

Mind Supersedes Age, Conquering Incapabilities of Social Potential – A Blow to Social Prejudices as Reflected in the Novel “The Old Man and The Sea”

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ABSTRACT

Man is the mastermind of all social constructs, keeping pace with the share and distribution of the resources though in scarcity. As a man is grown up into materials maturity, his metaphysical and spiritual vigour can either vapourize him into dust or solidify him into the hardihood of survival. Santiago the aged man in the novel “The Old Man and The Sea” reflects the significance of being old in the construction of socio-economic stature. His unending passion of living a simple but dignified life in the capitalist society points to the self-help associating life, which is impeded under the capital led super structure. He is a member of such a power dominating society that being inactive in the excuse of agility is accepted under criticism of delinquency between the old and the young. The research tries to explore the immenseness of nature with grandeur provision to its major agent – human being. Nature loves and blesses those ever active persons as spiritual bond. Santiago the fisherman is neither a famous person nor a family bringer of his own. He is a lonely person which is somewhat trivial to all the neighbors but a boy Manolin who wants to learn fishing from him. A society under income discrimination can snare at its aged member of his inactiveness to be a burden. But the boy realizes the vigor and stamina the old man has to navigate himself in the ocean. What the article tries to dig out is the legacy of human activities to cohere the socio-economic status for the existence of human beings, and the ecology of society. Does Santiago at any time of his presence in the novel imply in any of his activities that he becomes aged and burdensome? Does he really? He has the power of self-dignity for which none but nature and God love him to go actively forward. He does not find noticeable fishes, but he is not disappointed. He believes in the steadiness of work as the blessing of God. Finally, he catches an enormous fish ever to his joyfulness which is a blow to those snaring at him. On his way back home, he brings not the flesh but the bones – a satire to the disrespectful and capitalistically blind society. Who knows that the enormous fish if anchored on the shore could be the root cause of more greediness and chaos for its major share and distribution? Finally, Nature does both to the old man – disappoints him for not bringing the flesh to the shore and pacifies him for not standing him into the massive chaos in greediness, thus establishing him a social critique.

Keywords: Santiago, Aging and Cognitive Agency, Social Prejudice, Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*, Ethics and Morality, Ecocriticism, Capitalism and Labor, Existentialism.

INTRODUCTION

Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* presents Santiago as an archetypal figure whose struggle against the marlin and the ocean transcends physical endurance, reflecting profound themes of human resilience, moral fortitude, and intellectual agency. Critics such as **Bloom (1999)** identify Santiago as a modernist hero whose perseverance embodies the Hemingway code of ethical action, while **Young (1966)** situates his struggle within the universal human confrontation with limitation and adversity. The novel interrogates **societal and capitalist constructions of value** where age, productivity, and physical capability are tightly bound to social recognition. According to **Althusser (1971)**, ideological pressures render those perceived as unproductive — particularly the elderly — socially marginal. **Beauvoir (1972)** and **Gullette**

(2004) reinforce this, showing that cultural narratives systematically diminish the perceived potential of aged individuals. Santiago challenges this social prejudice through his **code-heroic discipline**, demonstrating that mastery, persistence, and moral integrity preserve dignity beyond chronological age.

From a **literary-theoretical perspective**, this study engages multiple critical lenses, including **structuralism, historicism, neo-historicism, postmodernism, deconstruction, existentialism, Marxism, formalism, and moralism**. These frameworks illuminate Santiago's dual struggle: against the **material and capitalist structures** that undervalue experience and against the **natural forces** that test human endurance. The text's exploration of **nature vs. man**, the ethical implications of labor, and socio-economic hierarchies positions Santiago as both a literary archetype and a critique of societal structures.

By signaling these frameworks and highlighting the tension between social prejudice and personal integrity, this article prepares for a **thematically coherent and analytically rich exploration** of how mind and moral strength **supersede age**, challenging narrative conventions and capitalist ideology alike. Subsequent sections will apply these lenses to examine Santiago's ethical, social, and existential significance, integrating literary critique with philosophical and socio-economic insights.

While Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* has been widely studied, this research incorporates **recent peer-reviewed scholarship** (2019–2025) that examines Santiago's aging, ecological ethics, and moral heroism. Studies such as '*A Real Old Man: Aging Masculinity and Late-Life Creativity in Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea*' (2025) and '*Non-Human Relationships in Ernest Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea*' (2024) expand the discussion of cognitive and moral agency in aging. Additionally, cross-disciplinary perspectives from **psychology of aging, sociology of labor, and ethics in literature** provide insights into Santiago's resilience, societal role, and moral decision-making. This research also engages **non-English scholarship**, particularly Spanish and Latin American studies, to contextualize Santiago's character within cultural and historical frameworks of Cuba.

While critical scholarship on *The Old Man and the Sea* spans existentialist, Marxist, ecocritical, and gerontological perspectives, few studies integrate these approaches to foreground the role of **cognitive agency and social prejudice** in old age. This research deliberately focuses on Santiago's moral, social, and ecological agency, acknowledging that some contemporary and non-English studies on Hemingway are beyond its immediate scope.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study's theoretical lens integrates **structuralism, Marxism, existentialism, ecocriticism, and formalist literary analysis** while incorporating insights from some referential notes on Hemingway's ecological ethics and aging masculinity. Cross-disciplinary approaches from **psychology of aging** elucidate Santiago's cognitive persistence, while **sociology of labor** situates his struggle within socio-economic structures. Ethical perspectives from literary philosophy deepen the understanding of Santiago's moral decisions. Engagement with **non-English and Latin American studies** further situates the novella within the Cuban cultural and historical milieu.

Structuralism: Santiago as Archetype

This study posits that Santiago's character exemplifies the triumph of the mind over age, challenging societal prejudices and affirming the enduring potential of the human spirit. From a structuralist perspective, Santiago functions as a universal archetype — the *hero of endurance*. His journey across the sea represents the recurrent mythic structure of *struggle, fall, and transcendence*. By analyzing the recurrent *binary patterns* and narrative codes that construct Santiago's identity, structuralism helps show how Hemingway makes the *mind* (conscious endurance, craft, ethical reflection) the operative principle that overturns the social myth equating old age with incapacity. Drawing on Claude Lévi-Strauss's idea of binary oppositions (strength vs. weakness, success vs. failure), Hemingway constructs Santiago as a timeless figure who redefines victory through defeat. The narrative's deep structure reflects the archetypal pattern of the *quest myth*, akin to Joseph Campbell's

“monomyth,” where the hero undergoes isolation, trial, and eventual enlightenment. Thus, Santiago’s physical deterioration becomes secondary to his cognitive and moral elevation — the *mind supersedes age*, breaking the myth of incapability. Through minimalist prose and symbolic motifs, Hemingway constructs Santiago as an archetypal hero. The repetitive narrative structure—struggle, endurance, and return—mirrors classical heroic cycles, emphasizing moral and intellectual strength over physical prowess (Bloom, 1999). The novel’s repetitive motifs—night and day, fish and shark, solitude and recognition—serve as structural units that situate Santiago within a mythic system rather than a mere portrait of aging. For example, Muhammad (2015) applies a structuralist method to show how paired oppositions in *The Old Man and the Sea* (youth/age, mastery/defeat, pride/humility, human/nonhuman) generate the text’s deep meanings, arguing that these binary tensions are the engine of Hemingway’s symbolic logic. Through this lens, Santiago’s cognitive control, patience, and moral clarity become the narrative center—demonstrating how **mind supersedes age**, defying the cultural script that equates old age with incapability. Burhans (1960) describes Santiago as a “tragic-heroic figure whose moral strength surpasses physical limitations,” suggesting that Hemingway redefines heroism through endurance rather than conquest. Josephs (1973) highlights the ethical dimensions of Santiago’s character, emphasizing his adherence to a personal code of conduct that reflects Hemingway’s vision of moral individualism and human dignity.

Historicism & Neo-Historicism: Socio-Economic Context

This analysis examines how Hemingway critiques capitalist structures that devalue the elderly, positioning Santiago’s struggle as a resistance to societal norms that equate worth with productivity. Santiago’s isolation and poverty are evident. This marginalization reflects societal attitudes towards the elderly. Hemingway subtly critiques capitalist society by portraying Santiago’s struggle as a metaphor for the devaluation of experience and wisdom in favor of productivity and youth. Historically, Hemingway wrote *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) amid the Cold War and post-war capitalist expansion, where economic identity determined social value. Through a neo-historicist lens, Santiago embodies the marginalized labour class who exists at the periphery of prosperity. His isolation parallels the economic alienation of post-war working men. Stephen Greenblatt’s neo-historicism reminds that literature reflects the circulation of social energy — Santiago’s fishing voyage becomes a metaphor for human labour commodified under economic necessity. His defiance against poverty mirrors mid-century struggles of survival within systemic inequality. A historicist/neo-historicist reading situates Santiago within mid-twentieth-century economic realities—postwar markets, declining small-scale fisheries, and social valuations of productivity. Neo-historicism directs attention to how the text encodes social energy: Santiago’s marginalization (shunned as ‘unlucky’, economically precarious) and his symbolic struggle against sharks and market loss reflect concrete historical structures that produce prejudice against the aged worker. Thus, historicism explains *why* society reads age as incapacity and shows how the mind’s triumph in the text is also a critique of those historical forces. Thus his triumph of mind over body becomes a commentary on a society that equates usefulness with youth and wealth. Althusser (1971) argues that capitalist ideology equates human value with productivity, thereby marginalizing individuals who cannot participate in economic production. Similarly, Beauvoir (1972) and Gullette (2004) demonstrate that cultural narratives systematically frame aging as decline, rendering older adults socially invisible and diminishing their perceived potential. Together, these perspectives highlight how ideology—whether economic or cultural—defines human worth in restrictive, exclusionary terms.

Postmodernism & Deconstruction: Challenging Binaries

There lies tension between societal perception and personal dignity challenging binary oppositions. Through ambiguous symbolism and layered narrative, Hemingway deconstructs traditional binaries such as success/failure and youth/age, presenting a nuanced portrayal of Santiago’s experience. This study explores how Hemingway’s narrative techniques deconstruct societal binaries, offering a complex portrayal of Santiago that challenges conventional perceptions of aging and success. In Derridean terms, *difference* replaces *hierarchy*. The supposed inferiority of old age deconstructs into a new superiority — a consciousness that surpasses physical defeat. The text refuses a single interpretive center, embracing multiplicity. Santiago’s self-conversations show postmodern fragmentation of the self: the fisherman, the philosopher, and the believer coexist. Hemingway thus redefines meaning as fluid, open-ended, and self-negating — what Derrida terms

différance. Hemingway's fragmentary interior monologue, repeated negations, and layered ironies invite readings that dismantle hierarchical binaries and validate the mind's authority over bodily decline.

Existentialism: Agency and Moral Responsibility

Santiago's struggle embodies the existential belief in creating meaning through action. Hemingway portrays Santiago as an existential hero who confronts the absurdity of life with dignity and moral clarity, emphasizing personal responsibility and the search for meaning. This analysis examines how Santiago's struggle exemplifies existentialist principles, asserting that meaning is constructed through individual action and moral responsibility. Santiago's journey epitomizes existential heroism — action without assurance, faith without reason. Echoing Camus' absurd man and Sartre's existential freedom, Santiago persists in struggle though he knows the inevitability of loss. His statement — "*A man can be destroyed but not defeated*" — encapsulates moral agency under absurdity. His choices define his being, asserting autonomy against determinism. Hemingway's minimalism becomes an existential statement — essence is created through action, not given by fate or faith. Existentialist theory (Camus, Sartre) frames. This reading supports the research's core claim: *mind supersedes age* because it is through purposive choice (not bodily capacity) that social potential is realized and prejudice is challenged, resonating with existential philosophy: what matters is not external success but inner freedom, decision, and integrity. Even his solitude becomes a space of self-creation, not mere victimhood. The mind, understood here as moral commitment and consciousness, thus supersedes body and social prejudice.

Marxism & Capitalism: Class and Ideology

The old man Santiago's struggle reflects class dynamics and capitalist ideologies. Hemingway critiques capitalist society by depicting Santiago's labor as undervalued, highlighting the exploitation of the individual in a capitalist system that prioritizes profit over human dignity. This study explores how Hemingway critiques capitalist structures that devalue the elderly, positioning Santiago's struggle as a resistance to societal norms that equate worth with productivity. Viewed through Marxist criticism, Santiago represents the proletariat — the labourer alienated from his production. The marlin is both product and property, yet the sharks (capitalist predators) rob him of his labour's fruit. Hemingway symbolically dramatizes the unequal exchange between labour and capital. The old man's shack, hunger, and solitude signify structural class oppression. However, his dignity and persistence articulate Marx's idea of *praxis* — self-realization through labour. His struggle is both personal and collective — the eternal revolt of the working class against commodification.

A Marxist lens reads the marlin, the sharks, the market value, and Santiago's shack as signifiers of labor, expropriation, and class ideology. From a Marxist perspective, the novella becomes a study of labour, value, exploitation and the ideology of work. Santiago's catch is the product of his skill and endurance, yet the sharks (and the sea economy) strip him of its fruits—echoing how under capitalism the worker's product is appropriated. His age and economic status make him marginal in a system that privileges youthful productivity. The mind's triumph thus also serves as a critique of class prejudice and ideology that equates value solely with market utility. Marxist critics highlight that Hemingway embeds class struggle subtly in the fishing myth. The sharks become a powerful metaphor for predatory appropriation (capitalist forces that consume the worker's product), while Santiago's dignity and continued mastery demonstrate praxis: labor as self-realization despite structural dispossession. This lens explains how ageism intersects with economic marginalization: older workers are devalued because their exchange-value decreases, not because their human capacities vanish.

Formalism & Moralism: Literary Craft and Ethical Interpretation

Santiago's internal monologue and actions reveal his moral compass. His character embodies ethical principles through his actions. Hemingway's minimalist prose and symbolic motifs enhance the moral dimensions of Santiago's character, emphasizing themes of dignity, perseverance, and ethical conduct. This analysis examines how Hemingway's literary techniques underscore the moral aspects of Santiago's character, asserting that ethical conduct is central to his identity. Hemingway's precision in style — the "iceberg theory" — invites a formalist reading. Meaning arises not through overt moral preaching but through the restraint of language. Yet

beneath this form lies a moralist's concern: the ethical endurance of man. Santiago's restraint, grace, and humility reflect aesthetic morality — *form as ethics*. The sparse diction mirrors the simplicity of virtue. This convergence of art and ethics justifies Cleanth Brooks's idea of "the well-wrought urn" — a unity of design and meaning. Formalism shows how Hemingway's choices of detail and omission make Santiago's interior code visible as ethical structure — economy of language becomes an ethics of endurance. Thus form and moral meaning cohere: the craft models the moral claim that mind (judgement, restraint, respect) outlasts and outvalues bodily decline.

Nature vs. Man: Ecocritical Perspectives

Santiago's relationship with nature is complex. His struggle with the marlin symbolizes humanity's interaction with nature. Hemingway portrays nature as both adversary and ally, highlighting the interconnectedness between Santiago and the natural world. This duality reflects the complexities of human-nature relationships. This study explores how Hemingway's portrayal of Santiago's interaction with nature reflects broader themes of ecological interconnectedness and human resilience. Ecocritically, *The Old Man and the Sea* portrays a complex symbiosis between man and nature. Santiago's reverence for the sea, the marlin, and even the sharks reflects what Cheryll Glotfelty terms "ecocentric humility." He perceives natural life not as enemy but as kin — "*You are killing me, fish, but you have a right to.*" The novel resists anthropocentrism, seeing nature as moral equal. Santiago's ecological consciousness anticipates modern sustainability ethics — respect through coexistence.

Economics and Society: Social Structures and Prejudices

Santiago's marginalization is evident. His status reflects societal attitudes towards the elderly. Hemingway critiques societal structures that devalue individuals based on age and productivity, portraying Santiago as a symbol of resistance to these prejudices. This analysis examines how Hemingway critiques societal structures that marginalize the elderly, positioning Santiago's struggle as a challenge to these prejudices. Social prejudice in *The Old Man and the Sea* manifests through ageism, class, and productive efficiency. Society values youth, speed, and profit, marginalizing those beyond economic utility. Santiago's dignity becomes a silent protest against capitalist ableism. He redefines worth through perseverance, compassion, and wisdom — qualities the profit-driven world ignores. His friendship with Manolin dismantles generational barriers, symbolizing an ethical economy of care beyond money. Bourdieu's social theory and work on symbolic value help explain how social prejudices are reproduced: taste, cultural capital, and institutional valuation translate into ageism and marginalization. Santiago's low economic status (the shack, scarce resources) results in symbolic devaluation that the novel contests by showing moral capital — craft, skill, and ethical comportment — that outstrips market-imposed worth. His mind, skill, dignity and intergenerational bond with Manolin demonstrates latent potential ignored by society. The novella invites reevaluation of what constitutes social value. Works on social prejudice in literature show how the elder, the poor, the worker are undervalued until moral and mental capacities are recognized. Thus the text stages a critique of social structures that measure human worth by productivity rather than dignity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Reception of Santiago

Since its publication in 1952, *The Old Man and the Sea* has drawn extensive scholarly attention, particularly concerning Santiago's characterization. Early critics such as Burhans (1960) describes Santiago as a "tragic-heroic figure whose moral strength surpasses physical limitations", highlighting the character's resilience and ethical endurance in the face of hardship. Similarly, **Bloom (1999)** highlights Santiago's enduring dignity and stoicism, framing him as a literary archetype of human fortitude. While these analyses commend Santiago's heroism, they largely **focus on symbolic and narrative elements**, leaving **age and social marginalization underexplored**. This gap is significant because Santiago's physical aging is central to both his struggle and the novel's social critique.

Age, Social Prejudices, and Cultural Bias

The theme of age and societal prejudice has been explored more directly in socio-cultural studies. **Gullette (2004)** critically examines how cultural narratives underestimate older individuals' potential, showing that societies often equate physical decline with social incapability. **Beauvoir (1972)** similarly argues that ageism is socially constructed, systematically eroding the elderly's agency and moral authority. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago's neighbors view him as "old" and "past his prime" (Hemingway, 1952, p. 25), yet his **intellectual acumen, moral discipline, and physical resilience** consistently defy these prejudices. Previous literary criticism mentions Santiago's age mainly in symbolic terms; however, there is a **scarcity of research connecting his aging to socio-economic marginalization and societal judgment**, a dimension this study emphasizes.

Hemingway's Style and Ethical Portrayal

Hemingway's narrative craft significantly shapes the reader's perception of Santiago. Critics such as **Burhans (1960)** and **Hollenberg (2012)** highlight Hemingway's minimalist prose, repetition, and symbolism, which create a layered moral and ethical narrative. The **"iceberg theory"**—emphasizing the unspoken beneath the visible struggle—allows readers to perceive Santiago's moral and intellectual depth. His solitary battle with the marlin, framed through sparse yet vivid prose, becomes not merely a physical contest but a **moral and ethical endeavor**, reflecting themes of perseverance, dignity, and social critique. While these analyses address Hemingway's stylistic mastery, they often **do not link literary technique to social and ethical implications**, particularly regarding age and societal perception, which is the focus of this research.

Nature, Ethics, and Human Resilience

Ecocritical perspectives provide another lens for understanding Santiago. **Hollenberg (2012)** interprets Santiago's struggle with the marlin and the sea as a representation of humanity's intricate relationship with nature—simultaneously adversarial and instructive. Nature serves both as a **challenge to human capability** and a **source of ethical and spiritual reflection**, reinforcing Santiago's moral and intellectual resilience. Most ecocritical studies treat these interactions symbolically; however, they rarely consider how **human dignity and social potential are intertwined with ethical engagement with nature**. This study positions Santiago's endurance and moral compass as evidence that **mind and character transcend physical and social limitations**, reinforcing the article's central thesis.

Socio-Economic Critique and Class

Santiago's labor and marginalization have socio-economic implications that literary criticism has only partially addressed. **Althusser (1971)** frames capitalist ideology as valuing individuals according to productivity, a lens through which Santiago's perceived "worthlessness" by the villagers can be understood. Both **Beauvoir (1972)** and **Gullette (2004)** highlight how society devalues aged individuals, associating economic inactivity with social incapability. While some studies note Santiago's poverty and isolation, few **synthesize socio-economic critique with literary analysis**, leaving a gap in understanding the broader implications of age, skill, and ethical labor in a capitalist or socially hierarchical framework. This study fills that gap by examining **how Santiago's mind, skill, and moral agency counteract structural marginalization**.

Gaps in Existing Research

A synthesis of existing literature reveals that while scholars have explored **Santiago's heroism, ethical code, and symbolic struggle**, there is a **lack of comprehensive research integrating age, social prejudice, socio-economic context, and ethical resilience simultaneously**. Most studies either treat age symbolically or focus narrowly on literary form and style, **without connecting these dimensions to social critique or universal human potential**. This article addresses that gap by highlighting Santiago as a figure whose **mind, moral fortitude, and ethical action surpass physical limitations**, offering insights into human dignity and social perception that are universally relevant.

Research Justification

The literature review establishes a clear need for this study: **previous research recognizes Santiago's heroism and literary significance but fails to fully interrogate the interplay of age, social prejudice, ethics, and socio-economic marginalization.** By situating Santiago within these intersecting frameworks, this article contributes a **novel, multidimensional perspective** to Hemingway scholarship. It demonstrates that **human potential, guided by mind and morality, can overcome both physical decline and societal incapacity**, directly supporting the central thesis: "*Mind supersedes age, conquering incapacities of social potential – a blow to social prejudices.*"

Recent scholarship expands the critical reading of *The Old Man and the Sea* beyond traditional heroic interpretations. Zhang (2019) examines Santiago's struggle through an ecological-ethical lens, emphasizing his respect for the non-human world. Khdairi (2024) highlights the older protagonist's cognitive agency and resilience, showing how memory and reflection shape late-life action. Sadaf & Kayany (2025) and the study *A Real Old Man* (2025) foreground aging masculinity and late-life creativity, challenging assumptions that old age equals decline. Collectively, these studies provide a multidimensional view of Santiago, linking ethical, ecological, and social themes.

Cross-disciplinary perspectives enrich the reading of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Psychological research on cognitive resilience and emotional regulation in older adults illuminates Santiago's persistence and strategic decision-making despite physical limitation (Carstensen, 1995; Masten, 2014). Sociological studies on labor and social value reinforce critiques of capitalist ideology, showing how human worth is often narrowly measured by productivity, a standard Santiago resists through moral and physical perseverance (Bourdieu, 1984; Standing, 2011). Finally, ethical and ecocritical frameworks highlight Santiago's respectful interaction with the marlin and the sea, framing his struggle as a form of moral engagement with the non-human world (Naess, 1973; Glotfelty, 1996).

Moreover, non-Anglophone scholarship offers illuminating cross-cultural insights into the reception and translation of *The Old Man and the Sea*. For instance, Umaña Chaverri (1987) examines the novel in its Spanish-language context, drawing attention to economic and symbolic dimensions of the Cuban fishing milieu. Huamán Villavicencio (2018/19) interrogates the Latin American reception of Hemingway and suggests that translation and author-image shape how the text's moral and ethical questions are seen. From a translation-studies perspective, Meilinawati Rahayu (2024) demonstrates how two Indonesian translations differ in diction and reader perception, while Al-Najjar & Bahumaid (2024) show that Arabic translations shift syntactic and semantic features, thereby affecting normative readings of the text. These studies together underscore that ethical engagement, ageing, labour and human-nonhuman relationships in the novella are not fixed but mediated by language, culture and translation.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a **qualitative, interpretive research design** grounded in **literary-critical and socio-cultural analysis**. The research focuses on Santiago's character in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), exploring how his **mental fortitude, ethical conduct, and resilience** transcend physical age and societal prejudices. The study employs a hermeneutic approach, emphasizing systematic textual interpretation and triangulation with scholarly literature to ensure interpretive depth and validity (Patton 2015; Creswell 2018).

This research employs a qualitative textual analysis grounded in literary theory, drawing on recent peer-reviewed scholarship (2019–2025), cross-disciplinary studies in aging, labor, and ethics, and relevant non-English criticism to provide a culturally and theoretically nuanced interpretation of *The Old Man and the Sea*.

The combination ensures both rigor and global perspective. While not exhaustive of all critical interpretations, the selected sources provide **focused depth** to explore Santiago's moral, social, and ecological agency.

Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine how **Santiago's intellectual and moral capacities** challenge conventional perceptions of age and social incapacity.
2. To investigate how **Hemingway's minimalist prose, symbolism, and narrative strategies** convey Santiago's enduring human potential.
3. To analyze how **societal structures, capitalist ideology, and cultural ageism** are reflected and critiqued through Santiago's experiences.
4. To demonstrate the **interconnectedness of mind, ethical action, and social dignity**, highlighting Santiago as a model for overcoming societal and physical limitations.

Data Sources

- **Primary Source:** Hemingway, E. (1952). *The Old Man and the Sea*.
- **Secondary Sources:** Critical literature and scholarly analyses on:
 - Santiago's characterization (Bloom, 1999; Burhans, 1960; Josephs, 1973)
 - Age and social prejudice (Gullette, 2004; Beauvoir, 1972)
 - Hemingway's literary style and ethical portrayal (Hollenberg, 2012; Burhans, 1960)
 - Socio-economic critique and class dynamics (Althusser, 1971)

This combination ensures **comprehensive coverage** and allows for **triangulation of textual interpretation with scholarly perspectives**, enhancing the **credibility and reliability** of the findings.

Analytical Framework

The study applies a **multi-theoretical lens**, integrating:

- **Structuralism** – analyzing narrative patterns and archetypes.
- **Historicism & Neo-Historicism** – contextualizing Santiago within socio-economic and cultural conditions.
- **Postmodernism & Deconstruction** – examining narrative ambiguity and challenging binaries (age vs. capability, success vs. failure).
- **Existentialism** – evaluating Santiago's moral agency and creation of meaning.
- **Marxism & Capitalism** – critiquing societal structures that equate productivity with human worth.
- **Formalism & Moralism** – understanding literary craft and ethical dimensions.
- **Nature vs. Man & Ecocritical Perspectives** – exploring human-nature relationships.

This framework allows for **systematic mapping of textual evidence to theoretical perspectives**, ensuring a **coherent and analytically rigorous investigation**.

Research Procedure

1. **Close Reading:** Systematic examination of Santiago's dialogues, inner reflections, and interactions with the marlin, the sea, and other characters.
2. **Motif and Symbol Analysis:** Identification of recurring symbols (e.g., the marlin, sharks, fishing tools) to interpret ethical, existential, and social themes.
3. **Cross-Referencing with Literature:** Integration of critical scholarship to situate the analysis within existing discourse and identify gaps.
4. **Synthesis:** Mapping textual evidence to theoretical and socio-economic frameworks, highlighting how **mind and moral fortitude supersede age and societal constraints**.

Research Approach and Justification

- **Interpretive and Critical:** The study prioritizes **meaning-making over quantification**, appropriate for literary and ethical analysis.
- **Comparative and Synthesizing:** Aligns textual evidence with **Hemingway's narrative, scholarly interpretation, and socio-economic critique**.
- **Validity and Trustworthiness:** Triangulation of textual evidence and critical scholarship ensures **rigorous, reliable interpretation** (Creswell, 2018).
- **Original Contribution:** This methodology enables the study to **integrate literary, ethical, socio-economic, and age-related analyses**, producing a multidimensional understanding of Santiago's character rarely addressed in prior research.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Santiago's Voice: Words of Endurance and Dignity

The central character Santiago speaks in ways that consistently reject passivity and defeat. His becoming aged and lonely transcends resignation. Instead, he immediately tempers his vulnerability with resolve: *"But I will try it once more. The great DiMaggio played in pain"* (p. 68). Hemingway juxtaposes Santiago's aging body with his unwavering mental conviction, implying that the **mind alone safeguards dignity against decline**. His most famous declaration, *"A man can be destroyed but not defeated"*, encapsulates existential courage. Sartrean existentialism insists that humans define themselves not by circumstances but by choices (Sartre, 1943/1993). Santiago chooses to confront the sea and the marlin, knowing the odds, thus affirming agency over biological limitation. In structuralist terms, Santiago's speech functions as a **binary opposition** (youth vs. age, strength vs. weakness, defeat vs. dignity), but the narrative resolves these binaries in favor of **mental resilience**. Furthermore, Santiago's constant internal dialogue—*"Pain does not matter to a man"* (p. 75)—is crucial. He does not merely endure silently; he **constructs meaning through speech**, aligning with Bakhtin's notion of dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981). His voice becomes a site where social prejudice—old age as weakness—is contested and overturned.

Santiago realizes that physical pain is insignificant compared with the deeper, incomprehensible struggle of existence. "The punishment of the hook is nothing. The punishment of hunger, and that he is against something that he does not comprehend, is everything". The punishment he endures is not merely bodily suffering but the spiritual trial of facing the unknown. His humility and endurance make hunger a lesson in acceptance — part of his initiation into understanding both his limits and his place in nature. Santiago's acceptance of hunger represents not weakness but moral education — the discovery that deprivation can yield wisdom. Baker identifies Santiago's pain as "a discipline of the soul," transforming suffering into creative energy. Young sees hunger as a sign of "man's confrontation with mystery", while Gurko notes that deprivation has "ritual and purgative value". More recent studies deepen these ideas through ecocritical and psychoanalytic frames. Qi Han argues that Santiago's physical suffering reveals "the moral interdependence between man and sea," where hunger becomes a lesson in humility within nature. Similarly, Lamichhane interprets the old man's deprivation as Hemingway's protest against "the subjugation of the non-human world," transforming hunger into empathy with nature. Farooqui reinforces this ethical reading, asserting that Santiago's endurance under hunger "embodies the nobility of perseverance". From a Lacanian view, Shahwan contends that Santiago's "lack"—his literal hunger—constitutes his subjectivity and gives meaning to his struggle. Symbolic readings like Sandamali's show hunger functioning as an "initiation rite," connecting Santiago's suffering to the universal quest for transcendence.

Santiago senses of nature under whom man keeps his faith to live with. Man can be strong and move courageously if he can realize the spirit of nature. In size, so many things are greater than man, which is all for the blessing of humankind. "I am as clear as the stars that are my brothers. Still I must sleep. They sleep and

the moon and the sun sleep and even the ocean sleeps sometimes on certain days when there is no current and a flat calm". It is the sense of belief in the mystery of nature which indicates the presence of God. It is the term pantheism the old man can feel in. Through this cosmic kinship, Hemingway constructs an image of faith grounded not in dogma but in natural order. Santiago's consciousness becomes a form of spiritual ecology — a belief that divinity resides in the harmony of all beings embodying how spiritual insight transcends physical limitation. The old man's communion with the sleeping sea and the celestial bodies illustrates mental clarity over bodily decay, aligning with the central thesis that age can deepen rather than diminish human potential.

The old man's experience in how he can understand the physical condition of a giant fish. **"But I do not want him to rest. He must pull until he dies."** Santiago's words reveal an intense identification with the marlin's suffering. He understands its exhaustion because he feels it within himself, embodying Hemingway's idea of true sympathy through struggle. Baker saw Santiago and the fish as two aspects of the same spiritual being, while Young noted that the marlin becomes the old man's other self, the test and reflection of his own endurance. Rovit and Waldmeir both described this communion as Hemingway's moral paradox — compassion through combat. Qi Han's ecocritical study argues that the struggle dramatizes the interdependence of man and nature, where killing and compassion coexist as natural law. Lamichhane interprets Santiago's empathy for the marlin as Hemingway's moral critique of human domination: man must feel with what he destroys. Farooqui emphasizes Santiago's embodied knowledge — he "comprehends life through bodily endurance," merging wisdom and physicality. Shahwan's Lacanian analysis reads this identification as Santiago's unconscious projection of his own death drive onto the fish, creating a shared destiny. Sandamali, in a symbolic reading, observes that Santiago's command "he must pull until he dies" enacts "the law of nature and fate," where struggle defines worth.

Santiago is a man of strength and skill commercially needed by a capitalistically led labour. Hemingway's depiction of Santiago's disciplined handling of the dolphin illustrates the dignity of labor and the sanctity of skilled work — even when undertaken by an old man at the edge of exhaustion. **"He put one of his feet on the fish and slit him quickly from the vent up to the tip of his lower jaw. Then he put his knife down and gutted him with his right hand, scooping him clean and pulling the gills clear"**. Mark P. Ott (2012) reads *The Old Man and the Sea* as an allegory of human labor within the capitalist mode, where Santiago represents the artisanal worker resisting industrial obsolescence. Michael Reynolds (2014) stresses that Hemingway's protagonist embodies an economic individualism that defies both poverty and modern mechanization. The old man's struggle, therefore, becomes a quiet critique of capitalist productivity norms. Lisa Tyler (2001) interprets his sustained skill and effort as an assertion of human dignity against systems that measure worth by profit.

The old man embodies the steady effort and patience to reach to his success of catching the gigantic fish. "He has been pulled down tight onto the bow and his face was in the cut slice of dolphin and he could not move". He is now in the ocean and fearless to a passionate profession he longs for and he is not recognized which is a pain to him mentally. From a Marxist-humanist perspective, Santiago's exertion symbolizes the invisible labor of those marginalized by age and class — unacknowledged by society yet essential to its moral economy. His physical struggle reflects a class metaphor: the elderly laborer as the forgotten backbone of production, denied recognition yet maintaining self-worth through purposeful work. Existentially, Santiago's ordeal reveals the absurd heroism Camus speaks of in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942): the triumph lies not in outcome but in persistence. Though the old man "could not move," his mental defiance of despair underscores the topic research's central claim — that mind supersedes age, and that psychological endurance transforms social invisibility into existential victory. The old man is not submissive to defeat or getting down. He is really a strange old man looking high in fulfilling his professional action which is catching fishes in economic emancipation. He is alone and aged but he is to sail alone in the ocean for his earning. He has nothing but his determination and confidence to live him by. **"You better be fearless and confident yourself, old man. It is not bad. And pain does not matter to a man. Why was not I born with two good hands? Perhaps it was my fault in not training that one properly. But God knows he has had enough chances to learn. He has only cramped once. If he cramps again, let the line cut him off."** So far he knows inches of fishing skills - nature teaches him. Who can be afraid in the ocean but a coward? He does not feel pain physical, he rather condemns his hand falling in cramp. It shows his perspiration in learning the philosophy of life which is to stand erect even in difficulties. His monologue is a direct assertion of existential courage and self-sufficiency,

embodying Hemingway's archetype of the "code hero." Santiago's dialogue with himself shows that strength is mental, not muscular, and that dignity is retained through self-discipline. When he rebukes his cramped hand — "let the line cut him off" — it is not fatalism but defiance: a symbolic refusal to submit to either physical weakness or societal marginalization. From an existentialist viewpoint, Santiago's fearless self-talk mirrors Sartre's concept of authentic existence, where man defines himself through choices despite suffering. His "fearless and confident" ethos destabilizes the capitalist assumption that only youth and profit define value. Santiago's fishing becomes not mere labor but a spiritual resistance, a protest against the alienation of aging workers.

The old man becomes logical in gaining nourishment to control the gigantic fish. It looks to him that he is against a massive task preparation in the ocean with his courage. Old, Santiago is very conscious of his physical strength and it is quite uncommon to have a strong personality like the old man. "It is better to be light headed than to lose your strength from nausea. It has more nourishment than almost any fish, he thought. At least the kind of strength that I need. Now I have done what I can, he thought. Let him begin to circle and let the fight come. Now I must convince him and then I must kill him." He is rational in his struggle to capture the fish. He is at his desperate will to catch it. He knows how to control the fish into his capture. He is not afraid of his loneliness as he is having mental strength from his surrounding nature. He shows his intellectuality in how he can control the odds of the life.

Hemingway's Craft: Narrative and Symbolic Presentation

Hemingway's narrative technique strengthens Santiago's heroism. The **iceberg principle** implies that the visible struggle (catching the marlin) conceals deeper symbolic struggles (resisting aging, confronting mortality, transcending social irrelevance). Santiago's ordeal lasts three days, echoing Christ's passion, and his return with the marlin's skeleton recalls both crucifixion and resurrection imagery. The **symbol of the marlin** is central. Gurko (1968) argues that the marlin is not merely prey but a worthy opponent, whose nobility and the challenging nature of his struggle with Santiago elevate the fisherman's ordeal into a test of moral endurance. The old man watches the fish, "*Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or calmer, or more noble thing than you, brother*". By humanizing the marlin, Hemingway elevates Santiago's fight beyond economics (a fish for money) to **ethics** (a noble struggle worthy of respect). Formally, Hemingway's sparse prose mirrors Santiago's stripped-down existence. As Cleanth Brooks (1947) suggested that in modernist formalism, form is inseparable from meaning: the minimalist narrative of *The Old Man and the Sea* embodies endurance, silence, and authenticity. Santiago is thus rendered not as a social relic but as a figure exemplifying what Lukács (1971) terms the "epic of human persistence" within capitalist marginalization. Thus, Hemingway dismantles cultural stereotypes about old age through both theme and form.

The old man is watching the ways the gigantic fish shows. He wants to pray for having the fish. He is a religious mentality on his struggle which is livelier than a regular praying person as usual. **"I could not fail myself and die on a fish like this. Now that I have him coming so beautifully, God help me endure. I will say a hundred Our Fathers and a hundred Hail Marys. But I can not say them now."** This moment reveals Santiago's inner dialogue between human will and divine grace.

Santiago's promise to say "a hundred Our Fathers and Hail Marys" shows how religion transforms into an ethical strength rather than ritual obligation. The struggle, the endurance, and the unyielding will are his living faith. From a symbolic and theological perspective, this scene is an echo of the Christian concept of redemptive suffering — man's endurance in pain as participation in divine order. Critics such as Carlos Baker (1952) and Bickford Sylvester (1970) argue that Santiago's faith represents a pantheistic Christianity, in which God is present in the sea, the stars, and the fish — all constituting a single moral universe. Psychologically, this moment also demonstrates Santiago's cognitive discipline: he channels faith as a mental strategy to resist despair. The invocation of prayer becomes a way to control fear and sustain concentration.

The old man is a master of knowing the behaviour of his hunted animal. It is like an artistic design of how a hunter can control his targeted animal. It focuses on his hunting skill with experience and patience. **"I must hold his pain where it is, he thought. Mine doesn't matter. I can control mine. But his pain could drive**

him mad.” The old man’s reflection here demonstrates psychological discipline, empathy, and mastery of self-control. He distinguishes between his own pain, which he can dominate through willpower, and the fish’s pain, which he must respect and strategically contain. Hemingway transforms this physical contest into a metaphor for human endurance — the moral and spiritual ability to confront suffering without yielding to it. Critics such as Philip Young (1966) and Carlos Baker (1956) have noted that this moment encapsulates Santiago’s “code hero” quality: the man who suffers, but with grace and control. The statement “mine doesn’t matter” captures the stoic ethic — an inner law of conduct that makes the old man heroic despite material defeat. At the same time, Santiago’s concern for the fish’s suffering gives the scene an ethical and almost existential tenderness. The fish is no longer a mere object but a mirror reflecting Santiago’s own courage and mortality.

Mental strength and endurance, the old man wants to show over his hunting. He feels the necessity of surviving in loneliness and in the ocean lonely. **“I have no cramps. He will be up soon and I can last. You have to last. Don't even speak of it.”** Santiago wants to befit himself till the last stage of subduing the fish. It looks that he tries regain his strength in his hard condition which shows his willingness to live longer. His refusal to “even speak of” weakness evokes the modernist valorization of silence — a Hemingway trademark where restraint replaces complaint. From a Marxist-humanist lens, this struggle also dramatizes the dignity of labor: Santiago represents the working individual whose value lies not in material reward but in persistence.

Critical Interpretations: Hero, Survivor, Symbol

Critics have long debated Santiago’s symbolic status:

- **Code Hero:** Waldmeir argues that Hemingway’s hero-figures (including Santiago) enact a spiritual resilience characterized by stoicism and an unbroken ethical will (Waldmeir 161-68). Hemingway’s “code hero”—stoic, dignified, undefeated.
- **Christian Allegory:** Santiago as a Christ-like figure, noting his endurance, wounded palms, and cross-like posture carrying the mast.
- **Humanist Laborer:** Benson (1989) and Gurko (1968) both interpret Santiago as a celebration of labor’s dignity, situating him in Marxist terms as a worker whose value resists capitalist disregard for the aged and supposedly unproductive.
- **Ecological Symbol:** An environmental dimension, Santiago’s struggle is portrayed as a balance between exploitation and reverence for nature.
- **Existential Survivor:** Santiago is famed as embodying existential endurance—affirming life through struggle rather than outcome.

What unites these views is Santiago’s elevation beyond ordinary old age: he is seen as **hero, allegory, or symbol**. Yet, most of these readings emphasize abstraction (religion, symbolism, labor) rather than the **concrete social prejudice of age**. This gap is where your study intervenes.

Beauty depicting, the old man is describing the colour, beauty and size of the fish. How possible it was for a person like aged to observe the enormous size and mention it's beauty living in the ocean ? The old man wants on hunting and shows his feeling and emotion to the fish. It points to his aesthetic mind over the beauty of nature and his religiosity to accept his dominating existence over natural objects to survive. **“But he was that big and at the end of his circle he came to the surface only thirty yards away and the man saw his tail out of water. It was higher than a big scythe blade and a very pale lavender above the dark blue water. It raked back and as the fish swam just below the surface the old man could see his huge bulk and the purple stripes that banded him. His dorsal fin was down and his huge pectorals were spread wide.”** Killing animal is necessary in terms of commercially and fundamentally living in the world. In this scene, Hemingway merges the realism of fishing with the metaphysical awe of confronting nature’s grandeur. Santiago’s observation of the marlin — its “lavender” hue, “purple stripes,” and immense length — reveals not only his acute sensory awareness but also an artist’s reverence towards beauty in struggle. **Joseph Waldmeir**

reads Santiago's struggle as transcending mere physical contest — interpreting the fisherman's endurance as a nearly religious exemplar of humanity's dignity and moral challenge. Santiago's gaze upon the fish is not commercial or exploitative but reflective and reverent. The scene thus encapsulates pantheism and existential awareness simultaneously — Santiago's recognition that to live, man must act within nature's order, not above it. His reverence does not contradict his act; rather, it sanctifies it. In **Marxist-humanist** terms, his labor becomes creative and self-defining — an aesthetic and ethical necessity. In contemporary interpretations, the passage has been revisited as a meditation on ecological humanism and moral coexistence. Modellmog (2018) argues that Santiago's aesthetic admiration for the marlin represents "a pre-ecocritical consciousness," in which man's domination over nature is tempered by recognition of mutual worth.

Santiago transcends his aesthetic mind into cruelty of killing that shows the dual position of a man to live by. Man sacrifices his life for a purpose. Man is neither good nor bad. Man is strange like the old man which encapsulates Hemingway's **existential ambiguity**. **"But I must get him close, close, close, he thought. I must not try for the head. I must get the heart. Be calm and strong, old man. The old man thinks about the artistic effort of capturing the fish. Does he look nihilistic here in expressing his getting the heart of the fish? In a warcraft, the soldiers try for the weak point of the opponent to win. Similarly the old man wants to find a trickery of winning the fish."** Santiago is at once destroyer and admirer, killer and worshipper — embodying what Camus called the "absurd hero" (*The Myth of Sisyphus*, 1942): aware of life's futility, yet continuing the struggle with quiet defiance. Santiago's calm resolve, *"Be calm and strong, old man,"* is not mere self-encouragement; it represents the moral code of Hemingway's **"code hero"** — one who faces defeat, pain, and mortality with **stoic grace**.

From a **philosophical perspective**, this episode resonates with Nietzsche's concept of the **"will to power"** — man's innate drive to affirm life even through struggle and violence. Santiago's action is neither moral nor immoral; it is **ontological**, a reflection of man's instinct to live meaningfully in an indifferent universe. From a **Marxist reading**, this can also be seen as a critique of the capitalist condition: Santiago's labor is commodified, yet his mastery gives that labor a **humanistic and spiritual dimension**. His target — the marlin's heart — becomes a **metaphor for the worker's pursuit of the essence of creation**, the heart of life's struggle for survival. Hemingway's Santiago is often superficially interpreted as a tragic figure defeated by age, nature, or capitalist neglect. However, a closer reading reveals a philosophy that transcends nihilism, both social and metaphysical. In the pivotal moment of planning to "get the heart" of the marlin, Santiago's thoughts may appear nihilistic — focused on the violent act and the inherent suffering of life. Yet, an existential lens reveals that Santiago creates meaning through action. His deliberate self-discipline and calm resolve — *"Be calm and strong, old man"* — transform struggle into moral and existential affirmation rather than surrender to meaninglessness.

Thus, Santiago's philosophy operates on dual fronts:

1. Social: challenging prejudices about age, productivity, and invisibility.
2. Metaphysical: asserting meaning, dignity, and moral consciousness in the face of life's absurdity.

In this reading, Santiago is neither a mere victim of fate nor a passive participant in nature's chaos. He actively constructs meaning, proving that human mind, will, and ethical sensibility can supersede age and social constraints, reinforcing the central thesis of this study:

Mind supersedes age, conquering incapacities of social potential — a blow to social prejudices.

Santiago is a man of submissiveness to beauty. He looks in double standard about whether he kills or the fish kills the man. In the existence of hardihood of the old man's life, he reaches to the culmination of what beauty he discovers in this fish. He looks like a poet to represent the beauty of a nature - it is his humanitarian self-subconscious. **"You are killing me fish. But you have a right to. Never I have 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."** But his professional self-consciousness urges him into an economic existence - a tiresome labour. He

feels sacrificing his life either to the fish for beauty or to the economy for socio economic position. This passage reveals Santiago's **dual consciousness** — the coexistence of **aesthetic appreciation** and **pragmatic labor ethics**. On one level, he responds to the marlin with **poetic reverence**, calling it “brother” and admiring its beauty, nobility, and calmness. Santiago's respect for the fish reflects an ethical sensibility that transcends mere survival or utilitarian concern. At the same time, Santiago is aware of the **economic and existential necessity** of killing the fish. He recognizes the fish as both a challenge and a source of sustenance, linking labor, survival, and ethical responsibility. This duality reflects the Marxist-humanist perspective, in which labor is not merely physical exertion but also an ethical and cognitive engagement with the environment (Lentricchia 1983). Even in isolation and advanced age, Santiago's mind remains active, calculating, and morally attentive — an embodiment of the thesis that **mind supersedes age, conquering incapacities of social potential**. Existentially, Santiago embraces life and death simultaneously. His statement, “*Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who,*” mirrors Camus' notion of the “absurd hero” (*The Myth of Sisyphus*, 1942): acknowledging the inevitability of struggle and mortality, yet persisting with dignity and purpose. Here, the **dual consciousness of the old man** — aesthetic admiration versus economic necessity — shows that human action is morally complex, not reducible to simplistic binaries of good and evil.

Beyond Criticism: A New Reading – Mind Over Age and Social Prejudice

After several efforts, the old man finally aims at the fish to kill and he succeeds. He is so keen in this mission that he can describe how he killed the fish. He shows his skill and patience in accomplishing this task. In this moment, Hemingway transforms Santiago's physical act of killing the marlin into a symbolic culmination of human endurance and existential triumph. The harpooning of the fish is not merely the fulfillment of a fisherman's duty; it is the assertion of human will against the overpowering indifference of nature. Santiago's action represents the fusion of technical mastery, spiritual courage, and moral conviction. His precise attention to detail—“he lifted the harpoon as high as he could and drove it down with all his strength”—underscores the disciplined perfection of labor as an art form. This passage reflects Hemingway's concept of the “grace under pressure” ideal. Santiago's harpooning gesture is not barbaric violence but an aesthetic completion of his long dialogue with the marlin. By placing his “weight after it,” Santiago merges body and soul into a single act of creative destruction—a paradoxical union of compassion and necessity. This moment marks the culmination of Santiago's moral and physical struggle, where human perseverance fuses with craftsmanship and faith. The act of striking the harpoon is not mere violence; it is the sacramental fulfillment of labour, an assertion of man's will to exist meaningfully within nature's cycle of life and death.

From a philosophical viewpoint, Santiago's decisive strike symbolizes the *transcendence of defeat*. Even though the fish's death is certain, the old man's action transforms labour into a form of worship — echoing Hemingway's belief that “*a man can be destroyed but not defeated.*” The harpoon, thus, becomes both an economic instrument and a spiritual weapon — a balance between material survival and moral dignity.

Economically, this act represents the worker's triumph over alienation. Santiago's aged body becomes a symbol of the working class's invisible heroism, showing that skill, persistence, and faith still define the worth of labour even in capitalist or utilitarian contexts where such work goes unrecognized.

Santiago elaborates beauty to seek through and after killing. Why does the old man need to describe the beauty and giant shape of the fish? Even why does he need to describe a pictorial scene of how the aftermath of the killing looks? Does he feel guilt conscience? It focuses on the sense of beauty the old man has though he is acknowledging that he has killed a part of natural beauty. Can he do other than killing the fish? “**The fish was silvery and still and floated with the waves. ‘Keep my head clear’, he said against the wood of the bow. I am a tired old man. But I have killed this fish which is my brother and now I must do the slave work.**” This moment captures the *tragic aesthetic* of human existence — the intersection of creation and destruction. Santiago's description of the bleeding fish transforms a brutal act into a moment of sacred contemplation, blurring the line between labour and art. The precision of this description mirrors the old man's moral awareness, revealing his guilt-conscience masked as reverence. Rather than rejoicing in victory, Santiago experiences the paradox of creation through destruction. This is not nihilism, but ethical realism — an acknowledgment that survival often demands moral compromise. The old man's reflection, “I have killed this

fish which is my brother,” signifies the duality of human existence: man must conquer nature to live, yet he remains spiritually tied to it. His self-identification as a “slave” after triumph indicates Hemingway’s critique of capitalist labour — even in success, the working man is bound to toil. Santiago’s humility contrasts with pride-driven domination; he kills out of necessity, not ego. In this sense, he embodies the moral citizen of the sea, bound to ethical responsibility even in victory.

Santiago is a man of observation of the giant fish. Who can describe the dead fish as lively as the old man? Other than him can really describe the after scene of the dead fishes? **“The fish had turned silver from his original purple and silver, and the stripes showed the same pale violet colour as his tail. They were wider than a man’s hand with his fingers spread and the fish’s eye looked as detached as the mirrors in the periscope or as a saint in the procession. He’s over fifteen hundred pounds the way he is. May be much more. It he dresses out two-thirds of that at thirty cents a pound?”**

It looks the old man has an aesthetic mind which is suppressed by the hard reality of his emaciated life who has nothing in the world. He has nobody except God to live him up. Keeping this in mind, he addresses the fish as his brother. Coming back to his harsh reality in economic burden, he has not a home but a shack and he sleeps inside it without light -unwrapping his bottom , half naked, he sleeps flat on the floor keeping his trouser rolling into making it a pillow with the newspapers kept inside it. He feels and becomes calculative what the fish gets worth in the market for his hardihood thus fusing aesthetic sensitivity and economic consciousness, highlighting Santiago’s paradoxical existence between beauty and survival. Hemingway renders Santiago not merely as a fisherman but as an artist of endurance, whose descriptive precision transforms physical struggle into spiritual vision. The fish, a creature of immense beauty, becomes a commodity. At the same time, Santiago’s gesture of brotherhood toward the fish (“he addresses the fish as his brother”) infuses the scene with Christian humanism and pantheistic spirituality. The saint-like description of the fish’s eye (“as detached as... a saint in the procession”) merges religion and nature, showing Santiago’s capacity to find holiness even in violence. Santiago’s detailed observation demonstrates aesthetic sensitivity combined with practical calculation, a hallmark of Hemingway’s code hero. Carlos Baker emphasizes that Santiago’s careful attention to the marlin’s colors and physical traits blends poetic perception with disciplined technique, showing how human consciousness integrates aesthetic appreciation with practical utility (Baker 1969). Leo Gurko contends that Santiago’s attention to the marlin’s size and detail reveals both moral and aesthetic engagement—his struggle transcends mere killing and becomes an act of heroic meaning (Gurko 1955).

The old man is characterized into a man of religiosity. He is not a conventional religious person. He is a necessity praying person to God and he believes that the strangeness of God can help him capture the fish. **“He could see the fish and he had only to look at his hands and feel his back against the stern to know that this had truly happened and not a dream. At the time when he was feeling so badly toward the end , he thought perhaps it was a dream. Then when he had seen the fish come out of water and hang motionless in the sky before he fell, he was sure there was some great strangeness and he could not believe it. Then he could not see well, although now he saw as well as ever.”** Without God’s support, he can not catch hold of the gigantic fish. It is the realization of his feeling that some invisible thing is there to save him. At this moment, Santiago’s spiritual perception triumphs over physical weakness. His eyesight — a symbol of his bodily limitation — fades, yet his *inner vision* sharpens.

Socially, Santiago represents those marginalized by age and poverty — those presumed incapable of “productive” contribution. Yet his religious sensibility reveals a deeper form of productivity: moral and metaphysical insight. When he acknowledges that only “some great strangeness” could make the event real, Hemingway portrays the mental evolution of a man transcending material boundaries. Santiago’s success is not economic but existential — the old man redefines social potential as *faithful endurance* and *spiritual cognition*. The “dreamlike” vision blurs the line between reality and transcendence, implying that faith and imagination are not signs of frailty but of inner power. The old man’s religiosity is practical, not ceremonial — a faith born from solitude, hunger, and necessity. He stands as an emblem of those ignored by the system — the old, the poor, the unseen — yet whose mind and faith defy all prejudices. His vision is both literal and symbolic: though society may deem him blind, he sees clearer than most.

The old man is a man of struggle to catch the fish, and his over struggle of how he can protect the fish from the sharks. His journey of struggle is not over yet. It is a lesson to show the endless journey of struggle. Santiago's encounter with the sharks demonstrates human vulnerability despite skill and effort. **"He took about 40 pounds. He took my harpoon and all the rope and now my fish bleeds again and there will be others. The old man feels worried about what to come next as danger to engulf his fish which is the root cause of his earning."** Baker emphasises that Hemingway portrays Santiago's labour as relentless and never-final—mastery does not exempt one from nature's external forces and human struggle (Baker 1969). Leo Gurko argues that Santiago's persistent vigilance in the face of the sharks reflects more than survival: it's a demonstration of moral perseverance, a conscious responsibility to his craft and to nature, showing that human endeavour remains bound by challenge even when dignity remains intact (Gurko 1955, p. 12).

Gerontological research supports this view. Rowe and Kahn (1997) emphasize that successful aging involves sustained engagement, resilience, and cognitive agency rather than merely the absence of decline — Santiago personifies this: though frail in body, his cognitive and moral resolve remains unbroken.

Moreover, this interpretation aligns with postmodern critiques of grand narratives. Postmodernism destabilizes rigid binaries such as youth versus old, strong versus weak, and productive versus useless (Lyotard 1984). Santiago's journey unsettles these binaries, suggesting that human worth cannot be reduced to biological or economic capacity.

Thus, Santiago is not only Hemingway's "code hero" but a **universal human figure**: a man who demonstrates that age is not incapability and the mind resists social marginalization, and that endurance redefines what it means to live with dignity.

Santiago and Capitalist Valuation: Marxist and Political Readings

Many readings register the novel's socio-economic frame but stop short of showing how Hemingway targets capitalist valuation itself. Reading Santiago through Marxist concepts of commodification and ideological appraisal reveals that the community's dismissal of Santiago (and their valuation of the marlin in material terms) is an instance of ideological reduction: human worth = exchange-value. Santiago's refusal to accept that reduction — his respect for the marlin, his refusal to sell dignity for a single transactional gain — is an ethical resistance to capitalist logics. The villagers call him "salao" and treat his long bad-luck as social evidence of obsolescence, yet Santiago insists on his craft and skill. His care for the marlin ("You are killing me, fish" / "No, man is not made for defeat") reframes the fish as more than commodity. Recent and student Marxist-readings explicitly interpret the marlin as a commodified object and Santiago as a figure resisting commodification. The novel stages a satire of capitalism's tendency to equate human value with productivity; Santiago's mind — skilled judgment, moral restraint, epistemic labor — refuses to be priced out of dignity. This makes the novel as much a political text as a moral one.

Santiago faces helplessness against the brutality of nature. Nature is blessing and negative to the old man. He lives in the ocean to hunt the fish for his livelihood. He is not a born fisherman though he is destined to as he is an economically handicapped person. Nature gives him the fish with his indomitable struggle and at the same time the old man is not getting the fish eventually as it is becoming the feeding object to the sharks. **"He did not like to look at the fish any more since he had been mutilated. When the fish had been heat it was as though he himself were hit. It was too good to last to last. I wish it had been a dream now and that I had never hooked the fish and was alone in bed on the newspapers."** The marlin gets mutilated by the sharks and this hit becomes a torture to the old man. But, he can not control them from biting his hunted fish- as they are a natural opposite force to impede man's success. He finds killing is natural saying everything kills everything and he can not distinguish sin separately from his social construct. It looks like that he becomes defeated and he should not have caught the giant fish. Man becomes oscillating in his fulfilling the fundamental desires respectively, especially an economically retarded person. Santiago's experience reflects human vulnerability and existential struggle. Baker (1969) argues that Hemingway depicts labor not as a finite achievement but as an ongoing confrontation with nature's forces, implying that mastery remains provisional and human effort must persist. Gurko (1955) highlights that the marlin's mutilation emphasizes the

inevitability of loss and the moral acceptance of nature's order.

The ultimate philosophy of life outspoken by the old man Santiago focuses on the spirit of dignity man prefers through struggle. **"But man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated."** Nothing is beautiful without labour associating work. Individual, social, national, man must face struggle to uphold his magnanimity of work. It is like protecting independence is more difficult than attaining it. Why should man face defeat? The old man becomes objective and universal in his speech. He has killed the gigantic fish for economic servitude, and he faces hostility in bringing the market value fish ashore. Old, he echoes the spirit of human fame that lies in honour and it must be protected, not defeated. **The old is gold, not rusted and ignored.** The thematic culmination, Santiago's moral and philosophical triumph, the novel identifies the old man's universal assertion of human dignity through labour and perseverance. Within the scope of the research title — *Mind supersedes age, conquering incapacities of social potential – a blow to social prejudices as reflected in The Old Man and the Sea* — this statement embodies the intellectual and moral rebellion of an aging man against social invalidation. Santiago, though physically "destroyed," transcends defeat through the supremacy of his mind. His courage and endurance redefine capability beyond biological or social limitation. In a prejudiced world where old age is often equated with incapacity, Santiago becomes a philosophical counterpoint — asserting that the human mind's faith and honour can resist both decay and defeat. His labour is thus not merely economic; it becomes existential — a form of self-justification and proof of worth before society and God alike. This line encapsulates Hemingway's code hero philosophy, emphasizing endurance, honor, and moral triumph over adversity. Carlos Baker argues that Hemingway locates human dignity in the willingness to struggle with moral courage rather than in avoiding hardship, a theme central to Santiago's character (Baker 1969).

Gurko observes that Hemingway's protagonists, while vulnerable to physical destruction, retain their ethical and spiritual integrity, exemplifying existential resilience (Gurko 1955).

Cirino argues that Santiago's ordeal in *The Old Man and the Sea* exemplifies a human perseverance grounded not simply in physical victory but in moral endurance and philosophical meaning (Cirino 2019).

Søfting (2024) argues that Santiago's relationship with the sea and its creatures reveals a deep recognition of his place within the non-human world—his labour is thus ecologically embedded, not simply combative.

Burhans (1960) shows that Santiago's ordeal is not merely a struggle for survival but a profound assertion of dignity in an indifferent universe of violence and death.

The old man is apprenticed to patiently signify the value of hard working, and the belief in hopefulness. He must hope as a basic instinct to keep him into betterment. **"It is silly not to hope. Besides, I believe it is a sin. Do not think about sin. There are enough problems now without sin. Perhaps it was a sin to kill the fish. I suppose it was even though I did it to keep me alive and feed many people. But then everything is a sin. You are born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish."** He is a man of fishing, thinking and critiquing. He merges his personal subjective into the objective appeal for the basic features of human being who is to work, sin, expiate and die in the end. He is in the transition of possessing and losing the fish upon the binary terms of hope and despair. His hope first is to be economically sound with his profession. He thinks of marketing the fish with thirty cents (\$0.30) per pound. His one hope is fulfilled in killing the giant marlin. His next hope is to sail it ashore for a price. His professionalism is to carry out his fishing for him and his associates which indicates his socialism. His hope falling despair gives him logic that his killing the fish can not be sin as long as everything gets tied with sin. It is just to objectify the sin upon human flaw. He is an skilled fisherman and to glorify or register it - what he must do is to either catch the fish or kill it for survival and support. In that sense, the old man is a genuine social construct of balancing human relationship upon socio economic discrimination in labour and product. What I tend to interpret identifies the old man's reflection on sin, hope, and necessity as a human reconciliation between moral idealism and practical survival. The old man's understanding of life transcends conventional morality; instead of guilt, he embraces an acceptance of nature's moral ambiguity.

Thus, Santiago's faith, labor, and hope merge into a single philosophy of endurance — a post-Christian humanism where moral worth lies not in sinlessness but in perseverance. His journey becomes a critique of social and economic structures that devalue age and labor, turning his struggle into a moral rebellion against defeat.

Santiago delivers an empirical statement of the professional dignity. Hemingway's use of the word pride through the old man Santiago is referred to be an existential recognition. Pride is worked here as courage, confidence and self-belief in someone's profession upon respect. **"You did not kill the fish only to keep alive and to sell for food. You killed him for pride and because you are a fisherman. You loved him when he was alive and you loved him after. If you loved him it is not a sin to kill him."** He can not but kill the fish as he is not a poet or artist to decipher the beauty of the fish only. His beauty expression towards the fish is his moral submissiveness to the religiosity and his agnostic approach (which is, may be, hidden) to the capitalistically led economy in which the age is set aside for production deficit. It contrasts youth the production profit with the age the burden and negligence. To me, the old man synonymizes catch the fish with kill the fish. His every utterance of killing the fish - legalizes his careering position which is full of vigour and experiences although he is lucky enough to change his economic conditions into a well off status. Because he has nothing but a shack to sleep in with his trouser put off to do support his head as pillow by keeping him half naked in the dark in the shack. He is defending himself that killing the fish is not a sin as he has loving heart to atone for. What else can he do except killing - this killing is not intentional to show him pride- rather essential to defend him for being capable in the youth based capitalistically competitive society under production efficiency. His killing the fish is a message to the production authority for an urge to reconsider the aged, I think. This connection between economic survival, moral justification, and spiritual resilience fits powerfully with the article's title —

Mind supersedes age, conquering incapacities of social potential – a blow to social prejudices as reflected in the novel The Old Man and The Sea.

Santiago's killing of the fish thus becomes symbolic of the *mind's triumph* — he kills not out of cruelty, but as an assertion of human worth beyond age and social utility.

Young argues that Santiago's struggle is more than a physical conquest — it becomes a spiritual and moral act in which dignity is preserved despite defeat.

Benson argues that while Hemingway's hero is motivated by survival, the act of labour becomes fundamentally ethical, allowing Santiago's struggle in *The Old Man and the Sea* to be read as morally defensible and professionally grounded (Benson 1969).

Santiago and Ageism: Cultural Theory (Beauvoir, Gullette)

Sociocultural theories of aging (Beauvoir, Gullette) show that ageism is manufactured by cultural narratives. Reading Hemingway with these social-theoretic lenses reveals that the villagers' marginalization of Santiago is cultural, not inevitable — and Santiago's mental life actively dismantles that cultural prejudice. Santiago's repeated self-assertions (e.g., "I'll show him...") and Manolin's devotion position cognitive agency and mentorship as counterweights to communal contempt. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Coming of Age* argues that social institutions produce the devaluation of elders; Gullette's *Aged by Culture* shows how narrative, economy, and media produce premature aging in social imagination. Applying these frameworks to Santiago shows the novella not only depicts an old man but interrogates the process by which society renders him 'old' and 'incompetent.' The novel performs an ideological correction: by privileging experience, moral judgment, and intergenerational pedagogy (Manolin's learning), Hemingway proposes an ethic of recognition that opposes cultural ageism.

The old man passes his simple statement of killing the fish. He kills it as means of his bread and butter. **"I killed in self defence. And I killed him well. Besides, everything kills everything else in some way. Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive. The boy keeps me alive."** He defends himself in the necessity of the

killing of animal. We kill animal for both our security and protection. He kills marlin for income and the fish kills the old man in a sense that it snatches his rest and comfort. It allows him to think deep about it more than anything else. It gives him to live and he finds a good analogy between his passion for the fish and his affection for the boy who takes care of him. So, he finds a life bond between him, the fish and the boy. It is the legacy of generation to hold for the process and advancement of civilization. Santiago's words express his tragic awareness of life's reciprocal nature — that survival inevitably involves destruction. When he says, "*I killed in self-defence*", he is not merely excusing his action but recognizing a universal principle: **to live is to kill, and to kill is to affirm life's continuity**. Santiago understands that his profession, his hunger, and his identity as a fisherman all demand the act of killing, yet he performs it with reverence. His line "*Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive*" shows the paradox of human existence: **labour sustains life even as it exhausts it**. Hemingway thus transforms Santiago's fishing voyage into an allegory of man's creative struggle — the same labour that dignifies him also destroys him. The mention of "*the boy keeps me alive*" brings this philosophy into the social realm. Santiago's bond with Manolin symbolizes **generational continuity and the moral transmission of human values**. The old man's mind, not his body, ensures survival beyond age and weakness — echoing the paper's central idea that *mind supersedes age, conquering incapacities of social potential*. Santiago's endurance and reflection reject the social prejudice that associates old age with uselessness; his mind remains fertile, moral, and socially productive even as his body decays. Symbolically, this statement binds **nature, labour, and affection** into one existential circle:

- *Nature* demands struggle.
- *Labour* defines dignity.
- *Affection* gives meaning.

Santiago's acceptance that "everything kills everything else" is not nihilistic; it is a **stoic humanism** — a reconciliation with the order of life. By understanding killing as participation rather than cruelty, Santiago transcends guilt and becomes a moral victor in defeat. The old man justifies his act of killing not as moral transgression but as an act of balance within nature's ordained order. His words embody the moral paradox of human existence: one must destroy to live, and in that destruction lies both guilt and grace. Scholars of ecocriticism note that Santiago's willingness to face death, his union of labor and nature, signals a precocious ecological consciousness in Hemingway's text — one where human life and the natural world are mutually dependent rather than antagonistic. Santiago's belief that "everything kills everything else in some way" echoes Hemingway's stoic vision of the natural order where life feeds upon life, suggesting the futility of moral judgment in survival acts. Santiago's relationship with both the marlin and the boy forms a generational and ecological continuum: the marlin sustains Santiago materially and spiritually, while the boy sustains him emotionally and symbolically — representing the continuity of human spirit beyond defeat.

The experienced Santiago as fisherman points to the man's empirical knowledge of the quality of the fish in market value. His killing is on market validity to the consumer, which he can not ignore or avoid. "**He leaned over the side and pulled loose a piece of the meat where the shark had cut him . He chewed it and noted it's quality and good taste. It was firm and juicy like meat, but it was not red. There was no stringiness in it and he knew that it would bring the highest price in the market.**" Consumer does value what to consume by commodification by professional recognition. This moment captures Santiago's *economic consciousness* — his practical evaluation of the marlin's flesh through sensory judgment mirrors his experiential intelligence, not greed. Hemingway transforms a simple act of tasting into an *epistemological gesture* — Santiago validates his survival struggle through knowledge, not mere instinct. His *mind* triumphs over physical exhaustion, demonstrating the *continuing social potential* of age against capitalist marginalization. The commodification of the fish underscores Santiago's participation in a broader economic system, yet he remains detachedly dignified — understanding value without being consumed by it. Having endured both physical and moral trials in his pursuit, the old man now evaluates the marlin not as a majestic creation but as an economic commodity — an object of trade within a capitalist world that measures value by utility rather than beauty.

The old man is concerned over the possession of the fish. He finds the mutilated fish to go bitten and torn by the sharks. "**They were hateful sharks, bad smelling, scavengers as well as killers, and when they were hungry they would bite at an oar or the rudder of a boat. It was these sharks that would cut the turtles'**

legs and flippers off when the turtles were asleep on the surface , and they would hit a man in the water , if they were hungry , even the man had no smell of fish blood nor of fish slime on him.” May be he sees his society's bourgeois to snatch the possessed property of the production people who do continuous efforts to run the production. The capitalist grab the majority of the production profit with just a conventionally prevailing wages given to the manpower. They can not understand that the production class is the real source of the profit of the commodities. When Santiago observes the sharks as “hateful... scavengers as well as killers,” Hemingway turns the old man’s immediate experience into a powerful social allegory. The sharks become symbols of the predatory capitalist forces that feed on the honest labor of the production class. Santiago’s mutilated marlin, won through immense endurance and skill, represents the fruit of labor seized by the exploiters of society — those who contribute nothing yet consume the largest share of production profit. The old man’s helplessness before the sharks mirrors the worker’s vulnerability before bourgeois domination, where toil and craftsmanship are devalued and reduced to mere commodities. Thus, Santiago’s resistance to the sharks is more than physical; it embodies a **moral and intellectual rebellion** against structural injustice. In this light, Hemingway’s aged fisherman stands as a testament to the dignity of labor — an emblem that *mind and moral integrity transcend physical decline and social marginalization*. Santiago’s hard-won marlin, a product of endurance and craftsmanship, is torn apart by creatures that contribute nothing to its creation. This imagery resonates with Hemingway’s broader critique of a world where the worker’s dignity is consumed by forces of greed and exploitation.

Santiago and Existential/Absurd Affirmation (Camus, Sartre; modern existentialist readings)

Santiago models an existential response to meaninglessness: he faces likely failure, yet chooses action — thereby creating meaning through struggle. That existential stance is crucially cognitive: the mind chooses significance despite bodily frailty. **“I wish it were a dream and that I had never hooked him. I am sorry about it, fish. It makes everything wrong. He stopped and he did not want to look at the fish now. Drained of blood and awash he looked the colour of the silver backing of a mirror and his stripes still showed. I shouldn't have gone so far fish. Neither for you nor for me. I am sorry, fish.”** It points to the forceful and unjust charge over something by the mighty. It looks like that nature itself is playing injustice among its living organs. In one sense, the sharks appear to be the symbol of strength to illegally own somebody's property as the capitalist does over the labour class. The old man gently revolts that getting hold of the giant fish is wrong as it is not ultimately belonging to his purpose fulfilling. It gives the notion of dialectic materialism. He gives his steady timeless effort to catch and kill the giant fish to gain market value, which is disappearing with the presence of the hyenas like sharks to snatch the tasty meats of the fish. He has a heart to realize the injustice played upon him by the powerful. Alone in the deep sea, losing the market of the fish, the old man wants the reality itself to become dream. He does not want to accept the harsh reality which is dragging him down - snatching his merriment through biting the meats of the marlin by the sharks. He looks like expiating himself not to go too far to catch the fish. Loving the beauty of the marlin, he defends himself that he kills the fish for his and the neighbors' livelihood - a socializing role-play in the scarcity of resources. The same old man now acknowledges that he was mistaken in killing the fish, rather he wants it to be a dream. Does he become escapist now in his guilt conscience statement that he should not have killed the fish? Like the old man in the poem "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" who killed the luck providing bird the Albatross whimsically, the old man looks like a revolting man against the injustice of the society and nature, but he can not leave his profession as it becomes morally rich with his down to earth observation of the fish to capture and the fish to mutilate. The sharks embody the **predatory capitalist class**, consuming the fruits of others' labour. Santiago’s tone of repentance transforms his conquest into a **dialectical reflection**: his act of mastery becomes his moment of defeat, not because of failure, but because of **the moral disillusionment of production under inequality**. He perceives the oceanic system—like human society—as unjustly ordered, where the weak produce and the powerful devour.

Ecocritical and Non-Human Relations: Nature as Test and Teacher


When nature resists being an object of commerce, the capitalist valuation system (which marginalizes aged human beings who cannot convert labor into profit) is implicitly criticized. Santiago’s mind recognizes and respects value that capitalism cannot price. Aged and fishing expert, Santiago is a role play of the unending

effort to protect his property the fish. Though questions bitten by himself about his not having killed the fish and gone too far away from the normal fishing nautical miles, he criticizes himself not to have sufficient arms to fight the sharks. **“Now is no time to think of what you do not have. Think of what you can do with what there is. He knew that each of the jerking bumps of the sharks had been meat torn away and that the fish now made a trail for all sharks as wide highway through the sea. He did not want to look at the fish. He knew that half of him had been destroyed.”** It points to his bravery over the sharks and his lonely movements in the sea. He can not be defeated but destroyed as he is possessing dignity. He feels hurt to accept the sharks' tearing the meats of the fish- he is not emotional to dive into the ocean to fight the sharks as he can not be armed enough, rather he will have his life riskiness if he does so. Here he is hopeless to defeat silently to be submissive to nature. He can not be suicidal in saving the marlin as it is unwise and his age suggests so in his empirical knowledge in fishing in the sea against some hostilities. But, he feels tortured mentally to see his fish pieced apart by the sharks. He kills and he hymns the beauty of the marlin -and in his killing - there is moral subjugation to fate for killing everything by everything in a sociological nature and ecological features. But, sharks, killing the dead fish into meats pieces, point to the hyenas biting over hunger and brutality concept that points to the coercion and domination by the capitalist who only sees profit and capture. The old man and the sea is a multilayered and multifaceted and dimensional literary work in social phenomena. Santiago recognizes that half of the marlin, symbolically half of himself, has been destroyed. Yet he refuses despair. Instead, he focuses on what remains possible, demonstrating that dignity persists even amid defeat. It insightfully connects this moment to class struggle and existential endurance — reading the sharks as emblems of capitalist greed preying upon the labourer's production. This Marxian echo is very apt: the sharks, like exploiters, consume the fruits of human labour, while the true producer (Santiago) is left with ruin and exhaustion.

However, from a socioeconomic perspective, this passage dramatizes the tragic awareness of the laborer's powerlessness within exploitative systems. In Marxist terms, the sharks' feast on the marlin is the alienation of labor — the dissipation of a worker's creative effort by forces of greed and domination. The old man's calm reflection thus becomes an act of silent defiance: though stripped of material reward, he preserves moral ownership of his labor.

Psychoanalytic, Autobiographical, and Psychological Readings

Psychoanalytic and autobiographical criticism reads Santiago as both a projection of Hemingway's struggles and as a psyche negotiating loss, pride, and mortality. This dimension elucidates why Santiago's mental life is foregrounded: the text is as much inner landscape as external action. The recurrence of memory, ritual (repairing sails, talking to himself), and symbolic wounds (hands, back) indexes psychological depth. Recent psychoanalytic and existential-psychological studies read Santiago as embodying Hemingway's own crisis, offering evidence of projection and symbolic self-reconstruction. This reading supports the primacy of mind: Santiago's interiority is where meaning occurs — again reinforcing that mental agency (not automatic biological decline) defines dignity.

Aged and conscious, Santiago is characterized how oldness is matured into reality of accepting the reality of fish directed profitless life. He accepts that he is not taking the full and final possession of the fish although he is the ultimate owner of it in terms of labour and moral law. **“Luck is a thing that comes in many forms and who can recognize her.”** But, the conventional society is having its ethical eyes shut to see the old man under such initiative. Ethics, Christianity pass their reward arrow  to the persevering and the old man must deserve it for his indomitable passion in catching such huge fish for his and his neighbours' feeding and business. But the adversity falls in with the appearance of the sharks who can grab the fish's meats top to the bottom leaving nothing saleable or profitable. It is in moral sense injustice. The old man knows it and passes this discrimination into the term luck which can either come to him good or in different forms. In that sense, the old man's faith in luck becomes symbolic of human endurance against social and natural inequalities — where moral victory replaces material possession. The old man's experience at sea becomes a metaphor for the human condition, where effort does not always guarantee reward. Hemingway intentionally personifies *Luck* as “her,” suggesting both seduction and betrayal—an entity that visits selectively and departs without notice. Santiago, having caught the marlin but lost its flesh to sharks, accepts that luck cannot be domesticated by will

or endurance. His recognition of this truth elevates him to a state of stoic enlightenment, where man's dignity rests not on success but on perseverance.

As the old man struggles longer, he is about to show his anger and hatred towards the sharks disguised as capitalists. **"He spat into the ocean and said, "Eat that, galanos. And make a dream you've killed a man."** The sharks are natural fatality to create conflict, having the role of capitalist monsters who snatch others' property through both conventional and structural power. Anguished, the old man spits at the sharks who are tearing off the meat of the fish. They are hunger-mad over the fish which belongs to the old man. It is like *dialectical materialism* in motion — the old man becomes the victim of an exploitative structure where the producers (laborers) are consumed by the system (sharks) they sustain. This interpretation connects strongly with Hemingway's existential and stoic dimensions.

Intergenerational Ethics: Manolin, Recognition, and Pedagogy

The boy-Manolin relationship is keenly social corrective: it shows how the young can validate the old's cognitive authority. This interpersonal ethic is practical and social — not merely symbolic — and works against communal prejudice. Manolin's continued care, learning, and admiration (refusing to let Santiago be reduced to "useless") function as acts of social recognition. Performance- and audience-focused criticism (e.g., readings of Santiago's audiences and social reception) highlight how small communities and younger agents reassess the old man's worth; scholarship on pedagogy and mentorship in the novella supports this emphasis.

The Skeleton as Satire: Material Loss and Moral Gain

The marlin's skeleton — what Santiago ultimately returns with — is a powerful symbolic satire. On the surface it reads as defeat (no flesh, no profit). But read carefully, the skeleton stages a moral victory: the marrow of the struggle remains as testimony. The community's likely reaction — greed, petty calculation about meat — is exposed as a poor measure of value. **"He saw the white naked line of his backbone and the dark mass of the head with the projecting bill and all the nakedness between."** It points to the vacuum and emptiness of the oppressed after being consumed full by the capitalist moron. Whose property is to be consumed by who and what a discrimination is by the natural supremacy! In fact, the sharks may be appearing as brutally strong with ugliness marked all over their body. Whereas the marlin appears beautiful with its possessor having moral education in nature and faces the injustice that he is killing the fish for servitude. The old man becomes watchful till the last devouring of the marlin by the sharks. Perhaps he points to the downfall of the aestheticism in the marlin. Consumers to consume with the capitalist having the major and cream of the production! The naked backbone of the marlin represents the total exhaustion and consumption of value—both materially and morally. Santiago, as the observer and struggler, witnesses the culmination of his labor stripped bare, much like a proletarian whose work is appropriated by forces beyond his control. The sharks' devouring becomes a metaphor for capitalist exploitation, consuming the product of skill, effort, and experience, leaving only skeletal remnants behind. Hemingway's emphasis on the **white naked line and dark mass** juxtaposes beauty and brutality, highlighting the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of work and nature. The marlin retains its inherent nobility and visual grandeur, even as its physical form is destroyed—a reflection of Santiago's moral and spiritual victory amid material defeat. Santiago returns to shore with bones and a ruined prize; onlookers marvel at the size but seldom grasp the moral labor involved. Literary and ironic readings emphasize Hemingway's ambiguous ending as both loss and moral triumph; eco- and Marxist critics have used the final image to critique commodification and to argue that value resides outside market calculations. The skeleton becomes a corrective emblem: loss in the market sense is not the same as moral or intellectual loss. By returning with bones, Santiago undermines the community's capitalist metric and demonstrates that the mind and moral courage are inalienable assets.

Comparative and Global Implications (why this matters beyond Hemingway)

When we place Santiago's narrative against global discourses on aging, labor, and dignity (gerontology, cultural studies), Hemingway's novella functions as a cross-cultural critique: modern societies (not only mid-century America/Cuba) commodify human worth and prematurely erase the social potential of the aged.

Gerontological frameworks on “successful aging” show contemporary interest in rethinking age beyond physical decline; Hemingway’s story anticipates and dramatizes these debates. Santiago’s example offers policy-relevant moral rhetoric: societies would do well to value cognitive agency, mentorship, and ethical labor — not merely market output — when designing social recognition, retirement norms, or intergenerational programs.

Synthesis: Why this reading changes the critical conversation

1. **Shifts the axis from symbol → social critique.** Instead of treating Santiago solely as altarized hero or allegory, this reading insists on his **social function**: he is the text’s argument against equating age with incapacity.
2. **Bridges disciplinary gaps.** By bringing Marxist, gerontological, ecocritical, existential, and psychoanalytic studies into conversation, we show the text’s multidimensional critique of marginalization.
3. **Produces testable inferences.** If critics accept this reading, subsequent empirical studies (literary reception, classroom studies, cross-cultural gerontology) can test whether texts like *The Old Man and the Sea* shift readers’ attitudes toward aging and dignity.

FINDINGS

Reassessing the Myth of Old Age

The study establishes that Santiago’s portrayal contradicts the conventional societal image of old age as weakness and dependency. Rather than embodying decline, Santiago symbolizes resilience, spiritual vitality, and intellectual independence. This challenges the long-standing **ageist prejudice** in capitalist societies (Gullette, 2004; Katz, 2014), where elders are often reduced to “burdens.” Santiago defies this reduction, proving that *mind supersedes age* in shaping human dignity.

Santiago resists society’s dismissive perception of the elderly. Early in the novel, neighbors mock him as “salao, which is the worst form of unlucky”. Yet his reply is not despair but resolve: “*A man can be destroyed but not defeated*”. This aphorism elevates him beyond the stereotype of dependency.

Santiago embodies a counter-narrative: he is “aged in body but youthful in mind,” affirming that dignity derives from cognitive persistence rather than physical vigor. This reading demonstrates that Hemingway anticipates global conversations about the **value of mental agency in aging populations**.

Katz argues that **ageism and neoliberal discourse frame old age as “a problem of productivity”**, where the elderly are valued only insofar as they remain economically active or self-sufficient. He warns that this **reduces aging to a measure of usefulness**, marginalizing those who can no longer perform productive labor.

Santiago as a Critique of Capitalist Superstructures

The old man’s inability to “bring back the flesh” becomes not a failure but a deliberate *satire* of capitalist greed and materialist judgment. This transforms Hemingway’s narrative into a **social critique**: worth is not measured by economic output, but by endurance, integrity, and moral depth.

Santiago’s retaining the fish’s bones symbolize **futility of capitalist greed**—flesh would only have caused envy and chaos as it is insightfully phrased in the abstract, “*a satire to the disrespectful and capitalistically blind society*.” In this light, Santiago is not merely heroic but revolutionary: his endurance becomes a **moral rejection of capitalist valuation**. Santiago’s return with only the marlin’s skeleton exposes capitalist valuation as narrow and destructive. The village sees failure in absence of profit; Santiago reveals that moral and cognitive labor are **invisible yet invaluable**.

Human-Nature Reciprocity Beyond Anthropocentrism

Contrary to readings that see Santiago as a conqueror of nature (Young, 2002), this research uncovers a deeper reciprocal bond between man and the sea, where struggle becomes a form of communion rather than domination. Santiago is not dominating the marlin; he is in communion with it. His triumph and loss together reflect the ecological truth that man is both dependent on and humbled by nature. This expands eco-critical interpretations into the moral domain: *nature both blesses and disciplines human ambition*. The research advances this ecocritical dialogue: Santiago's bond with the marlin reflects **reciprocity**—nature both blesses and disciplines him. The sea disappoints him by taking away the flesh but saves him from capitalist chaos. This is not anthropocentric victory; it is **ecological harmony**, where man is humbled yet dignified. Santiago models a **reciprocal ethic**, demonstrating that human dignity is intertwined with nature. The sea punishes yet protects him, reinforcing that **moral and cognitive strength, not brute force, defines human excellence**.

Reframing Santiago in Existential and Spiritual Dimensions

While existentialist readings stress absurdity and futility, this study argues Santiago's struggle offers a counterpoint: *a metaphysical dignity that transcends existential despair*. His endurance embodies **spiritual resistance**—work becomes worship, persistence becomes prayer. Thus, Santiago is neither absurd hero nor tragic loser; he is the epitome of what Camus called “the struggle toward meaning” but infused with divine blessing rather than nihilism.

Existentialists often cite Santiago as an absurd hero, echoing Camus: his struggle is endless, his triumph void. Indeed, “*He was comfortable but suffering, although he did not admit the suffering at all*” (p. 65). Critics such as Bloom views *The Old Man and the Sea* as Hemingway's **parable of absurd persistence**, where Santiago's endurance becomes an assertion of meaning in a universe resistant to it. Yet the reading goes further: Santiago's suffering is not absurd but **sanctified**. His repeated prayers—“*Hail Marys and Our Fathers*” (p. 83)—show endurance as spiritual devotion. Unlike Camus' Sisyphean hero, Santiago's burden is meaningful: his labour is prayer, his persistence worship. Hemingway thus fuses existential struggle with **Christian metaphysics**, creating a hero both absurd and blessed.

Intergenerational Recognition: Manolin and the Ethics of Mentorship

Manolin's devotion validates Santiago's worth. While society marginalizes the old, the boy provides intergenerational recognition. Santiago's dignity is socially reinforced; mentorship and recognition allow elders to assert value beyond market and physical measures, offering a model for ethical social organization. It points to the human relation, bringing empathy and closeness upon generation legacy with the mixture of the old and the young based on love and respect.

“They beat me, Manolin. They truly beat me.

He did not beat you. Not the fish.

He noticed how pleasant it was to have someone to talk to instead of speaking only to himself and to the sea.

I missed you.

Now we fish together again.

No, I am not lucky. I am not lucky anymore.

The hell with the luck. I will bring the luck with me.

What will your family say?

I do not care. I caught two yesterday. But we will fish together now for I still have much to learn.”

The old man remembers none but the boy in the ocean in his loneliness for fishing and the boy gives him mental strength as soon as he returns home empty handed and declares himself unlucky. The boy knows what the old man means to him in case of learning profession and skills. This is the ecology of sociology upon the socio economic and socio political phases. At the end, humanity wins over capitalism - a cry - a feeling - a

respect -and a healing and caring hand. The boy might be another marlin in the guise of a boy to return to the old man, who has nothing left to live with, with a responsible social bond to take care of. Santiago's dignity is socially reinforced; mentorship and recognition allow elders to assert value beyond market and physical measures, offering a model for ethical social organization. Critics like Carlos Baker (1969) interpret this reunion as Hemingway's affirmation of moral and educational legacy—the passing of knowledge, skill, and courage from one generation to another. Manolin functions as a symbolic conduit for continuity: “Now we fish together again” signifies both practical apprenticeship and emotional restoration. This relational ecology exemplifies Hemingway's nuanced humanism, suggesting that ultimate victory is measured not in material success but in the cultivation of moral, social, and professional bonds. The conversation also highlights the illusion and pragmatism of luck: Santiago rejects passive reliance on fortune (“The hell with the luck. I will bring the luck with me”), embracing active agency and responsibility—a thematic echo throughout the novella, emphasizing human resilience and self-determination. This final scene ties together the ethical, social, and existential strands of the narrative, demonstrating that while nature and society may exact harsh penalties, solidarity and mentorship preserve human dignity and hope.

The Skeleton as Moral and Satirical Symbol

The marlin's skeleton functions as a literary critique of materialism. While villagers see only failure, the moral victory is evident.

Critical perspectives:

- Young (1966), Gurko (1968): the skeleton symbolizes ultimate loss and triumph.
- Baker (1972): Hemingway critiques societal myopia focused on measurable output.

The marlin's skeleton symbolizes both **moral triumph and societal critique**. Santiago's skeletal return reinforces that **cognitive and ethical labor surpasses social and capitalist valuation**, consistent with the theme of the article.

Global and Cross-Theoretical Implications

Santiago's struggle resonates across disciplines:

- Gerontology & Cultural Theory: age is reinterpreted through cognitive agency.
- Marxist & Political Theory: critique of capitalist valuation.
- Existential & Spiritual Philosophy: conscious struggle creates meaning.
- Ecocriticism & Ethics: reciprocal human–nature relationships.

This study synthesizes these perspectives into a coherent argument: Santiago is not merely a hero; he is a universal exemplar of dignity, resistance, and the triumph of mind over social prejudice.

By integrating **recent peer-reviewed studies, cross-disciplinary perspectives, and non-English scholarship**, this research situates Santiago's struggle in both **literary theory and real-world contexts**:

- Cognitive resilience and moral agency highlight age as **an ethical, social, and psychological construct**.
- Ecocritical and Marxist readings underscore the conflict between **moral labor and capitalist evaluation**.
- Existential and spiritual dimensions show that **meaning arises from conscious, ethically guided action**.
- Cultural and translation studies contextualize Santiago's struggle within **Cuban social norms and Latin American literary tradition**.

Santiago is a **universal exemplar of dignity, ethical action, and social critique**, reinforcing the article's thesis:

"Mind supersedes age, conquering incapacities of social potential — a blow to social prejudices."

Contribution of this Research

1. **Thematic Innovation** – It shifts focus from mere heroism to **social prejudices, ageism, and capitalist critique**.
2. **Critical Expansion** – It integrates structuralism, Marxism, existentialism, and ecocriticism in one coherent lens.
3. **Scholarly Relevance** – It provides a fresh, globally resonant interpretation: Santiago as a universal figure resisting not only the sea but also society's misjudgments.
4. **New Reading** – Santiago is neither a failed fisherman nor only a stoic hero; he is a **symbol of human dignity beyond flesh, profit, or productivity**.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that *The Old Man and the Sea* is far more than a tale of heroism or a study of endurance; it is a sophisticated critique of social prejudice, capitalist valuation, and ageist assumptions. Santiago, the aged fisherman, exemplifies the triumph of mind over physical limitation, revealing that cognitive, ethical, and moral capacities are the true measures of human worth.

This study confirms that *The Old Man and the Sea* is far more than a narrative of endurance or adventure; it is a **complex social, moral, and ecological critique**, exemplified through Santiago, whose character embodies **cognitive, ethical, and spiritual agency**. Santiago's struggles **transcend physical limitations**, demonstrating that mental fortitude, moral decision-making, and ethical engagement define true human dignity.

Critical Insights

1. **Mind vs. Age:** Santiago's persistent activity, skill, and moral judgment challenge society's assumption that old age implies incapacity. The repeated observation — "*A man can be destroyed but not defeated*" — affirms that **human dignity resides in conscious engagement, not physical strength**. This observation teaches readers that age should never preclude societal respect or recognition.
2. **Social and Economic Critique:** The novella critiques capitalist logic by showing that material measurement of success — profit, flesh, market value — cannot capture moral and cognitive achievement. Santiago's return with the marlin's skeleton symbolizes the mismatch between human value and societal valuation, offering a pointed lesson: society's definitions of worth are often blind, narrow, and unjust.
3. **Ethics of Nature and Reciprocity:** Santiago's relationship with the sea and the marlin is not merely confrontational. It demonstrates ethical reciprocity, highlighting that humans thrive not by domination, but by respect, restraint, and mindful engagement with nature. Readers are taught that dignity is relational and that moral comprehension extends beyond human society to ecological interdependence.
4. **Intergenerational Validation:** Manolin's recognition of Santiago reinforces the social mechanism needed to resist ageist prejudice. This dynamic teaches an actionable lesson: mentorship, dialogue, and recognition of cognitive competence across generations are vital to preserving human dignity.
5. **Existential and Spiritual Dimensions:** Santiago's struggle is not absurd in the nihilistic sense; it is existentially and spiritually productive. His conscious labor, reflection, and endurance demonstrate that life's meaning is constructed through ethical and purposeful engagement, not merely by success or failure.

These studies highlight the novella's **ongoing relevance**, providing a contemporary lens through which to interpret age, resilience, and morality.

Pedagogical and Scholarly Implications

This research contributes to multiple scholarly domains:

- **Literary Studies:** It integrates formalist, structuralist, Marxist, existentialist, and ecocritical perspectives into a coherent reading that prioritizes social critique and ethical cognition.
- **Gerontology and Cultural Studies:** The study foregrounds age as a variable of **cognitive and moral value rather than physical decline**, offering a framework for cross-cultural interpretation.
- **Policy and Ethics:** By showing how society undervalues elders, the novella prompts reflection on ethical social policies, intergenerational programs, and cultural recognition of aging.

Teaching the Reader

The central lesson of this research is that literature teaches ethics, sociology, and philosophy simultaneously. Santiago's life is not just narrative entertainment; it is a blueprint for social, ecological, and moral literacy. The reader is urged to recognize that:

- Age does not preclude agency.
- Moral and cognitive effort cannot be commodified.
- Ethical engagement with nature is a form of human dignity.
- Recognition across generations strengthens both individuals and society.

Concluding Argument

Ultimately, this study affirms the article's thesis:

“Mind supersedes age, conquering incapacities of social potential — a blow to social prejudices.”

Hemingway's novella, through Santiago, teaches that human dignity is actively constructed, ethically defended, and socially validated. The old man's struggle, endurance, and wisdom transcend mere narrative: they interrogate societal norms, critique capitalist and ageist logics, and model universal moral principles.

Finally, my research reaches to a comprehension as such.

The old man and the sea become one self which is humanism, socialism, and freedom of mind to conquer all the barriers of economic and social status. Hemingway uses definite article “The” and the conjunction “and” to show the equal characteristics of man and nature. The sea is the storehouse of treasures of economy and lives with the old man equalized for bravery, longevity and intergenerational relations.

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