / sofianemaafa4@gmail.com

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Abstract:

The fear of failure is a mundane feeling people acquire as they mature. This feeling is unpleasant to most people and can be observed early with students at school, where their parents, teachers, and everybody around urge the little kid not to fail when his life depends on it. The fear of failure thus becomes man's best companion; at work, marriage, and everyday aspects of life. People are sociable creatures, who are ready to do anything not to fail. Many scholars approached the fear of failure and many authors have written about it differently in literature. But, they all seem to agree that the fear of failure often leads to social alienation. In the present article, the researcher will first introduce two of the most famous literary works in the world of literature; Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Then, the researcher shall illustrate how the two authors have approached the topic of the fear of failure and how the latter might lead to the social alienation of their heroes through their novels previously mentioned. Eventually, the researcher will conclude that humans are survivors and will do anything to overcome the different hardships to socially de-alienate themselves.

Keywords: Fear, Failure, Social Alienation, Novel, De-alienation.

*sofianemaafa@univ-tam.dz

الملخص:

الخوف من الفشل هو شعور دنيوي يكتسبه الناس أثناء عملية النضج. هذا الشعور غير سار عند معظم الناس ويمكن ملاحظته مبكرًا مع الطلاب في المدرسة، حيث يحث الآباء والمعلمين الطفل الصغير على عدم الفشل وكأن حياته تعتمد على ذلك. وبالتالي يصبح الخوف من الفشل أفضل رفيق للإنسان؛ في العمل والزواج والجوانب اليومية للحياة. الناس مخلوقات اجتماعية، ومستعدة لفعل أي شيء حتى لا تفشل. تعامل العديد من العلماء مع الخوف من الفشل وكتب العديد من المؤلفين عنه بشكل مختلف في الأدب. لكن يبدو أنهم جميعًا متفقون على أن الخوف من الفشل غالبًا ما يؤدي إلى الاغتراب الاجتماعي. في هذا المقال، سيقدم الباحث أولاً اثنين من أشهر الأعمال الأدبية في عالم الأدب؛ "الرجل العجوز والبحر" لأرنست همنغواي و"تداعي الأشياء" للكاتب تشينوا أوتشيبي. بعد ذلك، سيوضح الباحث كيف تعامل المؤلفان مع موضوع الخوف من الفشل وكيف يمكن أن يؤدي الأخير إلى الاغتراب الاجتماعي لأبطالهما من خلال رواياتهما المذكورة سابقًا. في النهاية، سيستنتج الباحث أن البشر ناجون بالفطرة وسيفعلون أي شيء للتغلب على المصاعب المختلفة للتخلص من العزلة الاجتماعية.

الكلمات الرئيسية: الخوف، الفشل، الاغتراب الاجتماعي، الرواية، إزالة الاغتراب.

1. Introduction

The term alienation has become one of the significant concepts in social sciences in the past few years. When alienation arises, people typically find it easy to grasp the concept. Alienation is one of the most controversial terms in the twenty-first century. Many scholars show special interest in alienation because every single society suffers to some extent from the cruel ramifications of alienation. When referring to the word suffer or suffering, this suggests that alienation is not a good thing; it is hardly found anywhere that alienation is positively spoken of.

Alienation probably existed centuries ago, since it goes hand in hand with the lingering injustices that permeate our societies, thus profoundly impacting countless lives. However, the term is believed to have been coined and developed as a theoretical concept by the German Karl Marx during the twentieth century. Marx firmly believed that alienation stems from the economy, specifically pointing to the harsh and unjust conditions imposed by Western capitalism. As a result, men or workers were shoved to the corner by this unfair and cruel system only to find themselves more isolated within their societies.

Sociologists have expanded the term to encompass various social injustices, not just economic ones. Thus, social alienation covers economic, social, religious, and all other injustices and anomalies in a given society. Minorities in general are reported to experience social alienation, especially when that is linked to poverty. The latter is a direct cause of social alienation because poor people cannot participate in the economy like richer people do.

Moreover, the capitalistic unjust system results in individuals considered inferior trying to meet the endless requirements of people who consider themselves superior. This 'mission impossible' journey usually results in a constant growing fear—a fear that these 'inferior' individuals might never be accepted as members of society. This fear might not make any sense, yet it fully exists and does not seem to be stopping any soon.

The fear of failure does not help these 'inferior' individuals. Instead, it feeds their social alienation; the more they try to meet the requirements of the 'superior' individuals, the more alienated they become, leading to what is known as 'self-estrangement'. This is where the 'inferior' individual does not show any more interest in becoming socially positive.

In literature, authors have not missed the opportunity to approach the topic of social alienation. This article provides a comparative analysis of two classic literary works: Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). The researcher explores their themes and cultural contexts to highlight their significant impact on literature and society. In both novels, the heroes experience different conditions imposed by their societies; however, they are socially alienated. The fear of failure later seems to be the one feeding more of their social alienation.

On the one hand, Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea* is considered his masterpiece earning him the Pulitzer Prize in 1953 and the Nobel Prize in 1954. In this novel, the old man Santiago does not catch a fish for nearly three (03) months. As a result, most villagers rejected him not only because he was poorer, but also because he was unlucky. However, Hemingway shows the reader that the old man is a survivor and proves to all villagers; young and old that he is still the best of them all by catching the largest Marlin. And even when the carcass was all eaten by the sharks on the way back, the old man brought it back as proof of his great achievement; a trophy for his victory.

On the other hand, *Things Fall Apart* is also considered Achebe's masterpiece. In this novel, Okonkwo is met with different challenges, while most of his tribe members seem to accept the Western newcomers, Okonkwo only sees them as capitalist invaders who came only for one purpose and that is to destroy his African culture. Okonkwo's social alienation and ultimately self-estrangement were also the result of his fear of becoming a coward and loser as was his father. His fear of becoming as weak as his father led him to be angry all the time at his wives and kids in the first place. There was a chance to show any softness because then he would be seen as weak which meant the end of him.

The fear of failure at meeting the requirements of their societies led the two heroes in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* to challenge everyone including themselves, and finally succeed in proving that they still had what it takes to be once more socially accepted. The fear of failure and thus being socially alienated led Santiago to be a lonely old man, while Okonkwo was too afraid to the point where he committed suicide.

2. The Psychology of the Fear of Failure:

Atychiphobia is the scientific term for the fear of failure. In their book *Phobias: The Psychology of Irrational Fear*, Milosevic & McCabe (2015) argue:

Atychiphobia (from the Greek atyches meaning unfortunate, and phobos meaning fear) is an irrational and persistent fear of failing at something. This fear may paralyze individuals; they may stop trying things for fear that they will fail at them, leading to significant problems in their daily lives and numerous missed opportunities. (p.40)

Authors usually feel more compelled to deliver a certain positive message. The fear which is supposed to be irrational becomes instead a long-lost survivor quality that the hero/heroine finally manages to acquire. Truly, no reader would want to see a hero/heroine who is extremely afraid not to meet certain requirements imposed by their societies. In this regard, Atychiphobia becomes something longed for and necessary for the hero or heroine to finish the required task and deliver the message intended.

Indeed, in both novels at hand, Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* and Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* suffer from the fear of failure; however, both heroes ultimately prove their worth, especially regarding their societies. As mentioned before, even when the two heroes seem to meet their ends on many occasions which is the case of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*; yet, both Hemingway and Achebe chose more heroic endings for their heroes and this again was done for the sake of delivering a positive message to their readers.

In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway (1995) described the old man Santiago as "salao, which is the worst form of unlucky" (Hemingway, p.12). Even though Hemingway portrayed his hero as a survivor par excellence, he did not miss the crude reality that man is powerless and mostly scared not to be adequate. In his novel, Hemingway certainly portrayed Santiago in a Homeric surviving fashion. However, his poetic and author-based endeavor did not stop him from revealing the one truth that "man is doomed to failure" (Bloom, 2008, p.54).

In most of Hemingway's works, his heroes are often injured or have scars. Psychological suffering seems to track down all his heroes. This fashion of writing about

Hemingway was inspired by the era he lived in; marked by wars, alcoholism, and women.

In addition, the reader notices that most of Hemingway's heroes relived what he had lived. It was Hemingway who witnessed both world wars at a close range. It was he who married six times and it was he who suffered from chronic heavy drinking. All these were done in the hope of soothing his traumatic as well as nostalgic memories. In the end, all these did not offer much help to the controversial author who came at the end of the tunnel by committing suicide in 1961.

What may seem like a gloomy style was simply a crude reflected image of the twentieth century. Hemingway's infamous descriptive style and short and simple sentences brought him international reverence. His life experience was full of tears and pain helping give birth to the story that brought him both the Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize. Despite its simplicity in style, plot, and characters, it remains one of the greatest novellas in history.

Indeed, Hemingway seemed fully aware of human psychology and its weak structure. After all that he had survived in real life, he became an expert in describing what it meant to be human on paper. Hemingway was not gloomy when he explained what it meant to be an old, poor, and misfit man who suffered from loneliness and misfortune. He, instead, was an expert in drawing the details of Santiago's suffering. Apart from all the literary embellishments and ethics, Hemingway could not turn an eye to the fact that "the heart of Santiago's spiritual victory would seem to be sheer endurance of the fact of failure" (Bloom, 2008, p.54).

Similarly, Okonkwo's life was dominated by the fear of being weak and unaccomplished like his father. His extreme fear of being seen as weak made him strive for wealth and success. Truly, by his late thirties, he was already a wealthy man who possessed two barns full of yam and was married to three wives. Not only this, but Okonkwo also earned two important titles. That is why Okonkwo had a fiery temper and was very impatient with anyone he saw as less successful and weak.

In Achebe's novel, chapter four while in a clan meeting a 'less-successful' man interrupted Okonkwo while he was talking. He immediately fired at him telling him that "this meeting is for men" (Achebe, p. 27). Okonkwo's lack of patience and fiery temper camouflaged his terror and despise of weaker unsuccessful men. Since he hated the weak image he had of his father, weaker and less-accomplished men constantly reminded him of his father.

Just like Santiago, Okonkwo's fear did not come from nowhere. Instead, this fear stemmed from their societies' morals and values. If not for his society's strong emphasis

on financial success and bravery, Okonkwo likely would not possess his infamous fiery temper, losing it over trivial matters. In this sense, Okonkwo becomes the outcome of his society; a product manufactured by the values and morals imposed by his society.

Okonkwo was always on edge, the image of his improvident father seemed to haunt him for the rest of his life. Yet, despite his hot temper, Okonkwo realized that no one could live in the shadow of a loser; that is why he carried on the same way he did until there might be a chance to change, the thing that did not happen.

The thing was that Okonkwo despised his father as a child and continued to despise him until he died. Okonkwo's "whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness" (Achebe, 1995, p.12). This complicated state that Okonkwo had seemed to fuel his life until it was all burned out. Thus, Okonkwo was more a victim than a culprit; he was pushed to the limits of his human capacities. Palmer (1972), better explains what Okonkwo was going through in his society, saying:

Okonkwo is what his society has made him, for his most conspicuous qualities are a response to the demands of his society. If he is plagued by fear of failure and of weakness it is because his society puts such a premium on success; if he is obsessed with status it is because his society is preoccupied with rank and prestige; if he is always itching to demonstrate his prowess in war it is because his society reveres bravery and courage. (p.53)

It is therefore safe to say that Okonkwo was the production of his society, even though he was also fully responsible for his deeds which would ultimately lead to his death. In a nutshell, Okonkwo's actions and deeds were not all his responsibility; it was also his clan members as well as the white Christian preachers'. This is why, he no longer could bear the pain and suffering of being left all alone by his clan members; except perhaps for his friend Obierika who also arrived too late after Okonkwo's body was found dangling off from a tree in the back of his own house.

3. Social Alienation:

Alienation is when a person feels no longer belonging to a group of people, usually because of not meeting certain requirements imposed by the same group of people. In this sense, social alienation has economic reasons as the main factor for not achieving a certain level of ownership or welfare. As a result, the person who fails to meet those materialistic demands is either socially alienated by the target social group or withdrawing from them; which is called self-estrangement.

In her article; On the Meaning of Alienation, Melvin Seeman (1959) identifies alienation as coming in five forms: "powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement" (p.783). According to Seeman the first shape of

alienation is powerlessness. She identifies powerlessness in workplaces. Seeman argues that in a capitalist world, a worker is left powerless by entrepreneurs and capital owners. In this case, the worker cannot control how much money he/she makes or how many hours he/she spends at work.

Seeman explains that meaninglessness is when an individual cannot fully comprehend the social rules imposed by the 'superior' individuals. In this case, this individual would ultimately be found alienated. The third form of alienation is normlessness. Seeman relates this third form to Durkheim's philosophy on social norms. Simply put, when social norms no longer make sense, the individual does not know what to believe. In this case, the individual again finds him/herself alienated from society.

According to Seeman, the fourth type of alienation is isolation. Seeman explains that isolation here does not mean the social maladjustment of an individual for failing to keep social contact, which leads to social isolation. Rather, isolation refers to an individual's moral maladjustment with their society. When a person feels morally disconnected from his/her social group, he/she would feel socially disconnected and thus isolated.

Last but not least, the fifth type of alienation is called self-estrangement. This type of alienation according to Seeman is similar but not the same as isolation. Self-estrangement is when an individual disconnects him/herself from the rest of the social group. Ideally speaking, the person no longer feels a member of the social group; since their ideals do not seem to merge anymore. For some reason, this convergence of ideals makes the person feel like an outsider in their social circle.

In some cultures, for example, when an individual feels disconnected from their society, they tend to commit suicide. According to these individuals, being disconnected from the social group is too overwhelming, and thus cannot bear the immense pain. Truly, human beings are creatures who were designed to cling to life; humans by all means desire to live for eternity. So, when an individual suddenly decides to end their life; this means that the feeling of disconnection from the social group is greater than the feeling of living.

This is pretty much what happened with Achebe's Okonkwo. As argued before, Okonkwo was by all means a successful man. In addition to possessing two large barns of yam, he had the advantage of three loyal wives and held two esteemed titles. Okonkwo was known to be a man of principles; he strongly adhered to his African roots against the Western invading Christianized ideology. As Okonkwo neared the end of his life, he recognized the growing social alienation from his kin. It was clear to him that complete isolation from the world was inevitable.

Okonkwo's social alienation stemmed from two reasons: firstly, he was socially alienated because of his hatred of weak and improvident people such as his father. Secondly, he was further alienated because of his contempt of the British colonizer together with the Christian missionaries. As a strong member of a culture that has long been made to be inferior, no hero needed to be setting the example for the rest of the African people.

Palmer (2022) explains how the African people were forced to be completely alienated from their roots in the African culture. The tragedy of Africa and Africans is that the latter engaged themselves in a long and futile effort waiting to be given the same legal and political rights as those of the European colonizer. Africans understood it late that they would never be treated the same as the European invaders causing them to go through a serious identity crisis. Ultimately, Africans came to accept their "negritude;" reflecting a deep acceptance and celebration of their culture, and embraced their culture, even against stereotypes labeling it inferior (p.69).

In this sense, it becomes clear that Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* was the only one who seemed proud to go back and cling to his African roots, even if it meant going back to believing in superstition, paganism, and the worshipping of ancestors. Yet, to him, that was way better than believing in an intruding culture whose sole goal was to break down what was built for years and replace it with a new culture, a copycat of the Western one.

In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway (1995) depicts his protagonist, Santiago, as an old man who stands resilient facing complete annihilation. In the novel, Santiago is presented to have no one left of his family. The only acquaintance he still has is the boy Manolin who remains faithful and at the same time pitiful to the old man. However, with all the loneliness and isolation Santiago was put in, the reader would wonder why he did not meet the same fate as Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*.

The answer to this question is that Hemingway armed his hero with a mechanism that Achebe did not with his hero. Indeed, Santiago while living the bitterness of solitude and isolation, had dreams. Santiago is a dreamer par excellence; since the beginning of the novel, he and Manolin try to invent and imagine scenes that did not exist: "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" (Hemingway, 2005, p.19).

This recurrent fiction of things that the old man seemed to enjoy and carry out throughout the entire novel, was nothing but to escape the tough and bitter reality that the old man was living in. Not only this, but Hemingway also reveals to the reader that

every time Santiago sleeps at night, he dreams of Africa and lions when he is young. This is, in fact, a mechanism that Hemingway employed for Santiago to escape the tough reality and live in a world of dreams.

Hemingway does not miss a chance to remind the reader that Santiago is a very old man and is no longer young. As the reader realizes that Santiago is no longer a young man, it is revealed to the reader that Santiago's dreams were no longer about storms, women, great fish, fights, or even his late wife; because these dreams mattered when he was young. His dreams were now restricted to places and lions on the beach (Hemingway, 2005, p.26).

The dream of lions was so significant to Santiago, as he would summon them whenever he felt disconnected from his social group; it was his refuge from the failure and weakness he was experiencing while in the village. The lions would remind him of his strength and success as a young man in his prime. As Okonkwo approached the end of his life, he recognized his increasing social alienation from his kin. It became clear to him that complete isolation from the world was unavoidable.

4. Faith as a Bolster against Social Fear:

People have always sought refuge in religion from all the hardships they experience in life. Faith is usually related to crises and hard times; when someone is in a difficult situation, they seek shelter in religion. This would give a new breath to the person in crisis renewing his/her capacity to resist an ordeal; an affliction. Certainly, and as many would believe, people are put on earth for a test.

As argued before, human beings were designed to be social creatures. When something goes wrong and things do not go as they are supposed, the social operation does not feel normal anymore. Instead, it feels harder and away from normalness. It is worth saying that religion, despite many people's beliefs, has played a major role in shaping and reshaping numerous cultures since the dawn of history.

De Vos (2019) explains how people sometimes feel inadequate. Being weak and imperfect in the first place, they would seek assistance from supernatural powers. Regardless of any religious system, people would often feel socially incapable (p. 103). It is like people believe that religion would complete their inadequacy in facing the daily challenges and crises in life.

Despite all the controversies, Hemingway was a man of faith. He (2005) did not fail to equip his hero Santiago with the power of faith. After reading the novel, the reader becomes acquainted with the fact that were it not for dreams and faith, Santiago would probably not have made it through his ordeal of being lonely and unlucky. Indeed, when

everyone seemed to downsize the old man for not catching a fish for nearly three months, Santiago proved indifferent and had faith anyway.

In chapter one, Hemingway (2005) introduces Santiago as a believer; a man with faith. During an ordinary conversation with the boy Manolin, Santiago reassures him that it is fine that his father did not allow him to fish with him due to his misfortune. He remains calm and doesn't get frustrated or engage in conflict; instead, he reminds himself and the boy that his father "doesn't have much faith" (p. 13). Thus, it has always been about faith with the old man.

There is a difference between religion and faith. When one might be religious, he/she might not be faithful. That is to say, religion is about ceremonies and worship; however, faith is about the soul. Again, Hemingway (2005) chooses Santiago to be faithful and not religious. In the apex of his fight against the mighty Marlin, and as the old man tightens his grip on the rope; he also tightens his grip on his faith. He is honest enough to confess that he is not religious, nonetheless; he manages to remember a few Christian prayers. He even asked the Virgin Mary to pray for the death of the Marlin (pp. 54-55).

Similarly, Achebe (2001) equips his hero Okonkwo with faith to support him against all the challenges he faces. Despite Okonkwo's unfortunate and tragic fate, he could still escape many difficulties thanks to his faith. However, Okonkwo's faith was somewhat different than that of Santiago. While Santiago was a Christian, Okonkwo was in the worship of idols and ancestors.

Achebe (2001) does not miss to mention the importance of faith in the lives of Okonkwo and all Africans. Despite his hot temper, Okonkwo is strongly committed to the convictions of his ancestors. On the New Yam Festival, the reader is told that Okonkwo wakes up early in the morning and offers a sacrifice of fresh yam and palm oil to his ancestors. He prayed for the protection of his ancestors for himself, his children, and their mothers, rather than just participating in a customary ceremony (p. 35).

In addition, the reader is also told that it was Okonkwo who resisted the 'new faith' that was brought and preached by the white man. Despite the stereotype of the inferiority of African religions and culture in general, Okonkwo understood the importance of holding to one's culture and identity. He understood this so much that he was ready to die for it. Okonkwo could not embrace the fact of giving in to the new invading culture; his pride and faith prevented him from converting to Christianity, which is why he preferred to end his life rather than give up his ancestors.

To better explain this strong belief in the ancient gods and ancestors of Africa, Killam (2004) explains how Okonkwo and his clan attributed his success to his chi; or what was known as his god. According to the Igbo culture, every man's failure or success depends on how his chi would respond to his conduct. Therefore, Okonkwo's chi defines his life and death in Umuofia (p. 22).

5. Social De-alienation of Santiago and Okonkwo:

Hemingway (2005) knew very well that his readers would not want a sad ending for Santiago; there is no point in breaking the protagonist. This is why Santiago had to survive everything, ultimately proving that heroes still exist. Probably in another real-life situation, Santiago would never have made it through all the hardships and challenges life imposed on him. Yet, as argued above, authors do have a positive message; otherwise, there is no point in writing in the first place.

As an old man, Santiago had seen it all; he lived a long life full of zeal and glory. However, as the old man came to live the last days of his life, he no longer had the same enthusiasm and glory he had before; rather, he became salvo, lonely, and worst of all unwanted. This combination of hardships would break the backbone of the toughest men. Yet, Santiago seemed indifferent to these annoying challenges and was hell-bent on proving himself one last time that he was still the best fisherman in his village by catching the biggest and most violent Marlin.

Not only did the old man succeed in catching the majestic Marlin all alone and with bare hands, but he also risked his own life by venturing into the open ocean with all its whirls and violent currents. Santiago's persistence and perseverance did not stop at this point, showing neither fear nor hesitation in fighting the numerous Maco sharks trying to steal his precious catch and only proof of his victory.

As an old man, Hemingway (2005) did not fail to remind his readers that strength is not always about physical power. On the contrary, and especially for old men, strength is translated into long experience in life which makes the person resilient in the face of the hardships that never cease to throw on one's way. While fighting against the mighty Marlin, the old man wonders what power the beast may possess! As a fisherman, he fought against the toughest fish one could do. Yet, with this unusual Marlin, he questions the challenges lying ahead.

Against all odds of the fish being physically stronger, not to mention that it was in its natural habitat. Yet, Santiago reassures himself that he has the upper hand. He checks back his strong traits in this fight, where he found that he had no cramps and still felt strong after the long agonizing fight against the fish. Santiago then declares to himself

that it was the Marlin on the hook and not him; so, there was nothing to worry about, the old man reassures himself (p. 41).

The strategy of supporting oneself even when all odds are against that person does not come from nowhere. Hemingway's life was not so different from Santiago's, especially about hardships and crises. However, Hemingway seemed to give Santiago one last chance to overcome life's challenges. Whereas, Hemingway failed and surrendered. This is simply another fact that humans are weak creatures and that it is just by chance that some people make it through till the end.

Okonkwo's life was also full of challenges and fears. Yet, Okonkwo had some privileges over Santiago in that he was young, strong-bodied, rich, and well-respected among his people. Okonkwo's alienation stemmed from his own choices. By allowing his fiery temper and ruthless impatience to dictate his actions, he missed the chance to become a chief or a leader, ultimately squandering his potential.

As an author, Achebe (2001) embraced the vital role of shaping his narrative, recognizing the importance of delivering a compelling message to his readers. Even though Okonkwo was seen as a man who was hard to deal with, he was also presented as a man of principles who stood against everybody and everything that could jeopardize his African identity and culture. Similar to Santiago, Okonkwo was the support himself even when everyone seemed to be against him.

The first thing Okonkwo had to fight everybody for, was change. When the imperialist Christian preachers penetrated his people, he resisted this new change because it would bring calamity and destruction to his people. However, Okonkwo was not as angry and obstinate as one may imagine, rather he was a man of logic and reason.

When these preachers came for the first time, they told some of the villagers that their wooden and stone gods were all fake and evil. Okonkwo, who was present, did not try to kill and chase them away; rather, he tried to reason with them. He could not understand how the preacher could claim that there was one God at the beginning and then say that God had a son. Okonkwo, in his logical thinking, questioned this concept, wondering if this God must also have a wife! (Achebe, 2001, p. 127).

The preacher found himself at a loss for words to answer and carried on passionately about the Trinity. Okonkwo and his fellowmen burst into laughter and realized this new faith was no better than their own. By blowing the new faith away, Okonkwo did not know that he only alienated himself more. In the end, most of the villagers converted to the new faith. Not only this but also the Commissioner, escorted by a group of messengers as well as Obierika with a group of his clansmen, refused to cut Okonkwo's body down from the tree he hung himself on.

Forced to hang himself on a tree in the back of his own house and whose body was denied proper burial, Okonkwo not only lost his life but also was denied all the sacrifices he had made for the sake of his country and people. The only one who seemed to recognize and appreciate his sacrifice was his best friend Obierika who finally dared to tell the Commissioner in his face that Okonkwo was one of the best men in all of Umuofia, and that he was responsible for driving him to hang himself (Achebe, 2001, p. 173).

Unlike Santiago who could finally find solace and refuge to de-alienate himself, Okonkwo unfortunately was not that lucky. Despite his strength, he succumbed to commit suicide and de-alienate himself from this world; a world which he could not understand anymore. Okonkwo's view is straightforward: cherish your identity and wear it with pride. When he did not find what he expected, he could not bear the fact of letting go of his own culture and identity, thus preferring to kill himself rather than embrace a foreign culture.

It was hard for Okonkwo to accept the ugly reality that his clan members could finally give in to the foreign invaders that easily. According to him, there was no room for reconciliation with the invaders; it was either him or them. It would be better that his clan members would regroup behind him with him as their leader.

However, no one seemed to understand his warning against the imminent danger lurking at them including his best friend Obierika. The latter was considered Okonkwo's last hope to convince the clan members to regroup and fight back against the invaders. In the end, all that Obierika could offer were some words of late courage saying that Okonkwo was one of the best men in all of Umuofia after his body was found dead and hanging off of a tree.

6. Conclusion:

In conclusion, both Hemingway (2005) and Achebe (2001) succeeded in drawing an exit for their heroes to de-alienate themselves from the different social restrictions they were forced to face. Even when the two settings were dissimilar, both novels successfully depicted the daily challenges one man can face. Against many people's beliefs, heroes suffer and break down under excessive weight.

In the end, Santiago had one last chance to de-alienate himself against the entire village together with nature. All these elements have agreed to break down the old man. However, Santiago miraculously made it through the storm proving himself worthy against everybody's expectations. The old man could finally live his glory one last time, even though the author does not reveal what happens next to him.

As for Okonkwo, it is a bit unfortunate that the protagonist commits suicide; it is as if Achebe (2001) was writing about the end of Hemingway himself. It is not easy to kill the hero of the novel; therefore, for what it is worth Achebe thought it worthy to do so. He likely ended his story in a striking way to emphasize the profound consequences of surrendering one's identity to an outside influence.

Achebe (2001), therefore, de-alienated his protagonist by making him commit suicide. As much as it is considered wrong in many cultures, the reader would understand why Achebe did so. Okonkwo preferred death rather than giving in to a foreign invading culture which brought nothing but slavery and desolation to his people. Life requires sacrifices, and Achebe had to sacrifice his protagonist to draw his readers' attention to the importance of the national identity.

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