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"Comparative analysis of the influence of Ernest Hemingway's 'The Old Man and the Sea' on AbdulRahman Munif's 'The Unfinished Bridge'"

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Extended Abstract

This article investigates how Abdulrahman Munif's *The Unfinished Bridge* reworks core narrative, thematic, and stylistic elements of Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. Using a French-school comparative method, anchored in intertextual analysis, motif tracking, and narratological mapping, we test influence claims against three evidentiary lanes: (1) verbal and stylistic echoes, (2) structural isomorphies at the level of incident, trial, and return, and (3) scene functions organized around pursuit, misrecognition, and qualified triumph. Close readings reveal a patterned network of correspondences that exceeds generic affinity. Character dyads (Santiago/Zaki; Manolin/Wardan) and adversarial pairings (marlin/dreamed-of duck; sharks/one-eyed wolf) parallel each work's choreography of risk, endurance, and loss. Both narratives pivot on external conflict with nonhuman quarry and on protagonists who persist through failure, yet the climactic lessons diverge: where Hemingway's sharks reduce the prize to bone, Munif stages a marshland return in which Zaki carries an owl and nine ducks, only to learn the coveted "duck" was an owl, a twist that reframes triumph as epistemic error. Stylistically, Munif deploys pared dialogue, aphoristic cadence, and action-led narration that recall Hemingway's economy while recalibrating tone toward communal apprenticeship rather than solitary stoicism. Thematically, both texts sustain belief in fate and the educative value of failure; however, Munif relocates the ethics of endurance into a social and ecological matrix, where memory functions less as private reminiscence than as shared archive. The structural grammar is likewise cognate: a catalyzing incident initiates arduous pursuit, mounting trials produce material depletion and self-reckoning, and a homeward return secures dignity without full restitution. On our criteria, the density and specificity of parallels, particularly in dialogue patterning and scene function, support an influence claim rather than mere convergence. Beyond this pairwise study, the article contributes a portable protocol for influence assessment that distinguishes demonstrable intertext (repeatable, text-bound evidence) from thematic kinship (broad, tradition-level likeness). We show how "qualified triumph" operates as a shared resolution form while Munif's misrecognition ending presses beyond Hemingway's stoic calculus to interrogate knowledge, naming, and the limits of mastery in a marsh ecology. The findings refine accounts of Arab-Anglophone literary traffic by demonstrating how a canonical modernist ethic is translated, localized, and ethically re-weighted within Munif's narrative world.

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