

Chapter I

Introduction

This chapter starts with Santiago's habit of calling the sea "*la mar*." From this, the chapter develops the research problem, guiding questions, and objectives for the study. It covers the study's background, problem identification, limitations, research questions and objectives based on Greimas's actantial model and Warren's ecofeminist theory, and finally the significance of the study.

1.1. Research Background

Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, published in 1952, stands as one of the author's most celebrated works. The novella tells the story of Santiago, an elderly Cuban fisherman who has gone eighty-four days without catching a single fish. Because of this long period of misfortune, he is called "*Salao*," a Spanish term meaning "the worst kind of unlucky." Despite his hardship, Santiago remains patient and determined. He believes that his fortune will eventually change and continues to trust in his strength and perseverance. With quiet resolve, he sails farther than other fisherman, venturing deep into the sea where he struggles alone against a giant marlin after several exhausting days.

At first, *The Old Man and the Sea* seems to be a story about endurance and courage against nature. However, it also explores a deeper relationship or respect, balance, and spiritual connection between people and the natural world. Santiago sensitivity by calling the sea "*la mar*," the feminine form in Spanish, which he links to affection and respect instead of conquest. Hemingway writes, "*He always*

thought of the sea as la mar, which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her.” (p. 29)

This passage shows that Santiago sees the sea as a living being with its own soul, emotions, and dignity. To him, the sea is not just a place to conquer but a companion in his solitude and struggle. His talks with the sea, the marlin, and the birds reveal a deep sense of companionship that goes beyond human limits. He tells the marlin, *“I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends.”* (p. 54)

His words reveal a complex relationship between reverence and survival. Although Santiago must kill the marlin to live, his act is guided not by greed but by necessity and respect. From an ecofeminist perspective, this connection reflects the feminine qualities of nature nurturing yet strong, gentle yet powerful qualities that stand in contrast to the patriarchal way of thinking that seeks control and domination over the natural world (Warren, 2000, p. 22-24)

Santiago’s respect for the sea shows an ecological awareness that is different from a human-centered view. This matches the main ideas of ecofeminism, which say that the oppression of nature and women both come from systems of domination. Carolyn Merchant (1980, pp. 1-3), in *The Death of Nature*, says that environmental destruction comes from a patriarchal view that treats nature as something to exploit, not as a living being. From this angle, *The Old Man and the Sea* can be seen as Hemingway’s quiet challenge to that view, offering a deep look at ecological harmony and the feminine side of nature. Santiago’s bond with La

Mar shows Hemingway's care for the natural world and his critique of human domination. By making the sea a feminine figure worthy of love and respect, Hemingway gives us a vision of nature based on care, equality, and harmony.

Several studies on *The Old Man and the Sea* have approached the novella from various angles, including ecocriticism, posthumanism, eco-masculinity, and ecofeminist critique. Most of them have centered on themes of conflict, contradiction, or ambivalence in the human-nature relationship, often concluding that Santiago either fails to overcome his patriarchal tendencies fully or remains caught between respect and conquest. What has received less attention is the possibility that the novella, when read through a structural lens, tells a different story. One in which the relationship between Santiago and the sea is not defined by domination but by a quiet and evolving harmony. The present study proceeds from the belief that this harmony, rather than being absent as a background of the story, has not yet been fully seen.

Building on this reading, the present study examines how *The Old Man and the Sea* portrays a harmonious relationship between human beings and nature through Santiago's connection with the sea. To do so, the analysis combines two theoretical perspectives, namely A. J. Greimas's actantial model, which maps the relational roles (actants) that structure a narrative, and Karen J. Warren's ecofeminist theory, which interprets the ethical and gendered dimensions of human-nature relationships. Greimas's model allows natural elements such as the sea to be treated as active narrative roles rather than mere background. At the same

time, Warren's framework provides the ethical lens for interpreting those roles. Both theories are discussed in greater detail in chapter II.

Drawing on both theories, this study argues that Hemingway's portrayal of the sea as a feminine figure worthy of love and respect quietly challenges the idea that nature is merely something to be used. The next sections explain the main problems, questions, and goals of this research.

1.2. Identification of the Problems

The Old Man and the Sea is not just a story about endurance and perseverance; it also offers a deep reflection on the relationship between people and the natural world. Santiago's view of the sea as *la mar*, a feminine presence he respects and loves, provides a symbolic contrast to the patriarchal view that often sees nature as something to control or dominate.

This portrayal invites a deeper analysis from the perspective of ecofeminism, a theory that connects the domination of women and the exploitation of nature in patriarchal systems. This research aims to explore the values of harmony and mutual respect between humans and nature as shown in Hemingway's novella. Furthermore, this study aims to uncover how the narrative structure itself traces the evolving relationship between Santiago and the sea. It also examines how that evolution can be interpreted through an ecofeminist lens that challenges domination and instead promotes interconnection, empathy and balance between humanity and the natural environment.

1.3. Limitation of the Problems

This study only analyzes Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* using A. J. Greimas's actantial model and Karen J. Warren's ecofeminist theory. It focuses on how the story's structure shows a harmonious relationship between people and nature, especially the sea, through Santiago's character.

This research is limited to exploring the themes and structure in this single literary work that represent ecofeminist values. The findings are not meant to generalize about all of Hemingway's writing, but instead to offer an interpretation of how *The Old Man and the Sea* expresses harmony, empathy, and respect between human and nature.

1.4. Research Questions

1. How is the narrative structure of *The Old Man and the Sea* constructed based on A. J. Greimas's Actantial Model and Functional Analysis?
2. How does the actantial roles and functional represent the evolving relationship between Santiago and the natural world, particularly the sea?
3. How can this evolving human nature relationship be interpreted through Karen J. Warren's ecofeminist perspective?

1.5. Objectives of the Study

1. To identify and analyze the narrative structure of *The Old Man and the Sea* based on A. J. Greimas's actantial model, with attention to the six actantial functions, namely subject, object, sender, receiver, helper, and opponent, as represented within the story and the functional structure.

2. To examine how the identified actantial roles and functional structure portray the development of Santiago's relationship with the natural world, especially the sea from dependence and struggle toward respect, recognition and acceptance.
3. To interpret the development of Santiago's relationship with the natural world through the lens of Karen J. Warren's ecofeminism, particularly by examining how the relationship relates to the logic of domination, interconnected oppressions, and an ethics of care.

1.6. Significance of the Study

1.6.1. Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to the development of literary analysis that integrates structural theory and ecofeminism, by combining Karen J. Warren's ecofeminist theory with A. J. Greimas's actantial model and functional analysis, this research offers a fresh perspective on understanding the relationship between human beings and the natural world through the narrative structures that shape meaning within the text.

1.6.2. Practical Significance

This study may serve as a useful reference for students and future researchers who are interested in exploring the relationship between humans and nature in literary works through an ecofeminist approach. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research will encourage greater awareness of Warren's ethics of care and the interconnectedness between human beings and their

surrounding environment, rather than a relationship grounded in domination.