



Deconstruction Santiago's Class Identity in *The Old Man and The Sea*

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Abstract: In the modern era, social status is often judged based on material possessions, yet this perspective does not always reflect an individual's true economic condition. Santiago, the protagonist in *The Old Man and The Sea*, is traditionally perceived as a poor fisherman. However, a deconstructive analysis challenges this notion by revealing contradictions in his social identity. This study aims to analyze Santiago's class position using Jacques Derrida's deconstruction approach combined with Karl Marx's theory of social class. The research employs a qualitative method with textual analysis to examine Santiago's ambiguous status. The findings indicate that although Santiago appears impoverished, his ownership of fishing tools and freedom over his labor resembles traits of the bourgeoisie rather than the proletariat. Additionally, his resilience and self-perception reflect a level of arrogance, contradicting his supposed humility. The study concludes that Santiago's character embodies both proletarian and bourgeois elements, demonstrating how class identity is not fixed but fluid and open to multiple interpretations. This analysis highlights the complexity of literary characters and challenges conventional class distinctions through a deconstructive lens.

Keywords: *Class Identity, Deconstruction, Santiago, Social Class*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, symbolic consumption has become an increasingly prominent phenomenon, where individuals use luxury goods such as iPhones or branded clothing as a sign of social status. According to research from Insider Intelligence (July 2023), as cited in Widiarini & Mulyawan (2024), sales of personal luxury goods worldwide are projected to grow from US\$415.45 billion in 2023 to US\$500 billion in 2027. The United States and China are the two main markets that are estimated to contribute 50.6 percent of total luxury goods sales in 2027. This trend is also in line with the increasing number of middle-class people. Referring to BPS data (2020), there has been a rapid increase in the number of people with middle-class incomes. In addition, data on income from luxury product sales in Indonesia

reached 2,035,000,000 USD (SRD, 2020, as cited in Asprilia & Hami, 2021, p. 77). Symbolic consumption is not merely about economic capability but also reflects social positioning and identity construction. As Soemarsono, Vernanda, Roselawati, & Safitri (2024, p. 348) argue, that the consumption of branded goods and certain lifestyles are used as a means of expressing identity and achieving social acceptance. This concept aligns with Thorstein Veblen's (1899) theory of conspicuous consumption, which posits that luxury goods function primarily as a means to signal social status rather than as a reflection of actual wealth. Veblen argued that the *nouveaux riche* class often displays leisure time and excessive consumption as a form of communicating social status (Bakti, Anisnar,

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& Amin, 2020, p. 88). In the digital age, this phenomenon has evolved into "flexing" on social media, where it is more aimed at building self-image and popularity than reflecting the economic reality of individuals (Wahidah & Khodijah, 2023, p. 23). However, symbolic consumption is not limited to real-world transactions—it also manifests in literary representations, where characters exhibit social positioning through their possessions and lifestyles. This phenomenon can be observed in Ernest Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and The Sea*, where the protagonist, Santiago, is often perceived as a poor fisherman struggling to survive. However, a closer examination reveals a more complex socio-economic dynamic. Although Santiago appears destitute, his ownership of production means such as a boat and fishing gear differentiates him from other fishermen who lack these resources. This raises critical questions: Is Santiago genuinely poor in a material sense, or does his position reflect a nuanced socio-economic reality? Understanding Santiago through a socio-economic lens challenges conventional interpretations of his character and underscores how social status in literature is not static but subject to multiple readings.

In the novel *The Old Man and The Sea*, Santiago is an old fisherman who lives in a small village in Cuba. For 84 consecutive days, he has failed to catch a big fish, and poverty has become an inseparable part of his life. However, Santiago is a humble and tenacious man who still believes that luck will come in time. He lives in limited economic conditions, with a simple house and minimal possessions. Despite his poverty, he never shows despair or complaints. His humility is reflected in the relationships he builds with the people around him, including Manolin, a young man who used to be his apprentice and now works with other fishermen. Although Manolin works elsewhere, he still cares for and respects Santiago, often returning to help and learn from him. One day, Santiago decides to go far out to sea in the hope of catching a big fish. His struggle during this journey is the peak of his determination and courage. Santiago finally manages to catch a giant marlin after a tiring and challenging fight. However, the pride of the big catch does not last long. When he returns to shore, sharks attack and eat most of the marlin's flesh, leaving only its bones. Returning to his village exhausted and with a damaged catch, Santiago maintains

a calm and respectful demeanor. Despite losing most of his catch, the spirit and resilience he displays in fighting the marlin illustrates his inner strength and courage. Santiago is an example of a man who lives in poverty but has extraordinary mental strength and spirit. Through his struggles with the marlin and the shark, Hemingway paints a picture of humility, perseverance, and love for his profession.

The urgency of this research lies in the necessity of examining how social status is constructed and represented in literary works. Using Jacques Derrida's deconstruction approach, this study aims to explore the hidden meanings embedded in Santiago's character and how perceptions of his social status shift depending on interpretive frameworks. Deconstruction allows for an analysis of meaning instability within the narrative, creating space for alternative interpretations beyond fixed categorizations. By applying this method to *The Old Man and The Sea*, this research not only offers a fresh perspective on Hemingway's novel but also contributes to broader socio-economic studies in literature.

Several previous studies have been conducted, such as that conducted by Trung, Anh, & Nhan (2023) that analyzed *The Old Man and The Sea* using the principles of Hemingway's Iceberg and Buddhist concepts such as impermanence and emptiness. They highlighted how much of the story's meaning lies beneath the surface and how Santiago's journey reflects the transient nature of success and failure. This study also shows how combining literature, religion, and culture can help us understand ourselves, especially in difficult times such as a pandemic or disaster. By applying the concept of "Emptiness," this analysis offers a deeper way to embrace the truth of life and understand our relationship with the world.

Another study by Aprilia & Arianto (2021) analyzes binary oppositions in Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch*, focusing on the main character. Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory is used as a post-structuralist approach to unravel common perceptions and explore the differences between two opposing elements. The method employed is qualitative descriptive, where data is drawn from quotes in the novel. The results show the existence of five binary oppositions among the characters in the novel: good vs. evil, valuable vs. worthless, honest vs. dishonest, caring vs. indifferent, and

busy vs. quiet. These binary oppositions reflect the complexity of human character and how societal perceptions of certain traits can be explored more deeply and have opposing sides. This research demonstrates that binary oppositions provide a new perspective on human character in both novels and the real world.

Research by Setyawati (2020) examines the characters Sita, Rama, and Rawana in Cok Sawitri's *Sitayana* using Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory. The results show that the portrayal of these characters significantly differs from the classical version of the Ramayana. Sita, who is typically depicted as an obedient figure, is presented in *Sitayana* as more independent and bold in challenging patriarchy. Meanwhile, Rama is no longer positioned as a noble knight but rather as a weak and doubtful character. Rawana, known in the Ramayana as the evil giant, is transformed in *Sitayana* into a figure full of love and wisdom. Furthermore, this research finds logical inconsistencies in the portrayal of these characters, where their behaviors and roles contradict the stereotypes usually associated with them. This opens up space for new interpretations of the meaning and roles of the characters. The new constructions resulting from this analysis reveal a reversal of the traditional narrative, such as the emergence of a romantic relationship between Sita and Rawana, as well as Sita's rejection of the patriarchal system. This research provides new insights into how classical stories can be reconstructed with more modern and relevant meanings.

Furthermore, Rohana (2021) uses Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory to analyze male characters in Achdiat Karta Mihardja's *Atheis*. This study aims to uncover the shifts and contradictions in the portrayal of atheist and theist characters, as well as how the beliefs and doubts of the main character, Hasan, confront the struggles of faith. Using a descriptive method and content analysis technique, this research shows that although the atheist characters in this novel deny the existence of God, they ultimately experience regret and realize God's existence. This research is relevant to previous studies on literary deconstruction, but the focus on this novel *Atheis* highlights the shift in meaning and binary opposition between atheist and theist,

steadfastness and doubt, as well as narrow-mindedness and clarity. The results of this deconstruction open up new understandings of the spiritual and social struggles within the novel.

Despite the fact that deconstruction has been widely utilized in literary analysis, no prior research has explicitly integrated Derrida's deconstruction with Karl Marx's social class theory in *The Old Man and The Sea*. This study seeks to fill that gap by addressing two main questions: (1) How does Derrida's deconstruction theory reveal the duality of Santiago's character as a representation of both proletariat and bourgeois social classes? (2) How does Santiago's character reflect Marx's concept of social class, particularly in relation to ownership of production means? The primary objective of this study is to analyze Santiago's character through Derrida's deconstruction approach, identifying ambiguities in his social and psychological status. Additionally, this research aims to apply Marx's social class theory to Santiago's character, especially concerning his means of production. By combining Derrida's deconstruction with Marxist analysis, this study provides a deeper understanding of Santiago's character while opening space for multiple interpretations beyond conventional readings.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach that aims to understand social phenomena through in-depth analysis of descriptive data. This approach is based on the philosophy of post-positivism, especially phenomenology, as explained by Sugiyono (2018, as cited in Razali, 2022, p. 6). Sugiyono stated that qualitative research methods are used to test scientific conditions with researchers as the main instruments, where data collection techniques and qualitative analysis emphasize meaning. This method focuses on understanding subjective meanings that emerge from individual experiences or texts, while considering the social and cultural contexts in which the phenomenon occurs. In qualitative research, interpretation plays an important role, because its main goal is to understand and explain complex and diverse realities from the perspective of the subjects being studied. Therefore, this approach is very suitable for literary research, where meaning often depends

on the context, perspective, and interpretation of the reader. This is in line with the purpose of qualitative research, namely to understand how individuals and communities behave, think, and feel the phenomena being studied.

Deconstruction is part of post-modernism, an approach that emerged as a critique of modernism which was considered too rigid and only focused on certain patterns and systems. Post-modernism seeks to shake up modern world civilization, with the sting of "antipative-antagonistic" and the term "uncertainty" towards modernism (Nurnaningsih, 2014, p. 73). This approach offers a new way of seeing reality by considering a broader context. Deconstruction, as part of post-modernism, is not only a critique of modernism which is considered too rigid and systematic, but also offers a new way of looking at reality by considering a broader context. Within this framework, deconstruction was introduced by philosopher Jacques Derrida as a method of text analysis that radically challenges traditional understandings of meaning. Derrida shows that the meaning of a text is never stable or fixed, but is constantly changing, fragmented, and dependent on context. As Derrida explains in Sturrock (2004, p. 21, as cited in Setyawati, 2020), deconstruction is a system of thought that express strong opposition to general ideas. Endaswara (2013, p. 175, as cited in Nugraha, Saraswati, & Widodo, 2020, p. 28) states that deconstruction exists to allow each text to have a variety of meanings. Deconstruction, as a concept rooted in post-modernism, encourages readers to question and analyze the deeper meanings within a text, showing that meaning is not fixed but can change depending on how the text is interpreted. When applied to *The Old Man and The Sea*, a post-modern approach using deconstruction allows to look beyond the straightforward narrative. Santiago, the main character, is no longer seen through a single lens, such as a hero or a tragic figure. Instead, his character can be understood in various ways, depending on the reader's perspective. This approach highlights that meaning in literature is not absolute but fluid and open to multiple interpretations, inviting readers to engage with the text in new and diverse ways.

Karl Marx's theory of social class focuses on the relationship between social classes formed by the ownership of the means of production. Capitalist society is divided into two main opposing groups, namely the bourgeoisie and

the proletariat. The bourgeoisie lives from the ownership of the productive process. While the proletariat is a class without property. They live by selling their labor power (Gaviota, 2023, p. 28). Marx divides society into two main classes: the bourgeoisie, who own the means of production, and the proletariat, who do not own the means of production and must sell their labor power to the bourgeoisie. Basically, according to Marx, the proletariat are "wage slaves". They are systematically exploited by the capitalist class (Gaviota, 2023, p. 28). In this relationship, the bourgeoisie holds control over the economy and society, while the proletariat is exploited by the bourgeoisie for economic gain. Marx saw that this class relationship is not only an economic relationship but also a power relationship. Indeed, economic exploitation is an essential feature of the capitalist mode of production (Gaviota, 2023, p. 28). The bourgeoisie not only controls the means of production, but also the ideological system that shapes the way we understand the world. Thus, this social class structure is exploitative, where the bourgeoisie benefits from the hard work of the proletariat without giving fair compensation.

Research Instrument

The types of instruments used in this study are the researcher itself and documents/literature. According to Tingga (2023, p. 139), the researcher is the most important instrument in qualitative research, because the researcher will provide their subjective views on the focus of the research. In other words, from all the data collected by the researcher, the researcher will draw conclusions based on their personal perspective. Therefore, when conducting qualitative research, the researcher must be validated. In addition, documents/literature are also needed in this study because the primary source of data used is the novel *The Old Man and The Sea*, while the secondary data sources are in the form of journals, articles, books, and other literature related to topic, Derrida's deconstruction theory and Karl Marx's social class. According to Tingga (2023, p. 140) in qualitative research there is a data collection method called literature study, namely studying documents or literature related to the focus of the research as comparative material or to explore what is being researched. Documents are very helpful for researchers in finding



research data so that they fall into the category of research instruments.

Data Collection

The data collection technique used in this study is documentation. Documentation according to Tingga (2023, p. 147) is Documentation comes from the word document, which means written goods, documentation method means the procedure for collecting data by recording existing data. The documentation method is a data collection method used to trace historical data. Documents about people or groups of people, events, or incidents in social situations that are very useful in qualitative research. Documentation techniques or studies are ways of collecting data through archival remains and also include books on opinions, theories, postulates or laws and others related to research problems. In this context, the researcher reads, understands, and studies the novel *The Old Man and The Sea* as well as secondary sources that support the topic and discussion of deconstruction and social class theory.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is carried out by describing and interpreting data collected from the novel and secondary sources. The data analysis process in this study involved several stages, namely: (1) Reading and understanding the novel *The Old Man and The Sea* by Ernest Hemingway in depth, (2) Creating binary oppositions, (3) Focusing the analysis on the minor side of the binary opposition, namely aspects that are often ignored or considered inferior, to reveal the hidden meaning in Santiago's character, (4) Relating the results of the analysis findings to Karl Marx's social class theory, especially related to the concept of class in the ownership process. (5) Drawing conclusions from the results of the analysis, by providing a deeper interpretation of Santiago's class identity and how it reflects the broader social structure. This data analysis process takes place iteratively during and after data collection, with the aim of finding important patterns in the representation of a particular social class. Data reduction is done by selecting the data that is most relevant to the research topic, while data classification helps in finding patterns and generalizations related to social class theory.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Characteristics	
Proletariat	Bourgeoisie
Poor	Rich
Humble	Arrogant
Alienated	Unalienated

Santiago in the novel *The Old Man and The Sea* is depicted as a poor character, living in a small hut in Cuba, and having a humble attitude. Therefore, the binary opposition that can be used to reverse the hierarchy is to change Santiago's social and psychological nature or condition from poor to rich, from humble to arrogant and from alienated to Unalienated. Derrida's deconstruction theory is used as an analytical tool in this case. Deconstruction is not only an attempt to overcome the limitations of understanding meaning, but also to show that texts always have an ambiguous nature or have two sides of meaning. It is common for a text to always be ambiguous or have two faces. If we think about a meaning and draw conclusions from that meaning, we often get another meaning that is different from the meaning we previously believed. Al-Fayyadl (2005, p. 75 as cited in Kurniawati, Zuriyati, & Saifurrohman, 2020, p. 28) states that the meaning that is often not previously imagined because it could be that the meaning is secondary and not desired by the author. From the results of intensive reading of data sources, the dominant text in the character of Santiago was obtained, then entered the stage of reversing the hierarchy of binary opposition, namely the character of Santiago who is higher class and arrogant. This stage is to undermine the initial view of Santiago's character by presenting an underdog text as the basis for rejecting the dominant text.

Discussion

Santiago as Owner of mean of production

The binary opposition of Santiago's character regarding the "higher class" can be seen through his ownership of fishing equipment. The upper class consists of those who own the means of production (Suseno,

2016, p. 120), which indicates that even though he appears economically deficient, he still possesses important assets for fishing. Santiago owns skiffs (small boats) used for fishing:

"He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream, and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish" (Hemingway, 1952, p. 1)

In addition to that, Santiago also possesses fishing lines, harpoons, and sails:

"It made the boy sad to see the old man come in each day with his skiff empty and he always went down to help him carry either the coiled lines or the gaff and harpoon and the sail that was furled around the mast" (Hemingway, 1952, p. 1).

The ownership of these tools indicates that even though Santiago does not earn anything, he still possesses significant capital in his fishing endeavors. Although a factory owner may not have income if the factory is not operating, they can still survive for a long time. They can live off the capital accumulated during the factory's operation and can sell the factory if necessary (Suseno, 2016, p. 120). Based on this quote, even though Santiago is traditionally depicted as someone poor, he still owns means of production, such as his fishing gear and small boat. This aligns with Karl Marx's social class theory, which states that ownership of the means of production is a characteristic of the bourgeoisie. Although Santiago is often portrayed as economically limited, he actually possesses the means of production that allow him to sustain himself. Through a deconstruction approach, it can be seen that his fishing gear and boat function similarly to the capital or assets of a factory owner. Just as a factory owner can continue to survive on their assets even when production halts, Santiago can also persevere due to his ownership of these tools, despite appearing limited from a structuralist economic perspective. In the binary opposition, he can be viewed as part of the upper class because he possesses means of production.

Santiago and Arrogance

In *The Old Man and The Sea*, Santiago is generally portrayed as a humble, tenacious, and resilient figure, rather than arrogant. However, after a reversal of hierarchy, it becomes evident

that Santiago exhibits signs of arrogance. Several quotes reflect Santiago's arrogant side, such as when he states:

"But man is not made for defeat," he said. "A man can be destroyed but not defeated" (Hemingway, 1952, p. 38).

This quote reflects Santiago's strong belief in his own resilience and capabilities. While this is often interpreted as a reflection of his indomitable spirit, it can also be seen as a statement of his pride and arrogance, in his refusal to accept failure. Another instance that subtly indicates Santiago's arrogance is found in his internal monologue, where he expresses confidence in his abilities as a fisherman. For example, he reflects on his skills compared to other fishermen:

"I may not be as strong as I think," the old man said. "But I know many tricks and I have resolution" (Hemingway, 1952, p. 8).

In this statement, Santiago acknowledges his limitations in physical strength but quickly reassures himself of his extensive knowledge and perseverance. This can be interpreted as a form of subtle arrogance, where he believes that his experience and determination set him apart from others. This statement reflects the belief that, despite his physical limitations, his experience (or intellectual capital) and ability to employ "tricks" in his work give him an advantage. Suseno (2016, p. 123) states that the upper class inherently seeks to maintain the status quo, opposing any changes in the power structure. Given their established position, any change must threaten their standing. In this regard, Santiago displays a high level of confidence in his skills and experience, even as he acknowledges that his physicality is not what it once was. Similar to the bourgeois class that maintains power by controlling the means of production, Santiago relies on his "tricks" and steadfastness to continue fishing and persevere, despite his advanced age. Santiago's arrogance becomes apparent when he believes that his skills are sufficient to overcome the physical weaknesses that accompany aging. This parallels how the bourgeois feel they can still control circumstances even in the face of changes that could undermine their position. The bourgeois will strive to maintain the status quo to remain in power, much like Santiago,



who remains confident in his ability to endure despite increasingly challenging conditions. Thus, Santiago's confidence in his abilities can be viewed as a form of arrogance akin to the bourgeoisie in Marxist theory. Both share the conviction that their experience and skills are sufficient to confront any challenge, despite the threats that could alter their positions.

In *The Old Man and The Sea*, aside from the use of binary opposition that reverses Santiago's social and psychological conditions from poor to wealthy, and from humble to arrogant, there is further evidence supporting Santiago as a reflection of the high class. This aligns with Derrida's concept of deconstruction, which posits that texts are always ambiguous and paradoxical. Mantiri & Markainas (2011, p. 71) states that deconstruction proves that the seeds of a text's destruction lie within the text itself, manifesting as inconsistencies and paradoxes in the use of premises and concepts. In the novel *The Old Man and The Sea*, Santiago is structurally depicted as a poor fisherman. However, upon deeper examination through Marxist social class theory, there is a dissonance in his characterization. Santiago is not bound by conventional working hours, a trait typically associated with the proletariat. Instead, he appears to have a freedom of time more akin to that of the bourgeois.

Santiago's Time Freedom and Social Class

Santiago is portrayed as someone who is not restricted by conventional working hours (Alienated) but instead follows the rhythms of nature and his instincts as a fisherman. This is evident in various moments when Santiago continues to fish despite having gone "*eighty-four days now without taking a fish*" (Hemingway, 1952, p. 1), indicating that he is not subject to the time constraints typical of most workers. In the context of social class theory, Santiago's freedom from rigid working hours can be linked to the characteristics of the bourgeois class. The bourgeois, who own the means of production, often have the freedom to determine their working hours, unbound by the strict routines faced by the proletariat. As stated by Suseno (2016, p. 120), the owners can set conditions for those who want to work, not the other way around. Santiago, although economically depicted as a poor fisherman, exhibits similarities to the bourgeois class in

terms of work freedom. When he rows steadily and calmly, without haste or concern for time, as illustrated in the quote:

"He was rowing steadily and it was no effort for him since he kept well within his speed and the surface of the ocean was flat except for the occasional swirls of the current" (Hemingway, 1952, p. 10).

This emphasizes that Santiago is not constrained by time in his work, mirroring the temporal freedom enjoyed by the bourgeois. This reflects Santiago's life as being in harmony with the cycles of nature, rather than bound by the rules of working hours. Santiago's freedom from rigid time constraints parallels the position of the bourgeois, who work based on their own control rather than the pressures of time. Therefore, despite Santiago often being interpreted as belonging to the lower class in traditional/structural readings, he demonstrates bourgeois characteristics in terms of work freedom and control over his working methods.

Manolin as a representation of the proletariat class

A discussion of the bourgeoisie would be incomplete without addressing the proletariat, as these two opposing social classes are integral to the structure of society. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, this class distinction is reflected through its characters. Besides Santiago, there is Manolin, a young boy often referred to as Santiago's apprentice or assistant. Manolin is not merely a companion; he also represents the working class. As a child taught to work hard from a young age, Manolin lacks the full freedom to determine his own fate. He is bound by a work structure controlled by capitalists, which forces him to submit to the authority around him, whether from Santiago or other fishermen. In this novel, Manolin can be viewed as a proletarian, as indicated by his transition from working with Santiago to other fishermen:

"and the boy had gone at their orders in another boat which caught three good fish the first week" (Hemingway, 1952, p. 1).

This decision was not of Manolin's choosing but rather that of his family, reflecting his social class position. As stated by Suseno (2016, p. 124), the lower classes have an interest in

change. Because they are oppressed, any change represents progress for them. For them, every change must signify liberation. Manolin's transition from working with Santiago to another fisherman represents an interest in change, a hallmark of the lower classes. Furthermore, Manolin's status as a proletarian is evident in his lack of means of production, which sets him apart from Santiago. While Santiago possesses a boat and equipment that enable him to catch fish, Manolin lacks production tools and relies on the authority of the adults around him. This indicates Manolin's powerlessness as part of the working class, bound within a larger system that dictates their fates.

Ambiguity in Santiago's Character

By employing Derrida's deconstruction approach alongside a Marxist perspective, the analysis of Santiago's character in *The Old Man and The Sea* reveals that the meaning of the text is much deeper and more complex than understood through traditional interpretation. Santiago, often seen as a poor and humble figure, can be re-read as a bourgeois who owns the means of production and has freedom in his work. On the other hand, Manolin functions as a representation of the proletariat, bound to a larger social structure. Deconstruction reveals the ambiguity and inconsistency within the text, allowing readers to see that meanings often perceived as certain are actually relative and always open to reinterpretation.

CONCLUSION

Using Derrida's deconstructive approach, Santiago's character in *The Old Man and the Sea* can be interpreted through various diverse and even contradictory perspectives. Deconstruction, as a method of analysis, opens up opportunities to challenge the single or fixed view of Santiago who has so far been identified as a poor fisherman from the lower class. In the traditional view, Santiago is often depicted as a humble, persistent, and simple figure, a proletarian who struggles against the harshness of life. However, the deconstructive approach reveals new layers of meaning that were previously hidden, showing that Santiago can actually be seen as a figure closer to the bourgeois class. With his ownership of the means of production such as boats and fishing equipment, as well as control over his time and method of work, Santiago does not fully fit the

stereotype of a poor fisherman who lives without freedom. Instead, he shows bourgeois characteristics, because although economically he appears simple, his control over resources and freedom to organize his own life reflect upper-class values. In this context, Santiago is not only a symbol of a simple hard worker, but also a figure who has the autonomy and independence that are usually associated with the bourgeois class. Thus, Santiago is a figure full of ambiguity and has no fixed meaning. He is a figure that is open to many interpretations, depending on the point of view used. His understanding is not limited to one particular social class or character category, but always has the potential to be interpreted in various ways. This shows that the understanding of Santiago is fluid and changing, showing how literary characters can reflect complex and layered social dynamics. This deconstructive approach provides rich and diverse interpretative freedom for characters in literature. In addition to adding depth to the reading of *The Old Man and the Sea*, this analysis also opens up space to understand other literary characters in a more flexible way, where their identities and roles in the story do not have to be limited by fixed categories. This also encourages readers to explore other dimensions in the character that may have been hidden so far, thus opening up opportunities for broader and more dynamic interpretations.

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