Cowboys and Gauchos Roaming the Plains:
An Inter-American Comparison

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AUTHOR’S DECLARATION

Unless otherwise indicated in the text or references, or acknowledged above, this thesis is entirely the product of my own scholarly work. Any inaccuracies of fact or faults in reasoning are my own and accordingly I take full responsibility. This thesis has not been submitted either in whole or part, for a degree at this or any other university or institution. This is to certify that the printed version is equivalent to the submitted electronic one.
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Introduction

When dealing with America, its history and its culture, there is a high likelihood that one will come across one of its most important and original trademarks – the herdsman. The cowboy has enjoyed international recognition ever since his rise in American literature and is still popular today. The gaucho, in contrast, belongs to the larger number of herdsmen in North and South America whose popularity remains at a national level. Nevertheless, both the cowboy and the gaucho played an important role when it comes to shaping American culture as we know it. Even though their herdsman existence has come to an end, they keep roaming the plains in our minds. The focus of this diploma thesis lies on the cowboys and gauchos and their portrayal in the two novels *All the Pretty Horses* by Cormac McCarthy and *Don Segundo Sombra* by Ricardo Güiraldes. Although *All the Pretty Horses* also deals with the Mexican vaquero, I decided to leave the Mexican herdsman out of my analysis of the two novels and will just occasionally mention him with reference to the cowboy.

My principal motivation behind writing this diploma thesis was the focus of my two studies. As my teacher education is focused on the English and Spanish languages at the Karl Franzens University, Graz, I was particularly interested in looking at a topic that concerns both the Hispanic and the Anglophone worlds. Reading *All the Pretty Horses* by Cormac McCarthy I came across the topic of the North American cowboys and decided to look for a novel that serves as a South American counterpart to McCarthy’s novel and that portrays the gauchos. Being one of the most important works in Argentinian literature I chose Güiraldes’s *Don Segundo Sombra*. While focusing on the two novels what particularly aroused my interest was in which ways the cowboys and the gauchos compare to each other. Since the cowboy and the gaucho are representative of the North and South American worlds, respectively, an Inter-American perspective on these two characters became the framework for my diploma thesis.

This Inter-American perspective on the two novels offers the opportunity to focus on one aspect that concerns both American hemispheres and that is dealt with by two literatures of the Americas, namely by the U.S. American and Latin American literatures. Since the herdsman has had an important impact on both North and South America as far as their histories, cultures and literatures are concerned, and, therefore, can be regarded a symbol of Americanness he perfectly serves for such an Inter-American comparison.

Comparing *All the Pretty Horses* and *Don Segundo Sombra* I picked out three aspects for my analysis of the two novels, the first one focusing on the representation of the herdsmen in
Güiraldes’s and McCarthy’s works. The second aspect deals with masculinity and masculine identity as represented in the two novels and the third aspect concerns the classification of the two novels as Bildungsromane. In focusing on these aspects, the following questions arose, which I tried to answer in my diploma thesis: how are the herdsmen represented and does literary idealization play a role in their representation? How do the protagonists claim a masculine identity? What characteristics of the Bildungsroman do the novels have and do they follow the guidelines of the European Bildungsroman model?

For the analysis I extracted these three aspects from the novels and compared them with respect to both All the Pretty Horses and Don Segundo Sombra. In this comparative analysis I examined the similarities and differences between the two works and could find interesting results.
1. The American Herdsmen: The Cowboy, the Gaucho, and their Representation in Culture and Literature

The cowboy and his roaming about in the Wild West have been associated with freedom, bravery and virtuousness ever since his appearance in literature, film and art. Most people, when thinking about cowboys and the cowboy tradition, immediately recall the various Western movies and novels, such as the Karl-May film adaptations, and famous Hollywood cowboys such as John Wayne. Although Western movies per se have largely disappeared from screens in the 21st century, the cowboy figure – with respect to its literary representation – has undeniably left a mark in people’s consciousness. However, it is important to point out that the idea of the cowboy and his lifestyle, as promoted through mainstream culture and literature, is a romanticized version of reality. It can be said that this idealized depiction of a lasso-throwing hero does not necessarily provide insight into the long history and tradition of the horsemen of the Americas. Furthermore, we must not forget that the concept of the cowman is not unique to the United States and the Wild West. There are also various counterparts to the cowboy who share his history and evolution, such as the gauchos of Argentina, “the huasos of Chile, the gaúchos of Brazil, the vaqueros of Mexico, the morochucos of Bolivia, the chalanes of Peru, the llaneros of Venezuela and Colombia” (Tinker 1962: 191). Tinker (ibid.: 191) refers to them as “brothers under the skin” and emphasizes that “no groups could be more alike than the horsemen of the New World”. However, while the cowboy has become an object of international recognition, his Latin American fellows have faded into the background with respect to international popularity. Now leaving aside the literary component, it must be emphasized that the American herdsmen, not only in reference to the cowboys, have considerably influenced not only the culture, but also the economy and national awareness on both continents. Furthermore, they undeniably played an important role in the history of the Americas and helped shaping the North- and South American worlds as we find them today. The aim of this chapter is to give an insight into the origins and evolution of the American herdsmen, as well as to provide information about the cowboy, the vaquero and the gaucho. In addition, this chapter will focus on the literary idealization of the cowboy and the gaucho in order to provide a basis for my analysis of the representation of these two herdsmen in the novels *All the Pretty Horses* and *Don Segundo Sombra*. 
1.1. Origins and Evolution of the American Herdsman

Let us now take a closer look at the North and South American herdsmen and their function from a historical point of view. Despite their frequent epic and adventurous depiction in literature, cowboys, gauchos and their like-minded fellows in the other countries of the Americas were originally simple herdsmen, cattle drivers and rural workers. Their main duties did not include being horse-riding heroes and roaming the plains as free, independent spirits, but mostly comprised hard work, driving cattle over large distances and being loyal to their masters. The American herdsman’s origins date back to as early as the colonialization of the New World and the formation of the Latin American territories under Spanish rule. However, before retracing the history of the herdsman, we must focus on the animals that led to his emergence as an indispensable part of American history. After Christopher Columbus’ arrival in what was later to become America in 1494, European cattle and horses got introduced to the new continent by transporting them on ships from Spain across the Atlantic Ocean (cf. Slatta 2006: 32). According to Dary (1982: 4-5) these “creatures […] were destined to change the face of the New World and bring about a revolution comparable in impact to that of the Industrial Revolution nearly three centuries later.” Although initially many animals died on the long and exhausting sea travels, the Spaniards finally managed to breed them in the new settlements and the number of cattle soon multiplied, resulting in free-roaming cattle that “became wild” (cf. ibid.: 5). Besides the fact that cattle were generally viewed as a person’s capital until about 1500, the reasons that the practice of cattle breeding was so valued in the New World was due to the meat the animals provided, as well as hides and tallow (cf. ibid.: 5, 8). In the foreword of Tinker’s book McGann points out that cattle ranching was highly valued as it generally meant having “dominion over the largest extents of land” (Tinker 1967: n.p.). Due to the rapidly growing number of cattle during the 16th century rustling became a serious problem for the Spaniards and their livestock. However, since the Spaniards were not willing to watch and herd their own cattle, they made the non-Spaniards, mainly the Natives and the African-American, carry out all the necessary work. These circumstances led to the emergence of the vaquero, the Latin American herdsman, who also developed from the Spanish caballero¹ (cf. Dary 1982: 13; cf. Stacy, ed. 2003: 233). The vaquero’s duties were, among others, driving cattle from one place to another, rounding up cattle and branding calves. (cf. Dary 1982: 18,23). His equipment included most of the elements we nowadays associate with the cowboy – horses, the lasso, or

¹ Caballeros (caballo is Spanish for ‘horse’) were horsemen and herdsmen in Andalusia, Spain. They generally had a better reputation and social status than their descendants, the vaqueros (cf. Stacy, ed. 2003: 233).
lazo in Spanish, the lariat\(^2\), the spurs, the saddle, and other instruments (cf. ibid.: 14,31,35).

Dary (1982: 13) explains that “the early vaquero was not a very romantic figure”. He proceeds to say that “Spaniards and Mexicans have never viewed him as Americans north of the Rio Grande later viewed the traditional cowboy”. The vaquero “was about as far down in the social order as one could get” (Dary 1982: 13). He worked and lived on haciendas\(^3\) and his profession was passed on from generation to generation (cf. ibid.: 27). Nevertheless, despite his low social status the vaquero had become indispensable for the cattle business by the end of the 16\(^{th}\) century (cf. ibid.: 26). Today vaqueros can still be found in Mexico, especially in the North of the country. However, their work and duties have changed due to modern ranching techniques and instead of roaming about and driving cattle on the Mexican plains, their existence is now bound to the haciendas which they work at (cf. Dary 1982.: 27). Dary (ibid.: 27) argues that the haciendas might soon disappear, as well, since “most such ranches have been reduced in size, the land redistributed by the Mexican government, and modern ranching methods and techniques have been introduced”.

### 1.2. The North American Cowboy as a Popular Icon

It is important to point out that the cowboy was not born in the south and southwest of the United States. Tinker (1967: n.p.) explains that “the North American cowboy owed everything to Spain, not only the tools and techniques of his trade, but the very economic necessity that brought him into being”. As cattle raising in New Spain’s northern territories, such as in what today are known as Arizona, New Mexico, California and Texas, in the 16\(^{th}\) century did not flourish the same way it did in the southern regions and there was a lack of people to carry out the respective work, the Spaniards conducted missions in these territories. These missions, which primarily served the purpose to convert Natives to the Christian faith, were also expected to make the new converts loyal servants of the crown. Consequently, as aforementioned, these Natives and mestizos would become vaqueros working on the haciendas established by the Spaniards (cf. Dary 1982: 35). As far as the cattle and the horses, which were crucial for the Spaniards’ intentions, are concerned, they had already been introduced to the Northern territories by explorers such as DeSoto and Cortez ever since the 16\(^{th}\) century (cf. Tinker 1967: n.p.). According to Tinker (1967: n.p.) “the Jesuits and explorers […] spread the descendants

\(^2\)”a long light rope (as of hemp or leather) used with a running noose to catch livestock or with or without the noose to tether grazing animals” (www.merriam-webster.com, online) [2019, April 18]

\(^3\)Spanish word to refer to the large ranches in Latin and South America
of these animals until wild cattle and feral horses teemed on the great prairies north of the Rio Grande [...]”. After Mexico became independent from New Spain in 1821, several North Americans came to these regions and equally stocked wild cattle in their own ranches they had established there (cf. Tinker 1967: n.p.). With the annexation of Texas and other previously Mexican owned territories in the United States, the animals as well as the Mexican methods of cattle ranching fell into the hands of the Anglo-Saxons (cf. Rünzler 1995: 117). This meant that there was also an increased need for someone to watch and herd their livestock, there was again a need for herdsmen (cf. Tinker 1967: n.p.). According to Rünzler (cf. 1995: 117) the men that were herding cattle in this area were the first real American cowboys. These men, however, had to learn everything they needed to know from the Mexican vaquero, for instance how to ride herds, break feral horses and work with a herdsman’s equipment (cf. ibid: n.p.). From the 1850s onward cattle ranching became more and more economically relevant in the south and southwest of the United States and was once again propelled after the Civil War (cf. Rünzler 1995: 118-119). Consequently, driving cattle across large distances became an economic necessity. The cowboy was a rising figure in the light of all these changes. He was entrusted with large herds of animals which he had to drive from one place to another. On an average day he had to “ride the range, inspect the cattle, rope and doctor the calves for screw-worm, [...] turn back the stock that had drifted too far away, and take care of a dozen other chores” (Tinker 1967: n.p.). Cowboys worked in groups and were also particularly busy during the spring and fall round-ups, in which they rode out, rounded up feral cattle and branded the calves. There were several dangers a cowboy was faced with, such as stampedes provoked by Natives and cattle rustlers, cyclones and dangerous rivers they had to cross (cf. ibid.: n.p.). However, he was usually very skilled and knew all the tricks to survive life-threatening situations. Loyalty, bravery and team spirit were the cowboy’s virtues, as we can see in the following quote in which Tinker describes a cowboy’s qualities:

In addition to his courage, he had two admirable virtues; he never deserted a companion in danger, nor was disloyal to his employer, even though in his relations with his boss there was never any trace of subservience. His talk was salty and vivid, his sense of humor keen. For forty dollars a month, board, and lodging, he was ready to work the clock around, and risk his life as often as necessary. His fare was plain but nourishing, and he washed it down with many cups of black coffee. (ibid.: n.p.)

The cowboy experienced his heyday along with the cattle ranching business in the United States. However, the big cattle ranching boom did not last long and ended only a few decades after it had started, in the 1890s, when small farmers took over and fenced the “free public lands where ranchers had pastured their herds without expense” (Tinker 1967: n.p.). Furthermore,
cattle drives became obsolete with the introduction of the railroad in the southwest or were no longer possible due to the fencing of the Plains. Consequently, the cowboys’ work and duties changed. Sharing the fate of the vaquero, instead of roaming the plains and driving cattle over large distances he gradually turned into a resident herdsman (cf. Rünzler 1995: 122/ Tinker 1967: n.p.). Towards the end of the 19th century the cowboy in his original function was fading. According to Tinker (1967: n.p.) “the changed conditions have metamorphosed the cowboy into a farm hand […].” Other than today’s version of the rodeo in which the cowboy is still celebrated and the ‘cowboy attitude’ that many farmers in the south and southwest of the U.S. have kept, what remains of the cowboy is his romanticized and idealized depiction in mainstream culture and literature.

Despite the cowboy’s disappearance at the beginning of the 20th century, he has remained alive in books, movies, advertisements and, above all, in our consciousness. In fact, the cowboy has become a symbolic figure of bravery, adventurousness, virtuousness and righteousness in our ideals. Whenever we think about cowboys, associations, such as horses, heroes, freedom, fighting evil, etc. come to mind. Other common associations are “[…] Indians, gunslingers, and sheriffs involved in gunfights, cattle drives and wagon trains” (Agnew 2015: 5). Ever since the 19th century the cowboy has featured as the leading character of numerous Western novels and movies which all have something in common – they are based on a myth. According to Agnew (ibid.: 5) “the story of the Western Frontier is the oldest, most characteristic, and longest-lived of all American myths.” The tales about cowboys that are relayed via books, magazines and movies rarely represent the reality and offer a romanticized and idealized version of the truth (cf. ibid.: 7). Agnew (cf. 2015: 7) points out that “by the end of the nineteenth century the popular Western story had achieved a form where the historic West served as a springboard for extravagant and fantastical tales of adventure far removed from historical reality.” He goes on to say that “historical events were changed to suit the story”. Taking a closer look at the plots of typical Western stories we find cowboys as heroes that fight villains (often Natives), rescue women, engage in gunfights and restore peace (cf. ibid.: 5). It is important to point out that these images do not represent the real cowboy who was a hard-working farmhand that went on cattle drives and round ups. Although cattle drives have been used as a theme in Western stories, this has mainly been the case because “rip-roaring cattle towns provided a location where lawless behavior could be acted out […]” (ibid.: 16). The real cowboy was not necessarily heroic, nor did he fight villains, he was a herdsman devoted to his work. Agnew (2015: 84, 86) refers to the real cowboy as follows:
Cowboys on ranches rounded up and branded cattle, gathered hay, mended fences, and performed the other monotonous chores that kept a cattle ranch running. They were generally overworked, underfed, and poorly paid. [...] Being a real cowboy was hard and boring and involved monotonous work. (Agnew 2015: 84, 86).

As far as the cowboys’ gunplay in movies is concerned, for example, Agnew (cf. 2015: 86) mentions that real cowboys “were typically not good gunmen” since “they did not have the time or money for ammunition to continually practice their skills in order to become expert shots.” Although certain elements of the real cowboy, such as the horse and the roaming about in the prairies, have been adopted into Western novels and movies, there are still many deviations from reality. Furthermore, the Wild West as depicted in Western stories does not actually compare with the real West. When it comes to the real West, Agnew (ibid.: 8-9) refers to its location as follows:

In the beginning, all of America was some vague frontier to the west of the East Coast. The land of the West was perceived as a vast uncharted territory of lawlessness that Easterners were not familiar with, but envied. ‘The frontier’ then moved across the West at the forefront of a wave of civilizing influences. Early tales placed the Western frontier at the Allegheny Mountains, and only later in the American West and Southwest. [...] in 1803, the West became the land beyond the Mississippi.

Furthermore, Agnew (ibid.: 10) describes the real West as a place “conquered by settlers and exploiters who came for farming, cattle, timber, trapping, and prospecting” where “the Native Americans were beaten into submission and removed through a series of wars”. He also explains that this image was nothing that Western authors wanted to include in their works (cf. ibid.: 10). Hollywood immensely contributed to the idealization of the image of the cowboy and the Wild West. According to Agnew (ibid.: 10) “movies have become the vision of Western history for many Americans, in spite of the fact that few of these films are historically accurate”. Despite its missing historic authenticity “the Hollywood Western is a national myth, a global icon, and cornerstone of American identity” (ibid.: 11). When it comes to written literature, the situation regarding the historic authenticity is basically the same. Although there have been novels that focus on real-life westerners, such as Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett, there is a considerable number of Western novels that offer an idealized version of the truth (cf. ibid.: 21). Owen Wister’s *The Virginian* is considered to be the first popular and successful American cowboy novel (cf. Rünzler 1995: 157). According to Rünzler (cf. ibid.: 159) *The Virginian* represents a turning point as far as serious Western literature is concerned. One perfect example of written literature that spread the image of the romanticized cowboy hero are the Dime Novels. They were “inexpensively produced mass-market fiction paperbacks that appeared
from about 1860 to 1910 from multiple publishing houses” and comprised about 100 pages (Agnew 2015: 30). In these Dime Novels the cowboy completely lost his original function as a herdsman and was solely portrayed as being heroic (cf. ibid.: 30). Apart from these examples, literature dealing with cowboys is numerous. There is an uncountable number of written works and movies that focus on the cowboy figure, many of which do so by idealizing and romanticizing him. Other ways in which the cowboy is still immortalized and remains an important symbol in popular culture today are, for example, advertisements, singers and their songs and in the sport of rodeo. (cf. ibid.: 204-209).

1.3. The Argentinian Gaucho as a Symbol of National Identity

The North American cowboy and the Argentinian gaucho share one relevant feature when it comes to their emergence – both descended from the Spanish herdsman, the Spanish vaquero (cf. Nichols 1941: 421). Akin to the Mexican vaquero, the gaucho was a mestizo who benefitted from the free-roaming wild cattle on the pampas spread by the Spanish conquistadores (cf. Tinker 1967: n.p.). Emerging in Argentina from 1750 to 1775, the gaucho, who before this time was still called vaquero and lived the life of the Spanish vaquero, “made a business of hunting wild cattle for their hides and tallow or of driving them to estancias to be marked and gentled” (Tinker 1967: n.p.; cf. Nichols 1937: 533). Breaking horses for hacenderos and participating in cattle hunting expeditions were also parts of his work (cf. Nichols 1936: 66). Nevertheless, Nichols (cf. 1937: 534) points out that the gaucho was not necessarily a herdsman, but rather a hunter who was out for the hides of wild cows or horses. His equipment included the facón, the poncho, the boleadoras, spurs, and, of course, the horse (cf. Tinker 1967: n.p.). According to Nichols (cf. 1936: 67) three things were particularly important to the gaucho, which were his lady, his country and his horse, the latter being the most valuable to him. In his free time the gaucho, for example, hunted the American rhea, gambled at horse races, went to pulperías.

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4 “an extensive generally grass-covered plain of temperate South America east of the Andes: prairie” (www.merriam-webster.com, online) [2019, June 28]
5 “one that conquers; specifically: a leader in the Spanish conquest of America […]” (www.merriam-webster.com, online) [2019, June 16]
6 = hacendado: “the owner or proprietor of a hacienda” (www.merriam-webster.com, online) [2019, Apr. 18]
7 “a large heavy belt knife carried by South American gauchos” (www.merriam-webster.com, online) [2019, Apr. 18]
8 “a blanket with a slit in the middle so that it can be slipped over the head and worn as a sleeveless garment” (www.merriam-webster.com, online) [2019, Apr. 18]
9 “a rope with weights attached, used especially in South America to catch cattle or game by entangling their legs” (https://www.thefreedictionary.com) [2019, Apr. 18]
10 “a Spanish American rural grocery store often functioning also as a drinking establishment” (www.merriam-webster.com, online) [2019, Apr. 18]
where he might get into a facón fight, bet on cockfights and engaged in dancing and drinking (Tinker 1967: n.p.). Many gauchos would also entertain with their songs and ballads and take part in so-called payadas, a contest in which two singers competed against each other. (c.f. ibid.: n.p.). According to Nichols (cf. 1941: 421-422) unlike the vaquero, the original gaucho was considered an outlaw, since he engaged in contraband trade and illegal business. Nichols even refers to him as a “rebel against society” (ibid.: 423). Only when laws were enforced was the gaucho forced into legitimate work and gradually became the honest, hard-working Spanish vaquero he evolved from (cf. ibid.: 422-423). The original gaucho was looked down upon by the rest of the population in his day. Tinker (1967: n.p.) comments that the gaucho’s “dirt, ignorance, and mixed blood, his wasteful slaughter of other people’s livestock, and the callousness with which he abducted a girl or slit an enemy’s throat, combined, in the early days, to make him a despised figure”. He achieved his status as a respectable member of the society only after demonstrating his skills in war (cf. Nichols 1941: 423). In fact, despite his questionable nature, the gaucho contributed immensely to the welfare and independence of his country, since being patriotic he was willing to protect it by fighting foreigners no matter what (cf. Nichols 1936: 67-68). According to Tinker (1967: n.p.) “this patriotism, though blind, tinged the despised cattleman and Indian fighter with romance and transformed him into a national hero”. In addition to his militant contributions it must not be forgotten that the gaucho also helped shape “a huge cattle empire” (ibid.: n.p.). However, the gaucho was not spared from the economic and political changes in his country. Due to the modernization of the country brought along by Argentina’s liberal elite the gaucho suffered a considerable loss as far as his work and freedom are concerned (cf. Slatta 1992: 6). “New technology” and a “rural economy with sheep and agriculture” became a threat to his work and existence (Slatta 1992: 6). Furthermore, the arrival of millions of immigrants in Argentina also had an impact on the fading of the gaucho existence (cf. Slatta 1992: 6). Sharing a similar fate to that of the Mexican vaquero and the North American cowboy, he was forced to become a farm worker on an estancia because of “the termination of the pampas wars, and the changing character of the cattle industry due to the railroad and the barbed-wire fence” (Trifilo 1964: 402-403). According to Nichols (cf. 1937: 536) the end of the gaucho’s existence came about around 1875. Trifilo (ibid.: 403) points out that “the gaucho of today working on the pampas of Argentina is no more a real gaucho than is our own present-day cowboy the cowboy of the Wild West”.

When it comes to the gaucho’s representation in literature, he has experienced the same fate as the cowboy. Being one of the most important literary themes in Argentinian literature, his image has been idealized and romanticized in various poems, novels and other literary genres and
deviates from the real, historical gaucho (cf. Trifilo 1964: 395), however, to his favor. It is important to highlight that literature contributed to the revaluation of the gaucho’s reputation among the Argentinian population. Nichols (1941: 423) explains that apart from his achievements in war, “the gaucho owed the regeneration of his name to the advertising he received in literature.” Popular literary works, such as Martin Fierro, helped promote the gaucho as a “symbol of independence and of a triumphant nationality” (ibid.: 423-424). Being ascribed qualities such as courage, independence and daring, the literary gaucho inspired many writers and has mesmerized numerous readers (cf. ibid.: 423; cf. Trifilo 1964: 395). As Tinker (cf. 1967: n.p.) indicates the gaucho has been dealt with in verse and prose, as well as on stage. When it comes to gaucho poetry, the most important work is undeniably José Hernández’s Martin Fierro, a poem about a gaucho of the same name (cf. ibid.: n.p.). Tinker (ibid.: n.p.) points out that with this work, which “sold more copies than any other Latin American book”, Hernández “created […] a national figure and an indigenous epic.” Other noteworthy poems on gauchos are Estanislao del Campo’s Fausto and Rafael Obligado’s Santos Vega (cf. ibid.: n.p.). After the rise of the poeta gauchesca the gaucho also became a relevant theme in novels (cf. ibid.: n.p.). Important novels are, among others, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s Facundo, Eduardo Gutiérrez’s Juan Moreira, and, of course, Ricardo Güiraldes’s Don Segundo Sombra (cf. ibid. n.p.). Common topics in gaucho literature were people’s folklore, love, patriotism and the criticizing and describing of society (cf. Nichols 1936: 68). Tinker (1967: n.p.) refers to the true purpose of gaucho literature as follows:

The great body of gauchesco verse and tales serves a higher purpose than merely to amuse, for it enshrines the history of the Wars of Independence, the economic and social development of the country, and the growth and decadence of a class. (Tinker 1967: n.p.)

As aforementioned, his image being promoted through literature the gaucho became the symbol of Argentinian national identity. However, the reasons for this change of the perception of the gaucho, who used to have a bad reputation, did not come along by chance. According to Slatta (1992: 180) “the gaucho became the embodiment of Argentine character as the nation’s thinkers and leaders reconstructed the past to suit twentieth-century political needs.” Slatta (ibid.: 179) explains this development in more detail:

The ruling elite, besieged and threatened by vociferous demands from immigrant workers, adeptly maneuvered to maintain power. The oligarchy resurrected the long-scorned gaucho and transformed him into a nostalgic, idealized, domesticated symbol of Argentine national virtue. Ironically, the gaucho, long despised by the elite, became its central ideological weapon in a battle against foreign-inspired demands for social justice and democracy.
Nowadays, the gaucho is still an important symbol of Argentina (cf. Foster et al. 1998: 42). As such, “he is celebrated in national culture, considered to embody the most positive attributes of the Argentine individual: strength, bravery, honor, and a fiercely independent spirit” (Foster et al. 1998: 42).
2. Masculinity in Cowboy and Gaucho Culture and Literature

When considering the American herdsmen, most people are likely to associate a certain image of masculinity with them. In fact, a deeply masculine appearance is one of the main characteristics of the cowboy and the gaucho. The cowboy is regarded as the embodiment of manliness par excellence. In Western movies and novels, he is represented as a macho male hero who rescues women and bravely faces dangers and difficult situations. Being portrayed with an appearance and attitude of a stereotypically tough, brave and self-confident man the cowboy has served as a symbol of maleness ever since he became a popular figure in mainstream culture and literature. As far as the gaucho is concerned, he is also perceived as an entirely masculine being who similarly to the cowboy seems to set standards for masculinity. Even though the gaucho has disappeared from the Argentinian pampa, he is still “a potent symbol of Latin American masculinity” according to Kaminsky (2008: 56). In this chapter I am going to provide the theoretical background for my analysis of masculinity and the formation of masculine identities as depicted in All the Pretty Horses and Don Segundo Sombra.

Both the cowboy and the gaucho are associated with an almost exaggerated sense of masculinity. Nowadays, we still regard them as the epitome of manliness and we are still reminded of the cowboy’s masculine appearance, for example, through advertisements, movies and books. If one had to describe the cowboy and the gaucho and their masculine attributes, they would probably say that these characters are brave, tough, fearless, daring and self-confident. This image of the two herdsmen has especially been promoted by literature and popular culture, in the case of the cowboy at an international level. However, it is important to point out that our perception of their masculinity as influenced by literature and culture does not necessarily reflect manliness and its understanding among cowboys and gauchos in real life. Let us first focus on the masculine principles and ideals of the historic cowboy and the background of the idealization of his masculinity in literature and mainstream culture. As far as the cowboy is concerned, Moore (2010: 1) mentions that he “has become an icon of Anglo masculinity to generations of Americans”. She proceeds by defining the idealized masculine cowboy as follows:

The masculine cowboy hero depicted in film and literature is usually a figure straddling the frontier between civilization and the wilderness, sometimes siding with the townspeople against the wilderness and sometimes with the equally mythical noble Indian savage against civilization. Whether he accepts or rejects white society, his manhood is clear, and often superior to those of the so-called respectable men around him. (Moore 2010: 1).
In connection with this definition, Moore (ibid.) highlights that the masculine image and perception of the historical cowboys deviated from that of the idealized cowboys, as they “did not conform to movie cowboy masculinity, nor did their employers and the surrounding townspeople share this image of the manly cowboy”. Far away from any idealized representation of cowboy masculinity, the real cowboys expressed much of their manliness through the performance of their work, the way they lived their lives and their treatment of other men (cf. ibid.: 3). They did not heroically rescue women in trouble or bravely engage in fights with Natives, which are two actions that add to the masculine appearance of the idealized cowboy in mainstream culture. To them masculinity was shown by “exercising moderation, which was essential to maintaining social order” (ibid.: 3). Other indicators of masculinity among cowboys were responsibility and proper behavior (cf. ibid.: 3). It is also important to mention that when it comes to the hierarchies of masculinity among cowboys, race was an essential factor and benchmark. While the white cowboys considered themselves to be the most masculine group, men from minorities were viewed as less manly in comparison (cf. ibid.: 9). This is what the historic cowboy was like as far as his ideas of masculine appearance and behavior are concerned. As aforementioned, the idealized and romanticized manly cowboy figure we are accustomed to nowadays came into existence through literature and popular culture. However, the invention of an overly masculine hero did not only add to people’s amusement, it also benefitted a certain social group, namely the men that felt threatened by immigration and women’s rise in society in the late 19th century (cf. ibid.: 2). According to Moore (ibid.: 13) “for middle-class men outside the West, who worried they had become over-civilized, the cowboy became a symbol of masculinity […] because of his ‘primitive’ masculinity.” By drawing on the cowboy figure and identifying themselves with it, many men were able to define themselves as manly. The mythic cowboy figure, of course, was not real, still it served as a means for many American men to counteract the social changes that had a negative impact on their sense of manliness (cf. Kimmel 2012: 110-111). Kimmel (2012: 111) explains that “as a genre the Western represented the apotheosis of masculinist fantasy, a revolt not against women but against feminization”. He proceeds to say that “the vast prairie is the domain of male liberation from workplace humiliation, cultural feminization, and domestic emasculation” (ibid.). Consequently, cowboy and Western literature became the most common reading material for men, since it offered them a masculine world they could not find in real life (anymore). Furthermore, a multitude of men who considered themselves to be wimpy and civilized left the East coast and moved to the American west at the end of the 19th century where they sought their masculine roots (cf. Brandt 2007: 237-238). Brandt (cf. ibid.: 238) points out
that they renounced their civilized and luxurious lives in the east of the U.S. and looked for harsher lives in the West. By doing so they aimed at restoring their sense of manliness (cf. ibid.). Although this way of recovering one’s manliness by reviving it in the remains of the Wild West is not practiced anymore nowadays, the hype around the cowboy’s masculinity is still going on and cowboys are still considered symbols of manliness.

As far as the gaucho is concerned, he experienced the same exaggerated upgrading of his masculinity through literature and culture like his North American brother. In the Argentina of the early 20th century we can find major changes with respect to the perception of manliness. In the following quote Losada (2018: 55) explains these changes in more detail:

The upper-class, sophisticated male is often positively valorized in literary texts of the nineteenth century, but with the nationalist turn to the rural such an aristocratizing, European-modeled masculinity became less appealing and a frequent foil for new models of masculinity. (Losada 2018: 55)

The new understanding of masculinity implied that a man was neither like a woman, nor infantile, nor like homosexuals and nor like the men from urban spaces (cf. ibid.: 55-56). These requirements set for an appropriate masculinity could best be expressed through the gaucho (cf. ibid.: 55), who was becoming an idealized figure and symbol of national identity during this period. Similar to the situation of the cowboy in the United States the gaucho’s masculine image was taken advantage of and promoted by literature, culture and advertising (cf. ibid.). The gaucho especially played an important role when it comes to the European immigration in Argentina at the beginning of the 20th century and his image was expected to function against the arrival of European immigrants (cf. ibid.: 56). As mentioned in chapter 1.3., the ruling elite revived the gaucho, made him become a symbol of Argentine national identity and used him in order to prevent immigrant workers from demanding social justice and democracy (cf. Slatta 1992: 179).

As seen in the previous paragraphs of this chapter, the cowboy and the gaucho and the masculine images we receive of them have enabled men to claim a masculine identity and still do so nowadays to some extent. With respect to masculine identity, this thesis will later explain how cowboys and gauchos as depicted in literature claim a masculine identity by reference to the novels All the Pretty Horses and Don Segundo Sombra. Now, when it comes to discussing identities, we must first focus on how they are established. Sussman (2012: 9) points out that by ‘identity’ we refer to “our own sense of self of who we are”. In the first instance, it is important to realize that “to be a self in isolation is neither possible nor sustainable” (Sussman 2012: 9). Referring to Hegel’s concept of identity formation Ellis and Meyer (cf. eds., 2009: 1)
explain that “an awareness of ‘otherness’” is essential when it comes to the “process of identity formation”. According to this concept, “‘being’ is defined simply as in distinction from its ‘other’, ‘nothing’” (Ellis and Meyer, eds. 2009: 1). In other words, in order to claim a valid identity one group needs another group it can compare itself with. Being aware of the similarities and differences between oneself and the ‘other’, a different party, enables the respective group to make conclusions about itself and find a way to establish an identity. When it comes to gender, this concept of identity formation based on the ‘other’ also applies to the creation of male and female identities. Connell (cf. 2005: 252) comments that masculinity only exists when contrasted with femininity. He also explains that this concept is a young one that came about in early-modern Europe (cf. ibid.: 252-253). According to Liggins et al. (2000: 7) “gender is defined and measured in terms of difference”. Men and women have different stereotypical characteristics which help them define themselves and distinguish themselves from each other. For example, stereotypically men are considered to be more serious and rational, while women, for instance, are stereotypically viewed as being more sensitive. Of course, it must be highlighted that these are only stereotypes and that such characteristics can apply to both men and women equally. Nevertheless, such differences are commonly used by men and women to define themselves. The problem arises when one group bases its identity on another group by dealing with it in a derogatory and devaluing way, or even by suppressing it. From a historical point of view, men have frequently claimed a masculine identity by derogating other groups, the biggest group of them being, of course, women. Liggins et al. (2000: 7) points out that “[…] typically, women have been defined by their ‘otherness’ to men, with men, ergo masculinity, functioning as the standard, the norm, the point of fixity”. Throughout history men have defined themselves in comparison with women, for example, as being stronger, more reasonable and braver. By degrading women, their qualities and their behavior many men aim at distinguishing themselves as the superior sex. For example, when it comes to certain professions some people believe that women are not as capable of carrying them out as men, because they are regarded as being too weak or too emotional by men. Consequently, by holding this view and belittling women men appear more capable and adaptable and they enhance their sense of manliness. A frequent behavior that can be found among both men and women involves defining oneself in terms of not being like the other sex. For example, some men might claim that women are too emotional and that being emotional is not a typical trait of men. Thus, a man who displays his emotions would not be considered masculine, but instead feminine, which, however, would be understood as an insult among many men. In this example we can perfectly see that some men need women as the ‘other’ in
order to enhance their manliness. Nevertheless, this is where a derogatory treatment of the opposite sex starts. According to this ancient concept of masculinity being emotional and, thus, being like a woman is out of the question and needs to be avoided. Consequently, the idea is conveyed that appearing like a woman is shameful for a man, which casts women in a negative light. In terms of identity formation, this derogatory behavior and attitude towards a different group, however, can also become more aggressive. Throughout history, for example, men have suppressed women and expressed power and dominion over them. By doing so many of them have been able to claim an identity as the superior and more powerful sex. Nevertheless, women are not the only group men take advantage of in order to establish a masculine identity. Such behavior also effects different groups of men within the male community. As Kimmel (cf. 2012: 190) suggests, some men do not only attempt to identify themselves as manly by suppressing women, but also homosexuals and men of different racial background. For instance, as previously mentioned, when it comes to the masculine world of the cowboys, white cowboys regarded themselves manlier than cowboys from minority groups, which helped them strengthen their “sense of masculinity” (cf. Moore 2010: 9). However, it is important to stress that not all men make use of these derogatory ways of identity formation. As aforementioned, the awareness of the differences between the sexes is essential when it comes to forming identities in terms of gender. Nevertheless, the derogatory behavior towards women that men frequently develop in connection with the building of their masculine identity is not part of a natural, normal process of identity formation. Likewise, the suppressing of other groups is not a justified behavior, either. Consequently, it depends on the measure one uses in claiming an identity based on the ‘other’.
3. The Bildungsroman Genre

The Bildungsroman, which is frequently referred to as novel of formation and coming-of-age story in English, is one of the most popular and important types of novels of the 20th century, not only in its continent of origin, Europe, but also in the Americas. Regarding their structures, plotlines, characters and settings both *All the Pretty Horses* and *Don Segundo Sombra* can easily be classified as representatives of the Bildungsroman genre. The aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical basis for my analysis of the two novels as far as the Bildungsroman is concerned. The definitions and listing of characteristics and elements of the Bildungsroman that will be dealt with in this chapter correspond to the classical German, or European, tradition. It will later be shown in this thesis in which ways *All the Pretty Horses* and *Don Segundo Sombra* fulfill the requirements of the European Bildungsroman and in which ways they diverge from this tradition.

Having its origins in the late 18th century German literature the Bildungsroman marks a type of novel which, roughly speaking, focuses on the formation and development of an adolescent protagonist and his transition to adulthood (cf. Gutjahr 2007: 7). According to Doub (2010: 1) “the general organizing concept of this genre is the Bildung process of the protagonist, wherein the individual (‘Bildungsheld’) engages in self-cultivation.” The word *Bildung* translates into English as formation, education and, in a broader sense, development. The term Bildungsroman itself was introduced by aesthetics and literature professor Karl von Morgenstern who was the first one to deal with this new type of novel in his lectures and treatises around 1820 (cf. Gutjahr 2007: 9). As a technical term it also made its way into the English language, where nowadays Bildungsroman is used synonymously with its common translations: novel of formation and apprenticeship novel to refer to this literary genre (cf. ibid. 7-8). While in Germany a distinction is usually made between the Bildungsroman, the *Entwicklungsroman* (development novel) and the *Erziehungsroman* (education novel), not forgetting the *Künstlerroman* (artist novel), which all share similar characteristics, this distinction, however, is rarely made in English-speaking countries, where Bildungsroman is used “as an umbrella term which encompasses the other meanings” (cf. Gutjahr 2007: 12; Doub 2010: 2). Doub (2010: 2) points out that “outside of Germany, the more specific categories are largely regarded as superfluous.” Although novel of formation is a suitable English translation to refer to the genre, I am going to use the term Bildungsroman in my thesis. Furthermore, although the classical Bildungsroman originally portrayed a young male *Bildungsheld*, I am going to refer to both male and female protagonists.
in the following definition and explanation of the genre, since the female Bildungsroman experienced its rise in the last third of the 20th century (cf. Gutjahr 2007: 8, 62).

Now, let us have a closer look at the concept of the Bildungsroman by focusing on Ortrud Gutjahr’s definition (cf. 2007: 8): As aforementioned, the evolution of a young protagonist from adolescence to adulthood is the focus of the Bildungsroman. In this process of growing up, the protagonist reaches maturity by experiencing conflicts and crises, as well as by dealing with social rules and his or her natural environment. Before accomplishing this goal, however, our Bildungsheld is subject to something that Gutjahr labels a Bildungscurriculum, a certain course of formation the protagonist undergoes before finding a lifestyle that is not only suitable to him or her, but also socially compatible: After living under certain domestic, familial and educational conditions throughout his or her childhood and adolescence, the protagonist spends several years exploring the world by embarking on journeys or peregrinations which make him or her encounter yet unknown sociocultural contexts. Thereby, the protagonist comes across so-called Bildungsstationen, places and situations that are relevant for his or her formation. These Bildungsstationen enable the Bildungsheld to demonstrate talents and abilities, and to discover whether certain worldviews and life paths prove feasible (cf. Gutjahr 2007: 8). All the experiences the protagonist gathers, whether they are positive or negative, help them become more mature and aware of their purpose in life. Furthermore, they lead to the protagonist’s self-discovery and enable him or her to develop personality (cf. Kohlschmidt and Mohr, eds. 2011: 175). Gutjahr (cf. 2007: 46) quotes Jacobs and Krause who explain that such experiences include, among others, the protagonist processing his or her family home, the guidance through mentors and educational institutions, erotic adventures and the protagonist’s taking up of a certain profession. However, not all the experiences of the Bildungsheld are pleasant, as he or she must also deal with disappointments, conflicts and hardships, which represent an essential aspect of the protagonist’s Bildung (cf. Gutjahr 2007: 46). Doub (2010: 3) refers to these hardships as trials which are “often related to work, love, and the legal system”. “Perhaps the most important trial for our hero”, however, is “learning to live with the contradictions of one’s society – indeed, one’s family – […] as s/he strives to find a path in the world“, as Doub (2010: 4) puts it. Wilhelm Dilthey emphasizes that struggles and conflicts are necessary and indispensable for the Bildungsheld to experience on his or her way to maturity (cf. Kohlschmidt and Mohr, eds. 2011: 175). Likewise, Doub (2010: 3) points out that “the ordeals of work, love, and formal and informal schooling are some of the experiences which help shape the developing person”. She goes on to say that “by passing through these trials of youth, the characters have the opportunity to form their own opinions and values based on what they learn” (Doub 2010:
One important aspect of the Bildungsroman in this connection is the protagonist’s ability to reflect on their lives, which makes them question their own education and development, and their current state of being (cf. Gutjahr 2007: 8, 13). It is this self-reflection that helps the protagonist develop his or her own opinions and values. Gutjahr (cf. 2007: 48) refers to Jacobs who explains that the protagonist’s phases of reflection, in which he or she tries to gain a better understanding of him or herself and their life experiences, are a typical characteristic of the Bildungsroman. Finally, as mentioned above, the Bildungsroman closes when the protagonist achieves self-discovery and social integration. Doub (2010: 3-4) comments that „in the traditional novel of formation, the story concludes as the hero integrates into society (which symbolizes his maturity and acceptance of social norms)“.

Now, in line with the definition and concept of the Bildungsroman provided above, the novel’s structure can be understood as consisting of three phases and unfolds as follows: after the depiction of the protagonist’s early years, the reader gets insight into the Bildungsheld’s years of travel, in which he or she experiences love and friendship, but also crises and fallacies. Finally, at the end of the story the protagonist enters the stage of paradise (cf. Kohlschmidt and Mohr, eds. 2011: 177). In fact, apart from these three phases, the story in the Bildungsroman comprises several stages, which represent an important characteristic of the genre (cf. Gutjahr 2007: 48). In between these stages we can frequently find retrospections of the Bildungsheld at turning points or the protagonist reminiscing about past events (cf. Kohlschmidt and Mohr, eds. 2011: 177).

When it comes to the protagonist of the Bildungsroman, he or she can be viewed as a hero or heroine. Gutjahr (cf. 2007: 45) refers to Hegel who regards the existence of a hero as an essential characteristic of the Bildungsroman. According to Hegel, as Gutjahr (cf. Gutjahr 2007: 45) points out, the protagonist, however, is not a hero in a heroic sense, but a young man who searches for his place in civil society. Likewise, Doub (2010: 8) emphasizes that “[…] these stories are not a hero quest in the traditional sense”. She proceeds to say that “these are everyday people, going about the difficult (albeit banal) business of growing up” (Doub 2010: 8). Furthermore, as a hero the Bildungsheld appears passive in the face of life events and towards his or her environment (cf. Gutjahr 2007: 47). In addition, some Bildungsromane employ an antagonist, a morally questionable opponent the Bildungsheld has to deal with or compete against (cf. Gutjahr 2007: 53-54). As far as the other secondary characters in the Bildungsroman are concerned, they can function as symbols of life for the Bildungsheld or so-called
Bildungsmächte alongside the protagonist having influence on his or her development (cf. Kohlschmidt and Mohr, eds. 2011: 177).

As previously mentioned, the protagonist’s integration into society marks the ideal ending of the Bildungsroman and is considered an important characteristic of the German and European Bildungsroman model. In order to achieve this, the Bildungsheld must find “a means to negotiate a balance between the self and society” (Doub 2010: 6-7). Slaughter (2011: 93) quotes Lukács and summarizes that “the early idealistic German novels imagine the possibility of the individual and society achieving a mutually beneficial and fulfilling harmony.” However, the question arises of what happens if the protagonist struggles and fails to establish such a harmony with society and does not achieve social integration. According to Slaughter (2011: 95) “a strict thematic definition of the genre might insist that a particular novel is a bildungsroman only if it achieves such balance [...]” However, he goes on to say that the majority of Bildungsromane “are spread across a spectrum of less-than-ideal resolutions to the tension between personal liberty and social constraint” (Slaughter 2011: 95). In other words, in a considerable amount of Bildungsromane the protagonists fail to come to terms with social rules and hesitate to change their minds about society or are incapable of doing so. According to that, the Bildungsheld might, for example, go on a journey because he or she objects to the conditions and restrictions set by the society he is living in. Although the purpose of their journey is to prepare them for their final social integration, however, they still struggle to accept the social norms at the end of the novel and does not integrate into society. Although this process is not part of the classical Bildungsroman concept, it must not be forgotten that the protagonist’s process of coping with the contradictions of society is probably the most difficult trial they have to face throughout his or her formation (cf. Doub 2010: 4). Another question that arises here is whether the protagonist validly reaches maturity if he does not accept the social norms, which according to Doub (cf. 2010: 3-4) is an important criterion for being considered mature in Bildungsroman terms. This idea of only being mature if one integrates into society, however, comes from the traditional understanding of the Bildungsroman in the 18th and 19th centuries when social integration was still considered an essential part of a young person’s development and maturity. This bourgeois concept, however, appears to be rather antiquated nowadays. Furthermore, it can be said that it is up to the reader to decide whether or not the Bildungsheld is mature. In addition, if the protagonist spends a period of his life learning lessons and gathering experiences he or she certainly achieves a certain degree of maturity at the end of the novel, regardless of whether he or she integrates into society or not. Consequently, as far as the definition of the Bildungsroman is concerned, it becomes clear that the current understanding of the genre does not correspond
completely to the European model anymore. Nevertheless, just because certain *Bildungsromane* do not offer endings in which the protagonists integrate into society and obtain self-discovery, it does not mean that they are less a Bildungsroman. What we need to bear in mind is that the Bildungsroman as a literary genre has developed and may deviate from its original form.
4. *All the Pretty Horses*

Cormac McCarthy, whose novels rank among the most renowned works in popular literature, was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1933. According to Frye (2013:3) he is considered “[…], along with Cole Updike, Toni Morrison, Philip Roth, and Don DeLillo, as an American author of monumental importance and value”. Being an avid reader ever since his youth his first short stories were published in the literary magazine of the University of Tennessee, where he studied creative writing. At about the same time he started working on his first novel *The Orchard Keeper*, which was published in 1965. In the following years he composed several novels such as *Outer Dark, Suttree, Child of God* and *Blood Meridian; or, The Evening Redness in the West*, the latter being published in 1985 and acclaimed by many (cf. Frye, ed. 2013: xvii-4). The settings in most of his works are the American South and Southwest and even people he came across in his childhood serve as a “basis of characters” in his novels (cf. Christ 1999: 39/ Frye, ed. 2013: xvii-4). However, it was not until the publication of his novel *All the Pretty Horses*, which is the first part of McCarthy’s so-called Border Trilogy, in 1992 that he grew in popularity. From that time on, his other works also sold higher numbers of copies (cf. Frye, ed. 2013: xvii-4). As to the commercial success of *All the Pretty Horses* he did not only win the *National Book Award 1992* and the *National Book Critics Circle Award*, but also got nominated for the *Pulitzer Prize* (cf. Christ 1999: 40). Only two years later, and then again in 1998, the following two parts of McCarthy’s Border Trilogy were published, *The Crossing and Cities of the Plain*, which both equally deal with Cole and Rawlins as protagonists. In 2000 a film adaption of *All the Pretty Horses* was released by Columbia Pictures and six years later *Blood Meridian* and the Border Trilogy were ranked “among the best novels of the preceding twenty-five years” by the New York Times Book Review. Only from 2005 to 2006 *The Road, No Country for Old Men* and *The Sunset Limited: A Novel in Dramatic Form* were published, all of which were also released as film adaptions. He finally won the *Pulitzer Prize* for *The Road* in 2007 and the PEN/Saul Bellow Lifetime Award “for his work in the writing of fiction” in 2009 (cf. Frye, ed. 2013: xvii - xxii). As far as the literary movement that McCarthy belongs to is concerned, Snyder and Snyder (cf. 2013: 30) refer to Holloway who considers McCarthy as a late modernist. Holloway (2002: 4), who is quoted by Snyder and Snyder (2013: 30), points out that “[McCarthy’s] novels might stand as a series of experiments, or a laying of the ground, for modernism’s revival”. Holloway clarifies, however, that this ‘revival’ is not to be considered as a “nostalgic return to […] aesthetic conventions”, but that his novels stands for “a kind of cultural representation that might retain what has been strategically valuable and egalitarian in
the so-called ‘postmodern’ praxis”, a praxis he also dismisses at the same time due to its “more reactionary political contents” (Holloway 2002: 4; Snyder et Snyder 2013: 30-31). Thus, one might refer to McCarthy’s writing as both modernist and postmodernist to certain extents, however, ideally as late modernist.

The novel *All the Pretty Horses* by U.S. American author Cormac McCarthy comprises four chapters. The story begins with the 16-year-old protagonist John Grady Cole attending his grandfather’s funeral. His parents being divorced Cole lives on his grandfather’s ranch in Texas with his mother and some Mexican ranch workers that Cole considers family. Soon after the funeral he finds out that his mother wants to sell the ranch. Intending to prevent this he tries to convince his mother to lease him the ranch and even discusses legal matters with a lawyer behind her back, but he remains unsuccessful in his attempts. Since he cannot change his mother’s decision Cole and his best friend Lacey Rawlins decide to leave everything behind them and run away from home. One morning, when everybody is still asleep, they steal off on their horses and set out for Mexico where they want to find work. Heading south they ride their horses through the countryside of Texas and enjoy being independent and free. Soon they reach the Mexican border and confront a boy called Jimmy Blevins who has been following them for a while. When asked after the ownership of the boy’s horse, the 13-year-old claims that it is his, which Cole and Rawlins do not believe. They continue their journey without Blevins in order not to get into any trouble. Later, however, they come across Blevins again and allow him to join them on their journey. While moving farther on Mexican soil, they sleep in the open, come across Mexican strangers that help them with food and accommodation and ride long distances that mainly consist of desert and plains. They stick together, even though Blevins and the occasional trouble he causes keep the group back from moving on, e.g. when he gets drunk or when his horse runs away together with his pistol. Later, they stop in a town called Encantada where they find Blevins’s belongings. Trying to get the horse back, they steal it from the wrongful owner. However, in their cloak-and-dagger operation they are spotted by the townspeople and get chased since they are regarded criminals. In their attempt to escape the horsemen that are chasing them they unwillingly part ways and Cole and Rawlins are forced to ride on without Blevins. After some days they come across cattle drovers with whom they move on west. At the end of the first chapter they reach an enormous ranch called the *Hacienda de Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción* where the gerente decides to hire them as ranch workers.
The second chapter opens with Cole and Rawlins working on the hacienda. Soon after their arrival they want to prove their skills in horse breaking by offering the gerente to break 16 young colts in only four days. Contrary to the gerente’s belief, however, they manage to carry out the task successfully. Consequently, they are sent to the mountains with four other vaqueros where they spend three weeks trapping mares. Finally, after all these achievements the hacendado’s attention is drawn to the two young Americans and he is impressed by them. While working on the ranch Cole also comes across the hacendado’s daughter called Alejandra and falls in love with her. Nevertheless, they keep their relationship as a secret from all the other ranch residents, and especially from the hacendado, since both fear disapproval of their relationship. One day Cole gets to talk to Alejandra’s grandaunt who is also living on the farm and who already knows about their secret relationship. She advises the young American not to see Alejandra anymore by explaining to him that he is damaging her reputation and that a Mexican woman cannot restore her reputation once gone. Although Cole is now concerned about Alejandra’s future, she cannot let him go and they keep on seeing each other. The second chapter closes with Cole and Rawlins being suddenly arrested by police officers and taken away from the ranch.

In chapter three the two young Americans find themselves back in Encantada where they are taken into custody. There they also reunite with Blevins and find out that he was not only arrested for stealing the horse, but also for killing three men that he murdered in his attempt to get back his pistol. Since Cole and Rawlins were seen together with Blevins, they are considered to be accomplices by the police officers. Finally, they are all taken to jail, but on the way there the officers kill Blevins in the woods as punishment. Cole and Rawlins, shocked after the death of their companion, are put in prison where they face several fights among prisoners and prison violence in general. One day Rawlins gets seriously injured in a knife attack. In his despair Cole buys himself a knife which he confronts the knifer with and kills him, but also gets seriously injured himself. After that, both Cole and Rawlins are nursed back to health by Emilio Pérez’s people, a prisoner hiding from political enemies. Suddenly, the two adolescents are released from prison after being ransomed by Alejandra’s grandaunt. While Cole, however, decides to return to the hacienda to see Alejandra again, Rawlins heads back home to Texas by bus and their ways part.

At the beginning of the final chapter we find Cole back at the hacienda where he is welcomed by the staff and given back all his belongings. He soon gets to talk to Alejandra’s grandaunt who tells him that she paid the ransom for him and his friend in exchange for Alejandra’s
promise not to see him again. Cole also finds out that the hacendado had suspected him and Rawlins of being involved in the criminal affairs in Encantada before they got arrested, but first wanted to investigate the case himself. Cole soon leaves the ranch with a new horse and the intention to find Alejandra and to talk to her. Arriving at Zacatecas he gives Alejandra a call who first refuses to see him, but then gives in. They meet one day before her return to the ranch and Cole tells her everything about the prison and Blevins. Alejandra, who is very sad, soon admits that she told her father, the hacendado, about their relationship because she did not want to be blackmailed by her grandaunt anymore. Cole is devastated and finally realizes why he was arrested that day. Their ways part as Alejandra returns to the ranch and Cole rides on back to Encantada. There, in an act of revenge, he surprises the police captain who had arrested him with a gun and demands his, Rawlins’s and Blevins’ horses back. Trying to find the animals, he gets shot in his foot and chased by some townsmen. Consequently, he flees with the horses and the captain as his hostage and they ride through the Mexican prairies for several days. Finally, some vaqueros calling themselves ‘men of the country’ show up and take the captain with them. Although Cole has no idea why they took the captain captive, he heads back north to the U.S. Back home in Texas, he takes the case concerning the ownership of Blevins’s horse to court and ends up being declared the legitimate owner by the judge. Furthermore, he tells the judge his entire story in private and confesses to having killed the knifer in the Mexican prison in self-defence and to having kidnapped the police captain. He proceeds to find the real owner of Blevins’s horse himself, but his search turns out unsuccessful. Finally, he returns Rawlins his horse and finds out that his father died. When asked about what he is going to do next, Cole replies that he wants to move on and find his “country” (McCarthy: All the Pretty Horses 299).

4.1. The Representation of Cowboys in All the Pretty Horses

Focusing on the plot of McCarthy’s All the Pretty Horses it becomes evident that the cowboy plays an essential role in the story. In this chapter I am going to focus on the representation of the cowboy in All the Pretty Horses. Furthermore, I am going to point out which elements of the classical Western, or cowboy story can be found in the novel and to what extent literary idealization is used to depict the American herdsman.

When it comes to the representation of the American herdsman in All the Pretty Horses, two variations of this representation can be found in the novel, the cowboy and the vaquero. However, the line between their representations is blurred, as there are no explicit distinctions made in their depictions. In fact, references to the North American cowboy and his existence
are limited. We only know that the protagonists of the novel want to live the lives of cowboys in Mexico, a quest that they eventually fulfill by living and working among vaqueros. However, the three boys call themselves cowboys and are proud of it. For example, right after crossing the border the three boys get to a store where they order something to drink. After tasting the cider Rawlins remarks: “I don’t know what that […] is […] but it tastes pretty good to a cowboy.” (McCarthy. *All the Pretty Horses* 50). Moreover, the reader gets occasional hints at the cowboys’ existence, for example, by being informed about the ranch of John Grady’s grandfather, the saddle that John Grady is given by his father and Rawlins’ father’s remark on horse breaking. Further indicators of the cowboy tradition include horse riding and roaming about on the prairies. Nevertheless, it seems like references to the vaquero outweigh the portrayal of the cowboy figure. In fact, we generally get the feeling that the cowboy tradition is already fading in John Grady’s, Rawlins’s and Blevins’ home state of Texas, which is no surprise taking into consideration the setting of the plot. In the 1940s’, in which the story takes place, cowboys and the Western myth had largely disappeared from existence in the U.S. Owens (2000: 65) asserts that the three protagonists decide to head south into Mexico, which was originally regarded as “the foreign Other” and “a wrong move for the American cowboy”, in order to find the Old West “that they can no longer find in the western United States”. He goes on to say that “the western frontier is gone, declared closed […]”, which is why the protagonists need to “find frontier adventures” outside of the United States (Owens 2000: 65). “By turning south, the protagonists are turning back history to the frontier conditions of the Old West” (Owens 2000: 70). Life changed a great deal in Texas and the U.S. in general after the turn of the century. In addition to the fact that the cowboy tradition is practically gone and the Old West is no longer the place where adventures and exploration are guaranteed, the modern age has descended upon the country. As mentioned in chapter 1.2., the cowboys inevitably fell victim to the modernization of life. In *All the Pretty Horses* we can find examples of the modern age in the U.S. as opposed to the old world that the protagonists of the novel desperately try to hold on to. In one of the scenes to demonstrate this John Grady receives a key from his father to open a closet in which he stores a Christmas present for the boy. Receiving the present earlier, the 16-year-old finds a brand-new saddle in the closet and runs down to the street with it where a Ford truck drives along:

The first vehicle along was a Model A Ford truck and it came skidding quarterwise to a halt on its mechanical brakes and the driver leaned across and rolled down the window part way and boomed at him in a whiskey voice: Throw that hull up in the bed, cowboy, and get in here. (McCarthy. *All the Pretty Horses* 14)
In this text passage it seems like the modern world clashes with the old cowboy world, as the saddle can be understood to represent the horse as the common means of transportation of all cowboys, while the Ford truck contradicts this image. The car is the new common means of transport in the 20th century and horses are no longer needed to get from one place to another. In Mexico life is different, modernization has not changed the country and the people to the extent it has in Texas. Most of the Mexicans represented in the novel still live and work on ranches and are dependent on farming and agriculture. There is not much technology to facilitate their everyday lives. Of course, it cannot be denied that the modern age has also come to Mexico, and references to this fact can be found in the novel. The police officers drive a truck to the prison, the hacendado Don Héctor Rocha even owns a private plane and Rawlins returns to the USA by bus. However, it seems like in general modernization has not taken hold of the country the way it has influenced life in the U.S. Consequently, the boys can let go of the everyday modern life they experienced in their home country and revive the myth of the Old West to their satisfaction. For instance, when Rawlins looks at his driver’s license in the billfold that Blevins shot through while demonstrating his talent at shooting the gun, Cole tells him that he “wont need em down here [sic]” in Mexico, referring to the driver’s license (McCarthy. *All the Pretty Horses* 55). South of the border the boys can live their cowboy lives in the fashion of the Old West, riding their horses, roaming the Plains and forgetting about modern life. They do not care about the fact that here they are considered vaqueros and that their idea of the revived Old West is, geographically, only a Mexican frontier region. All that matters to them is that their dream of living the lives of cowboys finally comes true.

When discussing the representation of the herdsman in *All the Pretty Horses* we must not forget his most valued animal – the horse – which is a salient feature of the novel’s plot, and not least because of the book’s title. Initially, horses seem to be portrayed as the cowboy’s and vaquero’s means of transportation and as an essential tool to carry out their work. However, their representation goes beyond the function as mere tools, as we also encounter a more intimate relationship between the riders and their horses in the novel, which becomes obvious in the following quote from the book, in which Cole is talking to his new horse after leaving the estancia: “He told the horse that he liked it and why he’d chosen it to be his horse and he said that he would allow no harm to come to it” (ibid. 242). Cole’s love is for the “ardent-hearted” (ibid. 5), he loves to hear and smell them (ibid. 222). They calm him down whenever he is in trouble and seem to be something stable in his life he can hold on to. Owens (2000: 72) points out that to Cole horses “prove more reliable and less complicated than other dreams”, for example, his dream of being together with Alejandra. In general, horses are highly valued and
cherished by the protagonists. Throughout their journey from Texas into Mexico horses symbolize freedom and independence to Cole, Rawlins and Blevins, since they enable the adolescents to get away from their lives in the U.S. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, they make the boys feel like real cowboys, as the horse is the only indicator of the cowboy tradition they still possess from their home country. The meaning of horses to the protagonists becomes evident when Blevins’s horse runs off and the three boys try to find it. Locating it in the town of Encantada they intend to steal it back from the wrongful owner and place themselves in severe danger in doing so. Towards the end of the novel, Cole returns to Encantada to demand his, Rawlins’s and Blevins’s horses back, which were taken away from them by the captain before their imprisonment and Blevins’s death. Even though Cole’s confrontation with the captain is primarily an act of revenge, the 16-year-old risks his life again just to get the horses back. Consequently, these animals appear as an essential part of the protagonists’ lives, as their beloved possessions, but also as something they cling to in a world in which not all their dreams might come true.

Let us now focus on the depiction of the American herdsman in *All the Pretty Horses* as far as heroism and literary idealization are concerned. Unlike the representation of cowboys in many Western novels and movies, which tell stories of invincible heroes that fight evildoers, *All the Pretty Horses* looks at the cowboy or vaquero from a realistic perspective. Instead of falling for an idealized and romanticized depiction, we experience the cowboy, or rather the vaquero in his original function as herdsman, roamer and ranch worker. Cole, Rawlins and Blevins leave their homes in Texas to become cowboys. However, they never really associate the cowboy identity with that of the Western hero. Their understanding of what a cowboy is and does only extends to their concept of work and freedom. To them, living the cowboy’s life means being free and independent. Although this freedom and independence are Cole’s and Rawlins’s principal motivations to set out for Mexico and to become real cowboys, they are not reluctant to consider the hard work of a herdsman as an essential part of the role. On the contrary, they want to find jobs at a ranch where they can carry out all the typical tasks of a buckaroo and look forward to it throughout their journey. They finally manage to get hired at the *Hacienda de Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción* in the Mexican state Coahuila and commit themselves to the work and duties of a vaquero at the *estancia*. There Cole and Rawlins spend their days breaking horses, breeding mares and riding out on roundups in the mountains. They become loyal ranch workers and enjoy their new lives. At this point, their depiction differs greatly from the traditional heroic representations of cowboys in literature and mainstream culture. Owens (2000: 66), however, argues that there are indeed notions of heroism in *All the
Pretty Horses and refers to the protagonists as “young romantic heroes of the type R.W.B. Lewis has named ‘the American Adam’”. Owens (2000: 66) quotes Lewis in his book who describes the American Adam as an “‘individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources’”. Referring to Lewis’s study called The American Adam Owens continues:

Torn away from a domestic Edenic sanctuary, an American Adam strikes out alone with naïve, impossible dreams. In the wilderness he faces challenges, living in the present, without much forethought about danger and failure. […] But in all of his manifestations, the young American Adam is unabashedly heroic (Owens 2000: 67).

In fact, this description of the American Adam hero fits the three protagonists in All the Pretty Horses perfectly. Cole and Rawlins set out on a journey through to them unknown lands with the somewhat naïve dream to find the Old West in Mexico. While heading south they never doubt their decision to leave their home country and determinately follow their dreams. Like the American Adam they also face challenges and obstacles without giving thought to possible dangers, for example, when they try to get Blevins’s horse back and are chased down by the townspeople. In this respect, however, Cole and Rawlins differ from each other, as Rawlins, for example, soon tries to get rid of Blevins out of fear of getting into trouble. Furthermore, they do not necessarily consider failure a possible consequence of their endeavors. For instance, Cole is pretty convinced of himself being able to break the sixteen colts at the hacienda in only four days and does not even consider the possibility of failure. Owens (2000: 80) explains that “the American Adam persona, as a prototypical hero, is expected to demonstrate bravery and skill under duress”. Cole and Rawlins are undeniably two brave characters, be it the case when they make their way into Mexico alone, or when they are taken to jail. Being brave is their only way to survive in the Mexican prison and in general to survive in the foreign country. A perfect example of their bravery under duress is the scene in which coyotes approach their sleeping place in the wilderness. In this scene Rawlins gets up, gets a stick from the fire, throws it at them and the coyotes disappear (cf. McCarthy. All the Pretty Horses 92). Furthermore, they show “skill under duress” (cf. Owens 2000: 80). Throughout their journey to the hacienda they are reliant on their skills and knowledge to survive in the unknown prairies, for example when it comes to hunting and finding food and water. According to Owens (2000: 80) the Western cowboy-Adam is measured by his skills in gunplay and horsemanship. All three of them, Cole, Rawlins and Blevins, own guns and know how to use them. Furthermore, they are excellent riders and well-acquainted with all the facets of horsemanship. Cole and Rawlins are able to apply their knowledge at the hacienda and manage to carry out all the work of a vaquero. As
we can see, Owens’s comparison of the protagonists in *All the Pretty Horses* with the American Adam hero is difficult to deny. Although the protagonists might not be the classical heroes from cowboy and Western fiction, they can be regarded as heroes with respect to their attitude, qualities and virtues.

Another important aspect of the idealization of the herdsman is the fact that Western novels and movies usually employ a villain that the cowboy needs to fight. Although there is no apparent adversary to the protagonists and no actual antihero Cole needs to fight to save his lover, Owens (2000: 92-93) argues that from a reader’s point of view, one person that can be identified as a villain is the police captain. Cole returns to the town of Encantada to take revenge and confronts the captain with a pistol and the demand to get back his horses. According to Owens (2000: 92) the 16-year-old appears as a kind of American hero in this scene, as “he is now acting in the best interests of Anglo-Americans, opposing the evil Mexican villain by boldly invading his turf”. Consequently, Cole can be viewed as the “classic ‘good’ American defeating the foreign enemy” to reclaim “American property” (ibid.: 92), an image promoting national identity that has been apparent in literary works all over the history of U.S. American literature. The traditional adversaries in cowboy and Western novels, the Natives, do not play a major role in the novel and there are only a few marginal references to them. Contrary to their common representation as thieves and killers in popular Western fiction, they are portrayed as a rather peaceful people in *All the Pretty Horses* and not as the dangerous ‘other’, which we can see in the following text passage at the end of the novel:

> At that time there were still indians camped on the western plains and late in the day he passed in his riding a scattered group of their wickiups [...]. The indians stood watching him. He could see that none of them spoke among themselves or commented on his riding there nor did they raise a hand in greeting or call out to him. They had no curiosity about him at all. (McCarthy. *All the Pretty Horses* 301).

The only criminal reference to Natives depicted in the novel concerns three prisoners in the Mexican jail. There, however, Cole gets along well with them and one of them even helps him get a knife to defend himself. Thus, it can be said that there is no hostile disposition between cowboys and Natives in the novel, which confronts and opposes the image of the Indian enemy in popular Western fiction.

To conclude, in *All the Pretty Horses* we find the representation of two descendants of the American herdsman, the cowboy and the vaquero. Nevertheless, despite the novel being a Western story there are more references to the vaquero than to his North American brother, which is the first deviation from the concept of the Western novel which usually focuses on
The cowboy tradition is already fading in the U.S. due to the modernization of the country. Furthermore, the Western frontier, the home of the adventuresome cowboy, does not exist anymore. Therefore, the protagonists decide to leave for Mexico where they hope to be able to live as cowboys and to find a place where they can revive the myth of the Old West. In Mexico, however, they are not considered cowboys, but rather vaqueros. The terminology is not important to them and the boys’ Wild West is now located in the prairies of the Mexican northern state of Coahuila. Finding work at a ranch there, they can finally live their dreams of being cowboys, or in the true sense of the word, vaqueros. As far as the literary idealization of the cowboy in Western novels is concerned, we find a rather realistic depiction of the cowboy, or vaquero in McCarthy’s novel. Although the protagonists do not appear as classical cowboy heroes, they can be regarded as heroes of the type ‘American Adam’ according to Owens (2000).

Another aspect concerning heroism in All the Pretty Horses is the existence of a villain the hero has to fight. In McCarthy’s novel there are indeed Natives, but these are not depicted as villains, which opposes the image of the hostile indigenous people in popular Western literature. Instead, the Mexican police captain serves as the villain Cole confronts. In All the Pretty Horses there are several deviations from the tradition of the classical Western story. Firstly, the novel focuses on vaqueros rather than on cowboys. Secondly, the setting is not the Wild West, but the North of Mexico. Thirdly, Natives are not represented as opponents, but appear as peaceful secondary characters. Nevertheless, the appearance of the protagonists as heroes, even if not as classical cowboy heroes, and the existence of a villain make the novel’s classification as Western story valid.

4.2. Negotiating Masculinity in All the Pretty Horses

Just as manliness has always been regarded an essential characteristic of the cowboy figure in Western literature and popular culture, it also plays an important role in All the Pretty Horses. Although the classic cowboy masculinity portrayed in novels and movies usually involves an overly masculine, self-confident hero that does not have any doubts about his own manliness, we find a different representation of masculinity in McCarthy’s novel. Taking a closer look at the protagonists’ behavior throughout the text it becomes obvious that Cole, Rawlins and Blevins are desperately trying to represent themselves in the most masculine way possible. In fact, they do not seem so sure of their own masculinity and in turn search for ways to identify themselves as manly. Therefore, it can be said that one of the main features of the novel’s plot is the protagonists’ quest for a masculine identity.
From a historical point of view, growing up in the United States towards the end of the first half of the 20th century Cole, Rawlins and Blevins are gradually being immersed into a society and culture in which the role and perception of men are experiencing a major shift. The days in which the patriarchal system was the norm in the U.S. and provided men with superiority and dominance over women are coming to an end. Women are continuously obtaining liberty and independence from men and are now able to take control of their own lives (cf. King 2014: 71). As the U.S. is steering towards Second Wave Feminism, a movement “defined in part by the desire to independently choose personal destiny, free of familial obligations”, women’s role in society is changing (cf. ibid.: 71). At the same time the American man who has always regarded himself as the “responsible breadwinner, imperviously stoic master of his fate, and swashbuckling hero” is now entering unknown territory, in which he can no longer define himself as such (Kimmel 2012: 190). Furthermore, Kimmel (cf. ibid.: 190) points out that men have always established “secure identities” by suppressing “marginalized groups”, particularly women, which becomes a challenging task with the rise of women’s independence and liberty. Consequently, many men find it a difficult undertaking to continue to define masculinity for themselves. According to King (2014: 70-71) the same changes can be observed in the protagonists’ home state, Texas, where Cole’s mother “functions as a symbol of the late 20th-century ‘liberated’ women”. After Cole’s grandfather’s death she wants to sell the ranch and become an actress. King (ibid. 71) explains that by doing so she dispossesses Cole, as well as his father “of the ranch and a means of earning a living”. King further argues that the mother’s decision leads to Cole’s emasculation (cf. ibid. 70), as he fails to “achieve conventional manliness, associated with physical labor […]” (ibid. 74). Cole must conform to his mother’s plans. He fails to convince her to lease him the ranch and cannot live his dream of being a cowboy in Texas. Seeking legal advice, he discovers that nobody can prevent his mother from selling the ranch. He even turns to his father asking for help, but soon realizes that his father has no say in it either, as he has also been emasculated. Consequently, Cole struggles to establish a masculine identity that suits him in the world he lives in, as he cannot obtain what has traditionally been regarded as masculine in old Texas – possession, power and dominance. The same applies to Rawlins who equally has no perspective of taking over his parents’ farm. Furthermore, Cole’s feeling of being emasculated by the women around him also results from his recent break-up with his ex-girlfriend Mary Catherine. When running into her on the open street he is instantly confronted with meeting her new boyfriend, whom she left him for. At this point, it becomes clear that he is not over her yet. The fact that she ended the relationship and quickly replaced him makes him feel emasculated, which becomes obvious when he struggles
to admit to his father that it was not him who ended their relationship (McCarthy. *All the Pretty Horses* 24). When Rawlins addresses him concerning Mary Catherine Cole remarks: “I wouldn’t let her get the best of me […] She aint worth it. None of em are [sic]” (ibid.: 10). Here he is not only playing down his feelings, but also positioning himself in a more superior role than her and women in general. However, he immediately changes his mind by saying “Yes they are”. Initially, he feels that women are not equal to men, and that men would be better off without women but he retracts his words and reassures himself that women are indeed valuable. This counterstatement also reflects Cole’s general view and treatment of women. Although he might feel emasculated by self-determining women like his mother and his ex-girlfriend, he shows no derogatory behavior towards them. Nevertheless, Cole’s and Rawlins’s desire to find a suitable masculine identity cannot be fulfilled in a world in which they feel emasculated. King (cf. 2014: 71) states that the two boys’ motivation to leave Texas is not only based on the fading cowboy tradition in their home country, but also on the shifts in gender relations occurring in the U.S. As she points out, Cole “seeks a pre-modern, patriarchal enclave as a sphere in which he may be valued as a laborer and therein recuperate masculinity” (ibid. 70). The two boys expect to find this world in Mexico, where they can still work and live as cowboys, which is something they regard as utterly masculine, and where men still express themselves through superiority, power and dominance over women. Brandt (cf. 2007: 238) comments that, from a historical point of view, many U.S. American men who felt ‘feeble’ fled to the American west with the aim to leave their civilized selves behind and recover their masculine roots. The same proceedings can be observed in *All the Pretty Horses* with the exception that Cole and Rawlins flee to Mexico, as the American west does no longer exist. According to Kimmel (2012: 111) “the vast prairie is the domain of male liberation from workplace humiliation, cultural feminization, and domestic emasculation”. It is this liberation that the boys hope to obtain by leaving the U.S. and by making their way through the U.S.-Mexican prairies emulating the creature that rules the open country, the herdsman.

Throughout their journey into Mexico the protagonists appear to find a certain masculine identity through the mythic cowboy figure. Consequently, they steadfastly hold on to the ideals of the cowboys, equating living their lives with displaying masculinity. Kimmel (ibid.: 110) describes the mythic cowboy as “fierce and brave, willing to venture into unknown territory”. He proceeds to define him by referring to Owen Wister’s letters and the essay “The Evolution of the Cow Puncher”:

He is a man of action – ‘grim [and] lean, … of few topics, and not many words concerning these.’ He moves in a world of men, in which daring, bravery, and skill are his constant companions. He lives by
physical strength and rational calculation; his compassion is social and generalized, but he forms no lasting emotional bonds with any single person (ibid.: 110).

Kimmel (cf. ibid. 111) further states that one of the main traits of the cowboy is, of course, his manliness. In the novel, the protagonists seem to copy their behavior from this mythic cowboy figure in order to be able to define themselves as masculine. Now, at a first glance, their understanding of cowboy masculinity seems to be limited to spitting, smoking tobacco, drinking alcohol, playing cool, and riding along on their horses. However, upon closer examination Cole, Rawlins and Blevins are well acquainted with the mythic cowboy’s masculine qualities and intend to adopt them, for example, by acting bravely and daringly. Their bravery and daring are best displayed when they set out for Mexico alone, advancing into the ‘wilderness’. Facing several challenges and dangers, such as crossing rivers or trying to survive on the open prairies, they never create the impression of being close to giving up and determinately go ahead with their search for a cowboy paradise, which makes them men of action. Furthermore, clinging to the masculine ideals of the cowboys the protagonists use skill in horsemanship to measure manliness, which becomes obvious in the following dialogue between Blevins and Rawlins:

Blevins are you a cowboy? said Rawlins.
I like it.
Everybody likes it.
I dont claim to be no top hand. I can ride.
Yeah? said Rawlins.
That man yonder can ride, said Blevins. He nodded across the fire toward John Grady.
What makes you say that?
He just can, that’s all.
Suppose I was to tell you he just took it up. Suppose I was to tell you he’s never been on a horse a girl couldnt ride.
I’d have to say you was pullin my leg (McCarthy. All the Pretty Horses 58).

Blevins acknowledges Cole’s superiority in horse-riding. The fact that he refers to him as a ‘man’ implies that Blevins considers somebody who is better at horse-riding to be manlier. Furthermore, by saying “Suppose I was to tell you he’s never been on a horse a girl couldnt ride [sic]” Rawlins reaffirms that a man who possesses good horse-riding skills appears more masculine. With his remark he does, however, also convey the message that men are generally better riders than women. In Rawlins’s statement we can undoubtedly find a discriminatory and derogatory position towards women, which we will focus on in detail later in this chapter. The
character to imitate the mythic cowboy figure and embody the masculine qualities of the cowboy the most is undeniably Cole. He most obviously tries to behave like a ‘real’, masculine cowboy by appearing cool-headed and tough, but also serious, untouchable and mysterious. He is not very talkative, preferring to observe his environment without commenting much on it, which makes him a man of “few topics, and not many words concerning these” (Kimmel 2012: 110). The 16-year-old is not the easiest accessible person and uses his short and succinct comments and responses in order not to get into profound conversations which are frequently brought up by Rawlins. In fact, he seems to keep an emotional distance from his companions and rarely interferes in their quarrels, which makes him appear independent and self-sufficient, typical attributes of the mythic masculine cowboy. Rawlins shows a similar masculine cowboy behavior to that of Cole, as he also attempts to appear tough, brave and serious. Unlike Cole, he is talkative, loves to philosophize about the world and the meaning of life, and constantly argues with Blevins. He enhances his masculine appearance by throwing out occasional remarks that make him appear superior than his companions and authoritative. When Cole and Rawlins, for example, decide to have breakfast at a café and Cole asks him “Could you eat some breakfast?”, Rawlins replies: “You’re talking my language, son.”. Shortly afterwards he addresses Cole by saying “You pay attention to your old dad, now […] I’ll show you how to deal with a unruly breakfast. [sic]” (McCarthy. All the Pretty Horses 32-33). We can find another example of such remarks in the scene in which the three protagonists discuss the ownership of Blevins’s horse. This time Rawlins is talking to Blevins: “Son, […] I dont give a shit who it belongs to. But it damn sure dont belong to you [sic]” (ibid.: 41). In both text passages Rawlins refers to Cole and Blevins as ‘sons’ and presents himself as their ‘dad’ or somebody authoritative, which provides him with a sense of superiority and dominance. Furthermore, by insulting and looking down at Blevins he also seems to feel superior and manlier. His constant quarrels with Blevins can be viewed as attempts to suppress the 13-year-old and claim dominance. Rawlins’ understanding of manliness as based on the idea of male superiority once again becomes apparent regarding his view and perception of women. He does not talk much about them, but when he does, his references to women are discriminatory and derogatory. As mentioned above, by commenting “Suppose I was to tell you he’s never been on a horse a girl couldnt ride [sic]” he indicates that women are generally less skillful riders than men, presenting them as the inferior sex and classifying men as superior in the cowboy world, in which horse riding is considered as thoroughly masculine. This statement also implies that a man who is bad at horse riding is feminine, which suggests the idea that if you want to be a real man, you do not want to showcase any feminine traits. He makes another derogatory
remark on women when he and Cole are again discussing the ownership of Blevins’s horse: “A goodlookin horse is like a goodlookin woman [sic] […] They’re always more trouble than what they’re worth. What a man needs is just one that will get the job done.” (ibid. 89). Here he does not only compare women with horses, but asserts that beautiful women are not worth the trouble they cause. Furthermore, by saying “What a man needs is just one that will get the job done” he implies that women, just like horses, have a certain role to fulfill, namely to serve men. In so doing, he makes women appear as mere tools and objects whose sole purpose it is to facilitate men’s lives. It is not quite clear whether there is also a sexual connotation concerning women in his statement, but women are undeniably discriminated against in this remark. Just like Cole and Rawlins, Blevins also adopts the role of the mythic cowboy to find a way in which he can display his masculinity. In doing so, he intends to appear serious and brave and tries not to admit any fears or discomfort. Instead, playing the inaccessible, he prefers to ‘play it cool’ and hides his weaknesses from his companions. Being constantly referred to as the ‘kid’ by Cole and Rawlins he longs to be seen as being grown-up and, hence, as manly as possible. By demonstrating his gunship skills to Cole and Rawlins he wants to make them aware of how grown-up and masculine he is (cf. ibid. 47-48). His plan works out well and the other two adolescents approach him with a certain kind of reverence, as they not only realize that he is good with guns, but also that he could have shot them with the pistol at their first encounter:

You had that pistol in your shirt back on the Pecos, didn’t you? said Rawlins.

The kid looked at him from under his immense hat. Yeah, he said.

They rode. Rawlins leaned and spat. You’d of shot me with it I guess.

The kid spat also. I didn’t aim to get shot, he said. (cf. ibid.: 48-49).

The pistol as the cowboy’s tool functions as an indicator of the “’North American concept of manliness’” (Stoeltje 2012: 52). Therefore, by displaying his shooting talent, he can convince Cole and Rawlins of his masculinity.

Although the three protagonists seem to be able to define themselves as masculine by emulating the mythic cowboy, they also struggle and fail to do so. Cole, for example, who acts as the independent and self-sufficient cowboy, does not turn out to be the lone wolf he would like to be perceived as. Contrary to the mythic cowboy character as defined by Kimmel he does form emotional bonds with his companions, not only with his cousin and friend Rawlins, but also with Blevins. When Rawlins tries to convince him to leave Blevins behind in Encantada, Cole says that he cannot do it (cf. McCarthy. All the Pretty Horses 79). Blevins has grown dear to him, which also becomes apparent when he saves the thirteen-year-old from the Mexicans in
the waxcamp who want to buy Blevins (cf. ibid. 76). Likewise, Rawlins gets too emotionally involved with Blevins, albeit in a negative way. He constantly quarrels with him and insults him, not only because he regards him a potential threat to his and Cole’s fresh start in Mexico, but also because he gains a sense of superiority through belittling him. His longing for superiority and dominance, which does not only manifest itself in his treatment of his companions, but also in his views of women, contradicts the masculine virtues of the mythic cowboy. Furthermore, he does not obtain Cole’s and Blevins’s approval of his derogatory comments on women, and his attempts to suppress Blevins do not work out due to the fact that Blevins either ignores him, or verbally insults him. When it comes to Blevins, the 13-year-old tries to appear manly by not showing fears or discomfort and ‘playing cool’. However, he fails at behaving like the untouchable, brave, intrepid cowboy he pretends to be. When the three boys are riding towards a thunderstorm and Blevins notices the lightning in the sky, he admits his deep-seated fear of being hit by it to Cole and Rawlins. Blevins does not want to show any weaknesses, which also becomes apparent in the scene in which the three boys are eating dinner at the house of the Mexican family right after crossing the border. There he falls off the bench and the people around him start to laugh. Feeling ashamed and humiliated, he sulkily decides to sleep outside under the open sky instead of spending the night in the family’s house together with Cole and Rawlins (cf. ibid. 53-54). Finally, it can also be said that the protagonists fail to claim a valid and stable masculine identity based on the mythic cowboy, since, as Kimmel (2012: 110) points out, “he doesn’t really exist”. Throughout their trip into Mexico the mythic cowboy figure is the only masculine constant they can hold on to. Unable to feel manly in their home country, they finally find a way to define themselves as masculine, namely by identifying themselves with this utterly manly mythic being. This ideal is just an illusion of the cowboy, a myth that represents the real hard-working, unromantic cowboy as the embodiment of manliness. The three boys are only familiar with the original North American cowboy as he existed in Texas in the 19th century and, therefore, seem to draw on the mythic cowboy in their search for a masculine role model. Nevertheless, they struggle to define themselves as masculine by doing so, in that they try to imitate a being that does not exist in real life. Consequently, their quest for a valid masculine identity continues.

Entering Mexico, the protagonists soon realize that gender roles south of the border have not changed to the extent they have in Texas and that male superiority is still very present. In the Mexico of the 20th century, women still live under patriarchal rule and men still define themselves as the head of their wives and their families. In addition, men still legitimately claim superiority over women, while women are considered the inferior sex and are expected to be
subject to men. The three boys’ first encounter with this to them unfamiliar social system takes place in the Mexican family’s home right after crossing the border, where they are invited for dinner and stay overnight. During the dinner the man appears as the head of the family who is the only one allowed to socialize with his guests, while his wife is represented as inferior and submissive: “The woman ate with her head down and the man joked with them and passed the plates” (McCarthy. All the Pretty Horses 52). When Rawlins finally thanks her, she “nodded demurely” (ibid. 52). However, it is important to point out that these are only the protagonists’ first impressions of gender relations and gender roles in Mexico. Although they initially have the sense that Mexican women are still dependent on men and that their liberty is limited, they find that this not true for all the women. Alejandra, for example, is rebellious and in doing so acts like her grandaunt in her youth (cf. ibid. 135). She is self-confident and not ready to follow the strict guidelines set for women in her country. Furthermore, the Dueña Alfonsa proves that women in Mexico are not powerless, as she has a great influence on Rocha and it is her who ransoms Cole and Rawlins from the prison. When it comes to the boys’ perception of Mexican men’s superiority over women, they are disillusioned to some extent. Arriving in Mexico they hope to find a country in which men do not have to conform to the needs and dreams of women and, thus, do not experience any form of emasculation. However, in his conversations with the hacendado, Cole finds out that Rocha, who, at a first glance, appears as a Mexican patriarch par excellence, indeed accepts his wife’s wish to live in Mexico City, far away from the estancia, not seeming to claim any superiority over her. Moreover, he refuses to take control over his daughter’s life, which becomes obvious when he talks about sending her to France. Although he does not want to let her go, he ends up saying “She will go. Who am I? A father. A father is nothing” (ibid. 146). It is important to point out that in contrast to Cole’s and Rawlins’s situation in Texas, Rocha does not seem to suffer any emasculation despite the fact that he respects the needs and wishes of his wife and daughter.

Despite being disillusioned when it comes to the gender relations they hoped to encounter in Mexico, the protagonists are still able to experience Mexico “as a sphere in which [they] may be valued as […] laborer[s] and therein recuperate masculinity” (King 2014: 70). To their advantage, the men in Mexico still seem to be able to claim their masculinity by assuming the role of the breadwinner and by being the masters of their own fate (cf. Kimmel 2012: 190). Furthermore, they continue to carry out professions that have traditionally been regarded as masculine, such as the profession of the vaquero, which benefits the protagonists. After finding jobs as ranch workers at La Purísima the two boys are finally able to live the lives of real cowboys, or rather vaqueros, which to them equals living the lives of real men. Working and
living in a world of men, in which courage, fearlessness and, especially, skill are the guiding principles, they feel comfortable and can self-identify as manly. Taking into consideration their behavior at the ranch they also seem to feel the need to prove their masculinity, as the boys’ breaking of the sixteen colts can be understood as an attempt to convince the other vaqueros of their strength and skill, and, thus, manliness. Petitt (2013: 71) notes that “the interaction with the horse provides an opportunity to display traditional macho masculinity”. She further explains that this display of traditional macho masculinity is enhanced, if a cowboy is successful in his attempt to deal with an unruly horse and takes control of it and shows “his domination over it by staying in the saddle” (Petitt 2013: 71). Consequently, as the Mexican vaqueros react to the protagonists’ achievements with “a certain deference” (McCarthy. All the Pretty Horses 105), the two protagonists do not only feel accepted as two of them, but also respected and confirmed in their masculinity. Furthermore, when it comes to Cole’s and Rawlins’s conduct of the horses they break and hunt, we can also observe a certain display of masculinity in terms of the relation between herdsman and animal. Acting as the tamers of these wild animals, they can claim superiority and dominance over them, while the horses assume the role of the inferior counterpart. In the following extract from the text we can find Cole in the role of the dominator and tamer of one of the sixteen colts:

Before the colt could struggle up John Grady had squatted on its neck and pulled its head up and to one side and was holding the horse by the muzzle with the long bony head pressed against his chest and the hot sweet breath of it flooding up from the dark wells of its nostrils over his face and neck like news from another world. […] He held the horse’s face against his chest and he could feel along his inner thighs the blood pumping through the arteries and he could smell the fear […] (ibid. 103).

Unable to escape, the animal submissively obeys its master, as it finds itself under Cole’s control. McCarthy strengthens the image of the boys as dominators by including the animals’ perception of them: “They stood waiting for they knew not what with the voice of the breaker still running in their brains like the voice of some god come to inhabit them” (ibid. 104). By depriving these horses of their freedom and bringing them under their control Cole and Rawlins exercise power and dominion over them, which enables the two boys to feel manly. The ancient concept of masculine superiority, which is seemingly not only present in human relations, but also in the relation between the herdsman and the animals he works with is present in this passage. Although Cole and Rawlins seem to take advantage of the horses to express their masculinity, they do not fit into Petitt’s category of the “heteronormative, macho and traditionally masculine cowboy”, whose treatment of animals involves the excessive and improper use of violence and aggressiveness (cf. Petitt 2013: 71,79). Instead, they rather
represent “the calm, responsible and less violent cowboy” and “the sensitive, attentive cowboy with finesse”, which Petitt (ibid. 73, 76) classifies as “additional rural masculinities” to that of the macho. These types of cowboys do not cause any unnecessary pain to the animals and do not boost their masculine appearance by making the animals suffer (cf. ibid. 73-75). The latter carries out his work rather sensitively and attentively, caring for the animals and treating them with respect (cf. ibid. 76). Cole and Rawlins, despite having to inflict pain on the sixteen feral colts while taming them and being able to demonstrate their manliness, nevertheless, try to make the experience as unpleasant as possible for the animals:

[…] [Cole] cupped his hand over the horse’s eyes and stroked them and he did not stop talking to the horse at all, speaking in a low steady voice and telling it all that he intended to do and cupping the animal’s eyes and stroking the terror out (McCarthy. All the Pretty Horses 103).

While Cole demonstrates great empathy with the horses by talking to them and stroking them, Rawlins complains a lot about their behavior and insults them. Still, he does not treat them violently or aggressively. Therefore, it can be said that Cole and Rawlins do not share the behavior of the heteronormative, macho and traditionally masculine cowboy, but rather display an additional rural masculinity, as Petitt (2013: 73) explains it, this involves a sensitive treatment of animals and abstains from claiming manliness by using violence against them. Although Cole and Rawlins seem to have found a suitable masculine identity at the hacienda, they are soon deprived of it by Rocha who has them arrested and taken away from the ranch by Mexican police officers.

The protagonists are also faced with other concepts and standards of manliness in Mexico that do not necessarily concern the appearance and behavior of the cowboy or vaquero. Most of them reflect the macho tradition that claims men’s superiority over all the other individuals and represents the man as a fearless, powerful, utterly virile and sublime being that, however, is also forced to stick to the rules of machoism in order to maintain his masculinity. In his conversations with the Dueña Alfonsa Cole learns that men have a considerable advantage over women in Mexico when it comes to their social status. With reference to Alejandra she explains to him that while it is dangerous for Mexican women to lose their reputation, since it is the only thing they can claim in a world of men, “a man may lose his honor and regain it again”. According to her, a woman’s reputation cannot be restored once gone. Cole reacts to her words by saying that it does not seem right (cf. McCarthy. All the Pretty Horses 136-137). His reaction can be understood to demonstrate his view of the Mexican macho world. Although he initially came into Mexico with the aim to find a place where men still express superiority over women,
he now realizes that he does not approve of the gender inequality in Mexico in which the macho system is rooted and questions men’s position in society. Cole and Rawlins come across other macho concepts during their arrest and imprisonment. For example, they become familiar with the dimensions of macho masculinity through the police captain before they are taken to their prison cell. He tells them about one pivotal moment from his youth when he and some older boys went to a prostitute to have sex with her. When she refused to sleep with him because of his young age, he apparently violated her just in order not to be laughed at and humiliated by the others. He justifies his behavior by referring to resoluteness as an indispensable quality of a man: “A man cannot go out to do some thing and then he go back. Why he go back? Because he change his mind? A man does not change his mind” (ibid. 181). The captain goes on to say that in the end when he came back to the other boys, no one was laughing: “You see. That has always been my way in this world. I am the one when I go someplace then there is no laughing. When I go there then they stop laughing” (ibid. 181). It is important to point out here that the captain’s shameful and cruel act does not represent macho masculinity in the first place, even though his story shows into what sort of behavior it can degenerate. It is rather the concepts of manliness he mentions that are indicative of a macho tradition, namely the ideas that a real man never changes his mind and that he must preserve his masculine appearance no matter what. When it comes to the idea that real men never change their minds and never ‘go back’, Cole does not seem to fulfill this requirement that seems to classify a real man in the macho world. He does change his mind about staying in Mexico and returns to his home country at the end of the novel. In terms of macho masculinity, he would probably be considered weak. However, it can be argued that his ‘weakness’ is in fact strength, as it is a strong move for him to leave his dream of living the life of a cowboy in Mexico and, particularly, Alejandra behind. He is forced to return to Texas after kidnapping the captain, but retreating to the U.S. demands a great deal of him and, thus, makes him appear strong. Compared to Cole, Rawlins appears to be rather weak when it comes to his return to Texas. He willingly gives up his dream of living in Mexico and, more importantly, leaves Cole behind alone. Although it can be argued that he is exhausted and devastated by all the events that have occurred to him and Cole, his going back to the U.S. seems to be a sign of weakness. One important lesson on the Mexican macho society is also relayed to Cole by Emilio Pérez in the prison. When the two of them speak about the adolescent’s fighting skills, Cole asks Pérez what he wants to know, who in return answers: “Only what the world wants to know. […] The world wants to know if you have cojones. If you are brave. […] Then it can decide your price […]” (ibid. 193). From this statement we get the idea that bravery is a fundamental masculine quality in the Mexican macho world. If a man is
courageous, he ‘has cojones’, meaning he is virile and potent, a common and general masculine concept among macho men. However, by saying “Then it can decide your price” Pérez also indicates that this masculine quality provides a basis for the objectification of men. By deciding on their worth based on their bravery, men are viewed as mere objects, not only in prison, but also in Mexican society. Cole goes on to tell Pérez that “some people dont have a price”, whereupon the padrote replies that “those people die” (ibid. 193), which implies that a man who lacks bravery struggles to survive in jail, and in a macho world. By killing the knifer in the prison Cole demonstrates his bravery and, thus, a valid masculine identity according to macho standards. The fact that Pérez helps him recover from his wounds shows him that the padrote now considers him a real man. He does, however, also realize that he has become an object in Pérez’s eyes that is reduced to its fighting skills and bravery.

Finally, when dealing with masculinities, we must not forget one trait that has traditionally been regarded as characteristic of men – their readiness to violent behavior. In the final two chapters of All the Pretty Horses violence and revenge play essential roles and seem to enable the protagonists, particularly Cole, to claim a certain masculine identity. To begin with, right after being taken to prison Cole and Rawlins are exposed to constant violent fights with the other prisoners. In jail Cole and Rawlins are subject to an “egalitarian absolute”, in which “every man was judged by a single standard and that was his readiness to kill” (McCarthy. All the Pretty Horses 182). It is here, as King (2014: 75) points out, that Cole “manifests his first violent inclinations”. Trying to protect himself, but also driven by his longing for avenging Rawlins he kills the knifer in an act of self-defense. Although this incident, in further consequence, leaves him with a feeling of remorse he cannot get rid of, it temporarily also provides him with a sense of masculine superiority, as he has proven his manliness by ending up as the winner of the fight. King (2014: 75) explains that “the violence in prison functions as a means of establishing a masculine hierarchy.” By killing the knifer, the 16-year-old has climbed further to the top of this hierarchy. Devastated by his parting with Alejandra and longing for revenge, Cole finally decides to confront the captain in Encantada. Kidnapping the man who is responsible for Blevins’s death and their imprisonment, he tries to get back his and his friends’ horses. In so doing, he does not flinch from using violence to achieve his goal. Holding the gun against the captain, he threatens to kill him if he does not cooperate, which allows him to exercise power over him and his life, and, consequently, display a rather brutal form of masculinity. Here we can find again the concept of masculine hierarchy and superiority, as Cole can claim dominance and is in control by having the captain’s fate in his hands. Throughout his kidnapping of the
captain and his attempt to reclaim the horses at the charro’s hacienda Cole is overpowered by his readiness to violent behavior, which becomes clear when one of the workers from the hacienda, whom Cole has defeated in a shootout, calls him crazy and Cole answers him that he is right (cf. McCarthy. *All the Pretty Horses* 266). The 16-year-old is aware that his recently developed propensity to violence has taken hold of him and has made him do things he is not proud of. However, the fact that Cole eventually tells the captain that he is not going to kill him, because he is not like him, demonstrates that violence and the act of killing other than out of self-defense go against Cole’s rather sensitive nature (cf. McCarthy. *All the Pretty Horses* 278).

In conclusion it can be said that the protagonists in *All the Pretty Horses* struggle to find a suitable way to establish a secure masculine identity in Mexico. Driven by a certain ‘masculine identity crisis’ they leave Texas where they feel emasculated by the rise of self-determining and independent women and set out for Mexico where they hope to be able to recover their masculine roots. Holding on to the mythic cowboy figure as their male role model throughout their journey they try to define themselves as masculine by imitating this utterly manly being. However, Cole, Rawlins and Blevins struggle to do so, because they all individually fail to emulate the mythic cowboy, and because they attempt to claim a masculine identity based on a being that does not actually exist. Furthermore, arriving in Mexico they realize that the country is not necessarily the patriarchal sphere they hoped to find, as women are also independent and self-determining to a certain extent and not all the men claim superiority over them. Despite their disillusionment Cole and Rawlins finally find a way to identify themselves as manly by working as vaqueros at the hacienda. Encountering different masculinities and masculine concepts while living in Mexico this is the only place where they seemingly establish a masculine identity they feel comfortable with. However, being arrested and taken away from Rocha’s ranch their quest for a masculine identity starts all over again. Gaining insight into the Mexican macho concepts of masculinity throughout their imprisonment the two boys, and especially Cole struggle to define themselves as manly by following the macho standards, on the one hand, because they are unable to meet them, and on the other hand because they disapprove of them. Cole, still searching for a masculine identity, seems to find a way to claim it towards the end of the novel. He experiences violence as a powerful means to demonstrate one’s manliness in the prison where he kills a man and reaches the top of a certain masculine hierarchy that exists among the prisoners. His display of masculinity through violence can further be observed in his kidnapping of the captain. Cole, however, feeling overwhelmed by his readiness to violent behavior, also struggles to feel manly by using violence. Consequently, like Rawlins, he leaves Mexico without being able to establish a secure masculine identity.
4.3. Coming of Age: Reading *All the Pretty Horses* as a Bildungsroman

In *All the Pretty Horses* we do not only find the protagonists’ quest for a masculine identity, but also observe their coming of age. Considering the novel’s plot, structure and characters *All the Pretty Horses* classifies as a Bildungsroman which focuses on the adventures of two adolescent Texans who reach maturity by heading south into Mexico and trying their luck as cowboys, or rather vaqueros. In this chapter I am going to analyze and discuss the typical elements and characteristics of the Bildungsroman as they appear in McCarthy’s novel. In addition, I am going to show in which ways *All the Pretty Horses* follows the tradition of the classical European Bildungsroman and which deviations can be found.

Taking a closer look at the plotline of *All the Pretty Horses*, it becomes clear that the novel fulfills several requirements of the concept of the classical Bildungsroman. The 16-year-old John Grady Cole and the 17-year-old Lacey Rawlins are two young boys from Texas. They are the main characters of the story and it is their journey to adulthood that the novel focuses on. In fact, the greater focus lies on Cole and his maturing. While Rawlins is an important character in *All the Pretty Horses* and can even be regarded a protagonist, Cole is the Bildungsheld. It is his formation that lies in the center of the novel. As far as Rawlins is concerned, the reader is not supplied with all the information needed to fully comprehend his Bildungswege, or in other words, his way of formation and maturity process. He does not make the typical experiences of a Bildungsheld like Cole does and does not even appear as a character in some parts of the story.

Just like in the classical Bildungsroman, we can find the so-called Bildungscurriculum, as it has been termed by Gutjahr (2007: 8), in *All the Pretty Horses*. According to this Bildungscurriculum the Bildungsheld embarks on a journey to discover the world and obtain maturity after living under certain conditions throughout his childhood and adolescence. The final aim of this course of formation are the protagonist’s self-discovery and integration into society. While we do not find out much about Rawlins’s family and educational conditions, we gain insight into Cole’s family life and background at the beginning of the story. Cole’s parents are divorced, and his grandfather has just died. Living with his mother on his grandfather’s ranch, Cole grows up around the Mexican foreign workers and becomes accustomed to working and living with horses. When he finds out that his mother wants to sell the ranch, he tries everything possible to prevent her from doing so. As he fails to convince her to lease him the ranch and to settle any legal actions against her decision he must accept that his dream of being a cowboy in Texas will never come true. Furthermore, the fact that the ranch, which is the only thing remaining to remind him of the ‘good old times’, will be sold leads to him experiencing
an identity crisis. Doub (2010: 5) points out that due to the consequences of modernity “individuals can experience an identity crisis […] , and may even encounter difficulty engaging with society”. This also applies to Cole’s situation. His mother is a modern, liberated woman who takes away his chance of living on the ranch. He does not feel comfortable with the new, modern lifestyle, in which men do not have the final say anymore, and, above all, in which farm work and the work of cowboys is obsolete. As already mentioned in chapter 1.2., modern changes provoked the ending of the cowboy’s world in the United States. Therefore, like in Doub’s explanation, Cole “has lost the traditional means of connecting with past generations and incorporating into society as the rituals of agricultural, feudal society are replaced by industry” (2010: 3). Consequently, he finds it difficult to engage with the Texan society of the 1940s. Cole is looking for a place where modernity has not taken hold of the tradition of farming and working as a cowboy, and where he can fit into society without difficulty. With respect to the protagonist’s Bildung we find the first and probably most essential trial for Cole in his dealing with his family situation and the modern society around him. According to Doub (2010: 4) “learning to live with the contradictions of one’s society – indeed, one’s family – is perhaps the most important trial for our hero as s/he strives to find a path in the world”. Cole’s inability to find a to him suitable place in the Texan society represents the typical initial situation of the Bildungsheld in the classical Bildungsroman before he or she embarks on a journey or peregrination which propels his or her maturity process. Cole decides to leave Texas and start a new life south of the border. He expects Mexico to be the place where he can fit into society and where all his problems are gone. After convincing his friend Rawlins to accompany him the two of them leave their homes together one night and set out without telling anyone.

Cole’s journey to Mexico, as well as the time he spends there, represent an important part of the novel’s Bildungskursus. The journey itself is the first Bildungsstation for our Bildungsheld. Cole’s and Rawlins’s survival throughout their journey is most obviously one of the experiences that adds to Cole’s maturity process. Having left their homes, the two adolescents are now on their own and need to make their way to Mexico without any assistance. They are accommodated by a Mexican family and share the food with a group of Mexican riders (cf. McCarthy. All the Pretty Horses 52,73). Nevertheless, they have no family to rely on and are forced to fend for themselves. Trying to survive in the open prairies they draw on hunting to find food and thus demonstrate their talents and abilities:

Rawlins stepped down and slid his little 25–20 carbine out of the bootleg scabbard he carried it in and walked out along the ridge. John Grady heard him shoot. In a little while he came back with a rabbit and he reholstered the carbine and took out his knife and walked off a ways and squatted and gutted the
rabbit. […] They built a fire and skinned out the rabbit and skewered it on a green limb and set it to broil at the edge of the fire (McCarthy. *All the Pretty Horses* 35).

When it comes to hunting, Rawlins is the one who provides the food. Hence, he seems to be the only one who actively demonstrates his talents and abilities as far as the boys’ survival strategies are concerned. Nevertheless, Cole also learns from these hunting experiences, as we can see towards the end of the novel when he heads back to the United States alone and shoots a doe (cf. ibid. 281-282). However, Cole does not only learn lessons about surviving, but also about friendship and community. He sticks with his best friend Rawlins whom he goes through various adventures and unpleasant situations with. Soon after embarking on their journey Blevins joins up with the two adolescents. They first refuse to have him accompany them as they regard him as a mere child that might cause them trouble. Finally, however, they allow the 13-year-old to come with them. Despite Rawlins’s dislike for Blevins, the three boys continue their journey together. In the end, Blevins does cause trouble to Cole and Rawlins, for example, when his horse runs off. Nevertheless, they agree to help him although Rawlins first wants to leave the 13-year-old behind. They steal back Blevins’s horse from Encantada, which leads to them having even more problems in the aftermath (cf. ibid.: 77-83). Another event that shows that the three boys stick together is their encounter with the Mexicans in the waxcamp. The Mexicans want to buy Blevins, but Cole immediately acts and rescues Blevins (cf. ibid.: 75-77). Cole leaves no one behind and supports the people around him even in unpleasant situations. All these experiences of friendship and community contribute to Cole’s maturity process. Another experience that influences Cole during his journey are the new sociocultural contexts he comes into contact with. Arriving in Mexico, he soon realizes that life there is different from what he is used to. People are not dependent on modernity to the extent U.S. Americans are and live rather simple lives. Men still claim the position as heads of their families and, most importantly to Cole, agriculture and farming are still widespread practices. In addition, the profession of the herdsman still plays an important role in the country. Cole seems to find it easier to engage with Mexican society, since it offers him everything he was not able to obtain in Texas.

The next essential *Bildungsstation* for our *Bildungsheld* is Rocha’s *estancia* where Cole and Rawlins are hired as farm workers. Here Cole can live the life of a cowboy, or rather vaquero, and for the first time seems to be able to find a place in society. According to Jacobs and Krause, who are quoted by Gutjahr (cf. 2007: 46), the taking up of a certain profession represents a common experience of the *Bildungsheld* in the Bildungsroman. In *All the Pretty Horses* Cole
takes up the profession of the herdsman and farm worker, which results in the fulfillment of his dream. On the ranch he learns everything about the vaquero’s work and is even able to demonstrate his talents and abilities, for example, when he breaks the sixteen colts (cf. McCarthy. *All the Pretty Horses* 103-109). By taming the feral horses, he attracts the *hacendado*’s attention and receives the chance to speak with him in person. In his conversation with Rocha they discuss famous horses and livestock. To his surprise, the *hacendado* asks for his opinion which boosts his self-confidence (cf. ibid.: 114-115). In general, when it comes to Cole’s maturity process at the ranch, he seems to grow more self-confident as his work is not only valued, but also because he is promoted. Most importantly, he is not treated like a minor that has no say, but rather as someone whose opinion and work effort matter. Although there is no schooling through an educational institution or a mentor in *All the Pretty Horses*, Cole learns important lessons at the ranch, not only with respect to the profession of the herdsman, but also about life. Therefore, it can be said that the ranch serves as a kind of educational institution for the 16-year-old.

Another important experience that influences Cole’s maturity process at the ranch is his romantic relationship with Alejandra, Rocha’s daughter. Soon after arriving at the *estancia* he falls in love with her and realizes that she has got the same feelings for him. The following quote depicts one of their first encounters, at the ranch’s dance festival:

> They walked along the road and there were other couples in the road and they passed and wished them a good evening. […] She took his arm and she laughed and called him a mojado-reverso, so rare a creature and one to be treasured. He told her about his life. […] She looked at him and smiled. Shall we go in? He looked toward the lights. The music had started. She stood and bent with one hand on his shoulder and slipped on her shoes. […] He rode back alone with the smell of her perfume on his shirt. (ibid.: 123-124).

Gutjahr (cf. 2007: 46) refers to Rosenkranz’s book who argues that love and passion, as well as the attraction to the other sex play an important role for the formation of the protagonist and represent an important aspect of the Bildungsroman. According to him a man and a woman do not only attract each other, but also ‘educate’ each other. Gutjahr (cf. 2007: 46) explains in more detail that while the protagonist leaves his family home behind him, spatially, as well as emotionally, he is in search of new emotional ties. In Alejandra Cole finds someone he can bond with emotionally. The romance seems to be particularly important to him after his disappointment with his ex-girlfriend in Texas who broke up with him and displaced him with a new boyfriend. However, Cole and Alejandra are forced to keep their relationship a secret from everyone on the ranch, except for Rawlins, since they fear the consequences of the
finding out. Despite their best efforts to hide their relationship, Alejandra’s grandaunt, the Dueña Alfonsa, reveals their secret. One day Alfonsa invites Cole to play chess with her and talks to him about her concerns regarding Alejandra’s reputation. She demands of him not to see her again and to end their relationship (cf. McCarthy. *All the Pretty Horses* 135-137). Soon after this conversation Alejandra pays Cole an evening visit and tells him that she will not accept this treatment from her grandaunt (cf. ibid.: 139). The same night the two lovers have their first sexual encounter in a lake near the ranch and Cole tells her for the first time that he loves her (cf. ibid. 141). According to Gutjahr (cf. 2007: 46) first erotic experiences are an important part of the protagonist’s Bildung. Cole’s relationship with Alejandra, however, also brings him into conflict at the ranch and DISTurbs his loyalty to the *hacendado*. The ranch owner and the 16-year-old appear to have a solid working relationship which is now jeopardized by the boy’s secret. Cole is conflicted because he does not wish to end the relationship with Alejandra, but he also fears losing his job at the *estancia*. This situation represents an essential trial Cole must face at the ranch, as he is forced to make an important decision; whether he wants to stay at the ranch and live his dream, or whether he wants to be together with Alejandra.

In the end, however, he decides in favor of Alejandra and plans to head to Mexico City to be with her. His plan is finally disrupted when he is arrested by the Mexican police officers, which, as he later finds out, Rocha is responsible for. In general, Cole’s trial concerning his love for Alejandra is one of the most major trials he faces in *All the Pretty Horses*. According to Doub (cf. 2010: 3), trials related to love frequently appear as difficult situations that the Bildungsheld must face. After his release from the prison he learns that the Dueña Alfonsa ransomed him and Rawlins in exchange for Alejandra’s promise not to see Cole again. He soon gives Alejandra a phone call and tries to convince her to talk to him and meet him in person. In the following quote from the text it becomes obvious how important Alejandra is to Cole:

> He closed his eyes and held the phone very tightly and he told her that he loved her and that she’d had no right to make the promise that she’d made even if they killed him and that he would not leave without seeing her even if it was the last time he would see her ever and she was quiet for a long time and then she said that she would leave a day early. (McCarthy. *All the Pretty Horses* 246)

Although Alejandra first refuses to see him, they finally meet in Zacatecas where Alejandra confesses to having told the *hacendado* about their relationship since she did not want to be blackmailed by her grandaunt. Cole is devastated but wants to be together with Alejandra: “[…] he told her that if she would trust her life into his care he would never fail her or abandon her and that he would love her until he died and she said that she believed him” (ibid.: 253). Nevertheless, Alejandra tells him that she cannot do what he asks of her, despite the fact that
she loves him (cf. ibid.: 254). Cole is heartbroken and must watch her leave him behind alone at the train station. The following text passage depicts his inner emotions after Alejandra refuses his request:

He saw very clearly how all his life led only to this moment and all after led nowhere at all. He felt something cold and soulless enter him like another being and he imagined that it smiled malignly and he had no reason to believe that it would ever leave. (ibid.: 254)

Cole deeply loves Alejandra, but despite her mutual feelings she decides to end their relationship, which makes the 16-year-old’s world shatter. He gave up his work on the ranch for her and left the life he had always dreamt of behind him in order to be together with her. This experience with Alejandra leaves him embittered and upset and contributes to his decision to take revenge on the police captain. At this point of the novel, Cole experiences two major disappointments. The first of these is about Alejandra, and the second one revolves around his life at the estancia. Due to his relationship with Alejandra he cannot live his dream of being a cowboy, or rather vaquero anymore, which was the reason he came to Mexico. Although his love for Alejandra means more to him than the work at the ranch, he is forced to accept that his plans to be with Alejandra do not prove to be successful either. He ends up alone and with his dreams shattered. However, these disappointments are an essential part of the protagonist’s Bildung (cf. Gutjahr 2007: 46). As mentioned in chapter 3, according to Wilhelm Dilthey struggles and conflicts are indispensable experiences for the Bildungsheld on his or her way to maturity (cf. Kohlschmidt and Mohr 2011: 175).

Cole’s arrest and imprisonment in the Mexican jail represent another important Bildungsstation for our Bildungsheld. As aforementioned, Rocha has Cole and Rawlins arrested by Mexican police officers, not only because of finding out about his daughter’s and Cole’s relationship, but also because he has suspected them of being criminals related to the crime in Encantada from the first moment on they came to the ranch. Although it was Blevins who killed the three people in Encantada, he and Blevins are imputed for the same crime. Furthermore, they are charged with the theft of a horse which is actually Blevins’s horse. Cole and Rawlins only helped the 13-year-old get his horse back and did not take away other people’s property unlawfully or kill anyone. Despite Cole’s and Rawlins’s attempts to prove their innocence to the police captain the three boys are taken to the prisión Castelar. On the way there, Blevins is shot in the woods, which infuriates Cole. Soon after arriving at the prison Cole learns the harsh reality of being a prisoner. On the first few days he and Rawlins constantly get into fights with the other inmates and have to struggle for their survival. When Rawlins gets seriously injured
by a knifer, Cole wants to avenge his friend and defend himself by buying a knife. In an act of self-defense, he finally kills the knifer. Cole’s time in the prison and all the experiences he gathers there add to his formation as Bildungsheld. While being imprisoned, he is forced to fight for his life and prevail against the other prisoners. In jail he is no longer a minor but is treated equally like all the other inmates, which also contributes to his transition to adulthood. One essential trial for him, however, is to accept that he is deprived of his freedom. He came to Mexico in order to be free and now finds himself locked up in jail. Furthermore, he must face the fact that he killed the boy in the prison, which leaves him shocked and conscience-stricken up until the end of the novel.

As can be expected, the Bildungsheld returns from his journey towards the end of the Bildungsroman. In Cole’s case, he finally heads back into the United States and returns to his home town in Texas. On his way there he reflects upon the experiences he has made and the events that have occurred during the time he spent in Mexico. As mentioned in chapter 3, referring to Jacobs Gutjahr (cf. 2007: 48) points out that the protagonist’s phases of reflection, in which he or she tries to get clear about himself or herself and his or her own experiences, as a characteristic of the Bildungsroman. In the following text passage Cole reflects about people that played an important role throughout his time in Mexico:

He thought about the captain and he wondered if he were alive and he thought about Blevins. He thought about Alejandra and he remembered her the first time he ever saw her passing along the ciénaga road in the evening with the horse still wet from her riding it in the lake and he remembered the birds and the cattle standing in the grass and the horses on the mesa. (McCarthy All the Pretty Horses 282)

In his conversation with the judge we also find out about Cole’s concerns regarding the hacendado and Alejandra. Again, he reflects on the situation at the ranch and even blames himself for what has happened:

I worked for that man and I respected him and he never had no complaints about the work I done for him and he was awful good to me. And that man come up on the high range where I was workin and I believe he intended to kill me. And I was the one that brought it about. Nobody but me. (ibid.: 291)

Another event Cole cannot stop thinking about is his killing of the boy in the prison. He feels guilty about the incident and confesses it to the judge who tries to cheer Cole up, but Cole remains upset about it. He also tells the judge about the police captain and his intention to kill him. To his dissatisfaction, Cole does not receive the relief he hoped to find in the conversation: “I didnt mean that I expected a answer. Maybe there aint no answer. It just bothered me that you might think I was somethin special. I aint. (ibid.: 293).
As aforementioned, all the negative experiences Cole gathers on his journey make up an indispensable part of his formation and contribute to his transition to adulthood. Nevertheless, these experiences also leave him disillusioned and restless. In fact, instead of getting him on the straight and narrow path, they seem to embitter him. At the end of the novel Cole pays Rawlins a visit and returns his horse to him, which he has brought all the way up from Mexico to Texas. Rawlins reports to Cole that his father has died and that Luisa’s mother, or Abuela as Cole refers to her, is very sick. In the following quote from the text Cole and Rawlins discuss Cole’s future:

What are you goin to do? Head out. Where to? I dont know. You could get on out on the rigs. Pays awful good. Yeah. I know. You could stay here at the house. I think I’m goin to move on. This is still good country [sic]. (ibid.: 299).

Cole reacts to Rawlins’s remark by saying that it is not his country (cf. ibid: 299). When Rawlins inquires of him where his country was, Cole merely answers: “I dont know where it is. I dont know what happens to country.” (ibid: 299). This statement represents Cole’s inner struggle to find a place where he can fit in and feel comfortable. At the beginning of the novel he left the United States hoping to find that place in Mexico. Now, after experiencing various disappointments in the country south of the border, he returns to Texas where he has no home anymore and no actual prospects, and where he finds himself in the same situation as before he left. In addition, his father has died and his Abuela is very sick, which is another blow of fate for him. Cole wants to find his country, but he is sure that it is neither Mexico, nor Texas. When it comes to the novel as Bildungsroman, we can find a major deviation from the concept and structure of the European model. In the classical Bildungsroman the Bildungsheld achieves self-discovery and social integration at the end of the novel. In All the Pretty Horses, however, Cole does not integrate into society, and, thus, enter the stage of paradise. On the contrary, it is impossible for him to integrate into the Texan society, as he still struggles to accept the social norms in his home country, which becomes obvious when he says that Texas is not his country. All the experiences he has gathered during his time in Mexico do not lead to his social integration either. Cole lacks what Doub (2010: 6-7) refers to as a “a means to negotiate a balance between the self and society”. As mentioned in chapter 3, Doub (2010: 3-4) points out that the social integration of the Bildungsheld also “symbolizes his maturity and acceptance of social norms”. Consequently, according to the standards of the classical Bildungsroman Cole’s final achievement of maturity can be doubted. As far as the protagonist’s self-discovery is concerned, Cole has learned a lot about himself while being away from his home town. He seems to have found out who he is, what matters to him and what he is capable of. Still, this
knowledge does not make him stay in Texas and allow him to integrate into society. He decides to move on and try his luck elsewhere.

In conclusion, *All the Pretty Horses* shares the majority of the characteristics of the classical European Bildungsroman. Cole, our *Bildungsheld*, is subject to a so-called *Bildungscurriculum*, in the course of which he leaves his home and family behind him and embarks on a journey to Mexico. On this journey, as well as throughout the time he spends in Mexico he comes across several *Bildungsstationen*, places and situations where he learns lessons, makes important experiences and faces trials that add to his maturity process. In Cole’s case these trials are particularly related to love, work and society, which are also common trials for the average *Bildungsheld*. Cole finally returns from his trip and heads back to his home town in Texas. Although the hero’s experiences are supposed to get him back on the straight and narrow and usually lead to his social integration, Cole, however, is incapable of integrating into Texan society. There are two reasons for this, the first being that he still cannot accept the social norms of his home state and the second that he has not processed all the negative experiences he has made yet. Although the greater part of the book conforms to the standards of the classical European Bildungsroman, we can find a major deviation here at the end of the novel, since Cole’s integration into the society never happens. Nevertheless, *All the Pretty Horses* is and will remain a Bildungsroman that includes elements of an American artistic freedom.
5. *Don Segundo Sombra*

Ricardo Güiraldes, who considerably contributed to the Argentinian literature of the 20th century as well as to the gaucho genre in general, was born in Buenos Aires in 1886 (cf. Rodríguez-Alcalá 1981: 10). Being born into a prestigious family, he spent part of his childhood in Europe where he later returned and came into touch with the European avant-garde and modernism, elements of which can be found in his early works (cf. Ertler 2002: 135). Despite his European tendencies in writing, however, he insisted on being regarded *americanista* due to his Argentinian “nationality and upbringing”, as he believed “that a writer's approach to art was determined by his environment” (Beardsell 1971: 322). His first two works *Cuentos de muerte y de sangre* and *El cencerro de cristal* were both published in 1915 and were collections of narratives and poems, respectively. These were followed by his first novel *Raucho* in 1917 which similarly to *Don Segundo Sombra* and other works of his deals with the pampa in Argentina (cf. Ertler 2002: 135). Besides using the Argentinian province as a frequent setting, he also incorporated facets of his own life into his stories. Furthermore, he focused on the accurate depiction of reality. So when it comes to *Don Segundo Sombra*, for example, he even stopped writing after 10 chapters and travelled through the north of Argentina in order to do research for the rest of the novel (cf. Beardsell 1971: 322). *Don Segundo Sombra*, being his “first critical and commercial success in Argentina” was published in 1926, one year before his death, and earned him the Argentinian *Primer Premio Nacional de Literatura* (cf. Doub 2010). The novel, being compared with classic Argentinian works such as *Facundo* and *Martín Fierro*, was soon regarded a piece of national literature (cf. Doub 2010: 19; cf. Rodríguez-Alcalá 1979: 33). It can indeed be argued that by introducing *Don Segundo Sombra* to the literary world, Güiraldes contributed to the establishment, constitution and transformation of an Argentinian national identity and character, since the gaucho had begun to become a national Argentine folk hero since the end of the 19th century (cf. Beardsell 1971: 322; Weiss 1960: 354, 357; Bockelman 2011: 585). Furthermore, one can claim that his heroic representation of the gaucho figure as not being an evildoer and thug anymore, but as being brave, virtuous and basically upright figure did not only help reshape the gaucho’s general reputation, but also turn him into a national symbol (cf. Bockelman 2011: 586). Güiraldes died in 1927, one year after the publication of *Don Segundo Sombra* (cf. Ertler 2002: 136).

When it comes to the novel’s plot, *Don Segundo Sombra* can be read as divided into three parts which represent three different stages of the protagonist’s life (cf. Doub 2010: 20). The story begins with the nameless first-person narrator and protagonist fishing at a river and pondering...
on his life as a 14-year old boy in a small Argentinian village. After being taken away from his presumably dead mother as a child and not knowing his father the boy, whose name is Fabio as we find out towards the end of the novel, lives with his two strict aunts who make his life difficult by constricting his freedom. One day a mysterious man called Don Segundo Sombra comes into town and immediately draws Fabio’s attention. Don Segundo is a gaucho who is brave, smart and fearless, and as it turns out, he is looking for a job in town. He soon finds work at a local ranch where he is supposed to tame and break horses for the landowner Galván. Fabio, who is captivated by the appearance of the middle-aged gaucho and who wants to escape his rather dull and constrained life, decides to follow Don Segundo and ask for a job at the same ranch where he arrives even before the old gaucho. The 14-year-old becomes an eager worker who carries out all his tasks without complaining. He tries to learn as much as possible from his coworkers and, of course, from Don Segundo whom he deeply admires and regards as a role model. To him Don Segundo embodies all the virtues of a real gaucho and a man he wants to become. Two weeks after his arrival at the ranch Fabio finds out that the ranch owner is sending Don Segundo and some of the other ranch workers on a cattle driving trip to another of his properties. Fabio instantly wants to join them, not only because of his interest in cattle-driving and his wish to accompany Don Segundo, but also because he wants to prevent his aunts and the people from his hometown from finding him. Given the permission by the landowner to set out the protagonist buys himself a new horse and gets ready to ‘roam’ the pampas with his companions and a herd of 500 cattle. Before riding out, however, he meets Aurora, a girl he falls in love with (for the first time), but is forced to leave her behind because of the cattle drive. On the trip Fabio gets to carry out specific tasks of a cattle drover, for example, herding up the cattle. However, he also experiences the downsides of his new profession, for example, when he falls off the back of his horse or when his group and herd are exposed to inconvenient weather conditions. He also gradually immerses himself in the lifestyle of the gauchos. Fabio learns a lot about their duties, behavior and principles by observing them, but also by being taught by them and especially Don Segundo first-hand. Despite struggling with his fears, aches and pains, and feelings of not being good enough, the adolescent is finally proud of his achievements and enjoys living the life of a gaucho. The narrative of Fabio’s first cattle-driving trip closes with chapter 9 when Fabio and his group of cattle-drovers are caught in a heavy rainfall and are finally released.

The second part of the story is marked by a time leap of five years. We find the now 19 year-old Fabio having become a more skilled, experienced and less fearful gaucho. For the last five years he has learned everything about being a man of the pampa from his padrino, as he calls
Don Segundo, whom he still looks up to and follows everywhere. Being still in the cattle-

Don Segundo, whom he still looks up to and follows everywhere. Being still in the cattle-
driving business Fabio now spends his days riding across the pampa alongside Don Segundo, driving the cattle of various ranch owners from one place to another and facing new challenges as a herdsman. Besides work Fabio, however, also takes pleasure in the freedom of action and amusements of the gauchos, for example, by placing bets at a cockfight where he wins a lot of money and by attending a horse auction. Finally, on another one of their cattle drives, which lasts for almost a month, they face several difficulties and lose control of the herd. After the animals inevitably damage the property of an unknown farm owner, who despite the inconveniences sympathizes with the herdsmen, the gauchos eventually manage to deliver the cattle to the estancia of a man called Don Sixto. They soon continue their ride and get to another huge ranch at the seacoast where they come across several other gauchos who are also looking for a job. There Fabio and two other boys at his age, one of them called Patrocinio, join the other gauchos in their task of herding up feral, free-roaming cattle for the ranch owner and ride out as one unit. They soon make friends with each other, especially Fabio and Patrocinio, and enjoy the work they are carrying out. Trying to hold back a wild bull that tries to escape the herd, Fabio’s horse gets injured while the bull escapes, which makes the young gaucho furious. When they come across the same bull again the next day, Fabio is attacked by it once again and immediately wants to take revenge and kill the animal. In his attempt to do so, however, Fabio gets seriously injured and loses consciousness. He is finally taken to Galván’s estancia where he is nursed back to health while Patrocinio does not leave his side for some time. On the estancia, where he is supposed to recover from his wounds, he also gets to know Paula, Patrocinio’s sister, whom he becomes very fond of. She stays with him on the ranch even after her brother leaves and Fabio tries to win her over. However, one day when he unwillingly gets into a fight with Numa, a ranch worker who is also in love with Paula, he pulls his knife to protect himself and injures Numa. As a consequence, Paula loses all interest in him as she regards him a brute. Although he has not still fully recovered from his injuries, Fabio decides to leave the estancia, as he regards it a necessity after the incident with Numa. He returns to the outlying estate where Don Segundo is waiting for him and they soon continue traversing the pampa. In the following few weeks they participate in a horserace in which Fabio loses a lot of his money, as well as some horses, and he witnesses a knife fight in which a gaucho is killed. They are also once more employed as cattle drovers and face difficulties driving their herd through a heavy rainstorm. Finally, Pedro Barrales, a cherished comrade from Fabio’s first cattle drive, pays the protagonist a visit in order to deliver him a letter which will change the young gaucho’s life. Fabio finds out that his father Don Fabio Cáceres has died and that he
inherits his father’s properties as his legitimate son. He is shocked, confused and angry, and does not know how to react, but is sure that he does not want to leave behind his life as a free gaucho. Despite not being interested in the life of a landowner and the wealth he has just gained, he returns to his home town in company with Don Segundo. There he is kindly welcomed by his custodian Don Leandro, who treats him in a rather fatherly way and wants to introduce him to his new life, but Fabio feels like his world is falling apart.

After another time leap of three years the final part of the story begins with Fabio recounting his life as a ranch owner while sitting at a lagoon on his property. On the one hand he regrets his decision and longs for returning to his life as a gaucho on the pampa, on the other hand he seems to have got used to his new life. This day, however, is a particularly sad one for him. Don Segundo, who has been living and working on Fabio’s estancia for three years, has decided to continue his life on the pampa, which saddens Fabio, but he can also relate to the decision. In the last scene of the novel Fabio bids farewell to Don Segundo by shaking hands with him. While watching his padrino riding off, Fabio concludes the narration by saying that he feels like bleeding to death (Güiraldes. Don Segundo Sombra 111).

5.1. The Representation of Gauchos in Don Segundo Sombra

In Ricardo Güiraldes’s Don Segundo Sombra the gaucho has the strongest presence in the novel and is portrayed by Fabio and his gaucho companions. Revolving around the world of the Argentinian herdsmen the book tells the story of a young boy who is on the gradual path to become a gaucho and is fascinated with the changes in his life. In this chapter, I demonstrate how the gaucho is represented in Don Segundo Sombra. Furthermore, I examine whether this representation offers a historically accurate and truthful account of the gaucho and to what extent literary idealization is used to depict the Argentinian herdsman.

At a first glance, it can be said that in Don Segundo Sombra we are provided with an accurate insight into the world of the gauchos. By reading Güiraldes’s novel the reader is given detailed information about their work, their lives, their leisure time activities, their qualities and traits, as well as their likes and dislikes. According to the description provided by the narrator and protagonist, Fabio, the gauchos in the novel appear as hard-working farmhands and cattle drivers who are considered ‘men of the pampa’. Their work is everything but easy and demands a lot of perseverance and endurance, which we learn through Fabio who initially has a hard time adjusting to the herdsman profession. As far as their work and duties are concerned, we primarily find the gauchos in Don Segundo Sombra rounding up wild cattle, driving the herds
of hacendados from one place to another and breaking horses. Furthermore, the gauchos in Don Segundo Sombra are well-skilled in horsemanship and know how to deal with the animals they work with. In addition to their horses their equipment includes ponchos, boots and spurs, lassos and boleadoras. When it comes to their qualities and traits, they seem to be rather balanced and down-to-earth people who have a passion for their jobs and readily accept the risks their profession entails. Working in groups Guiraldes’s gauchos are team players and are there for each other in times of distress, which becomes evident at some points in the novel, for example, when Fabio breaks his collarbone after his confrontation with a bull (cf. ibid.: 69). In this scene we realize that friendship is an important part of the gaucho life represented in the novel, since Fabio’s friend Patrocinio rescues and takes care of him.

Spending their days roaming the pampa Guiraldes’s gauchos are forced to cope with several dangers, such as unruly cattle, injuries and adverse weather conditions. In this connection one indispensable trait of the gaucho that is mentioned in Don Segundo Sombra is his toughness. For instance, during the round up described in the novel one of the men participating gets injured. When Fabio finally addresses this man about his injury, the gaucho does not consider it to be severe although he cannot feel his leg. He claims that the only thing he needs is patience (cf. ibid. 66). A real gaucho as represented in the novel leaves his weaknesses behind and never gives up, which we can see, for example, in the following quote in which Fabio refers to the fortitude and stamina of the gaucho: “El buen paisano olvida flojeras, hincha el lomo a los sinsabores, y endereza a la suerte que le aguarda, con toda la confianza puesta en su coraje” (ibid.: 78) (A good peasant forgets about weaknesses, resists sorrows, and straightens up in the face of the fate that awaits him and places all his confidence in his courage)\(^{11}\). Furthermore, Fabio explains to us that the gaucho is a calm man who is an enemy of uproar and needless boasting (cf. ibid.: 65). However, although the gauchos in the novel are mainly portrayed as peaceful people, we do experience them as quick-tempered drunkards who fight and kill each other. In one scene at a pulpería two gauchos end up in a knife fight and one of them gets killed. Thereupon, one of the spectators of the fight comments that gauchos only call themselves Christians, but are hounds, while another one interjects that it is the pride that kills the gaucho and makes him draw the knife (cf. ibid.: 97-98). Here we find out two not so pleasant truths about the gaucho: first, he can be violent and act irrationally and secondly, he is driven by his pride. Nevertheless, the representation of the gaucho as peace-loving and self-controlled outweighs the depiction of the troublemaker in Don Segundo Sombra. Furthermore, what is

\(^{11}\) This translation from Spanish into English has been provided by the author of this thesis.
essential to a gaucho according to Fabio is his roving spirit which he describes as feeling a constantly increasing need to possess the world (cf. ibid.: 105). Fabio also indicates that the gaucho does not view the pampa plains he crosses as foreign land, since he is considered ‘the owner of the pampa’ (cf. ibid.: 214). It is important to mention that in Don Segundo Sombra we do not only experience the gaucho carrying out his profession, but also gain insight into his leisure activities, which, in fact, represent a major part of the gauchos’ depiction in the novel. Observing Fabio and Don Segundo, for example, betting on a cockfight and a horse race, as well as enjoying themselves at a ball at an estancia, it can be concluded that the gaucho is a cheerful fellow who seeks entertainment and whose life is not only committed to his work and roaming about. In fact, Güiraldes’s gauchos are vivacious, sing and dance and are full of the joys of life. In general, it can be said that Fabio regards Don Segundo as the gaucho prototype. Admiring his padrino Fabio represents him as the man of the pampa par excellence who possesses all the qualities and skills that it takes to be a real gaucho. This becomes obvious, for example, when Fabio tells the reader that he has learned everything he needed to know as a herdsman from Don Segundo:

Él fue quien me guió pacientemente hacia todos los conocimientos de hombre de pampa. Él me enseñó los saberes del resero, las artimañas del domador, el manejo del lazo y las boleadoras, la difícil ciencia de formar un buen caballo para el aparte y las pechadas, el entablar una tropilla y hacerla parar a mano en el campo, hasta poder agarrar los animales dónde y cómo quisiera (ibid.: 34).

It was him who patiently guided me towards all the knowledge of the gaucho. He taught me the knowledge of the cattle driver, the tricks of the horse-breaker, the handling of the lasso and the boleadoras, the difficult science of training a good horse, how to drive a herd and make it stop in the pasture, and how to catch the animals wherever and in what way I wanted.\(^{12}\)

In addition to his representation as a master of his trade, Don Segundo is depicted as being brave, tough and fearless. Another attribute that Fabio ascribes to his padrino is patience. Knowing what to do and what to say in every situation Don Segundo is smart and always stays calm whenever there are times of crises, for example, when Fabio becomes unsettled after receiving a letter in which he is informed about his father’s death and his inheritance. Don Segundo is very popular among the peasant population and welcomed and well-respected by the people wherever he goes. Although he readily works together with the other gauchos, he is, however, an independent spirit that belongs to himself. It can be said that in Güiraldes’s work

\(^{12}\) This translation from Spanish into English has been provided by the author of this thesis.
Don Segundo is the most representative of the gaucho character, not least because he is the one who introduces Fabio to the world of the Argentinian herdsmen.

Within the context of the representation of gauchos it is important to also draw attention to the animals their very existence is tied to. As a matter of course, the horse and the cow are the foundation of every herdsman’s life and the same applies to Güiraldes’s gauchos. In the novel it becomes clear that the lives of the gauchos revolve around these animals, which becomes obvious when focusing on the gauchos’ conversations and the language they use. Fabio, for example, uses metaphors and similes that are based on these animals to describe himself and his environment, even when he is not at work. While being at the ball at one of the estancias he and Don Segundo work for Fabio refers to a crowd of people as thirsty cattle impeding each other at the water. Furthermore, when attention is focused on him, and he feels uncomfortable, Fabio compares himself to a foal tied up at the legs (cf. Güiraldes. *Don Segundo Sombra* 37, 38). Here it becomes clear that the animals are very important to the young gaucho, since they even have an impact on his everyday use of language. In general, the gauchos in Don Segundo Sombra cherish their horses and care for them. They also deal with the cattle in an appropriate herdsman way. Nevertheless, their treatment of these animals can be harsh and cruel at times, too. For example, when they muster the cattle and drive them to the estancias or when they break horses. Although they deprive these animals of their freedom and teach them to obey, it is an essential part of their work and therefore cannot be simply described as unjust and cruel. Nevertheless, in one situation Fabio is more extreme than the other gauchos when it comes to the treatment of the animals. After a bull injures his horse during the round-up and he later comes across the same bull again and is attacked by it again, he takes revenge on the animal and kills it. Fabio does not act very gaucholike in this situation since he kills the bull out of a drive for revenge and anger. However, Fabio is not an animal abuser either, which becomes obvious when he shows great sympathy with the dead animals during the cattle drives.

At this point it could be argued that the representation of the gaucho in *Don Segundo Sombra* deviates from reality and that the gaucho figure depicted in the novel is just an idealized and romanticized being that differs from the historical gaucho. For example, with respect to the gaucho’s profession, the tasks that Güiraldes’s herdsmen carry out do not necessarily represent the work of the original gaucho who was rather a hunter than a herdsman and whose main business it was to obtain the hides of wild cows and horses. He only broke horses and participated in cattle hunts when he needed money, but it was not his regular occupation (cf. Nichols 1937: 534). It is also important to mention that the real gaucho was a rebel and outlaw
whose work was considered illegal as he engaged in contraband trade. In *Don Segundo Sombra* the gauchos’ profession comprises driving the cattle of landowners from one place to another, going on roundups to provide the *hacendados* with new cattle and carrying out duties at the *estancias*, which are typical tasks of a herdsman. There are no references to illegal activities when it comes to the jobs of Fabio, Don Segundo and their companions, since they carry out honest work for honest money. Furthermore, the gauchos in Güiraldes’s novel are represented as being popular and accepted among the Argentine rural population. This image contradicts the actual perception of the historic gaucho in his day who was instead despised and dreaded by the average Argentinian citizen due to his reprehensible nature and behavior. In contrast, Don Segundo is usually respected and appreciated by the people he comes across. Fabio mentions that his *padrino* has a special charisma that evokes admiration in the countrymen wherever he goes. In general, the gauchos in *Don Segundo Sombra* do not seem to have a bad reputation, even though they fight against each other, kill their fellows or bet on cockfights. Despite the gauchos’ brute behavior that we can also observe in the novel they are, nevertheless, for the most part depicted as hard-working members of the rural society and lose their status as social outcasts. For example, one way in which we can observe that there is no defensive attitude towards the gauchos on the part of the peasant population is the readiness of *estancia* owners to accommodate the cattle drivers during their trips. Although the arguments mentioned above demonstrate that the representation of the gaucho in *Don Segundo Sombra* deviates from reality, it can be said that the portrayal of the Argentinian herdsmen in Güiraldes’s work is mainly accurate. First of all, most of the information we receive about the gauchos in the novel is authentic and based on the truth. For example, the description of the gauchos’ qualities is certainly correct, as their profession and lives undeniably required a lot of toughness, perseverance and bravery. They were also well-skilled in horsemanship in real life and used the equipment mentioned in the novel for their work. When it comes to the gauchos’ leisure time, all the activities that are depicted in *Don Segundo Sombra* also match with the ones the historic gaucho engaged in. Then, although the representation of the gauchos’ profession and popularity does not necessarily seem to reflect historical circumstances, we must not forget the time at which Güiraldes’s novel is set. *Don Segundo Sombra* was published in 1926, a time when the gaucho’s time roaming the Argentinian prairies had already come to an end. Since the gaucho ceased to exist around the 1870s, according to Nichols, and the novel offers a nostalgic look back at the life of the gaucho, the story is more than likely set towards the end of the 19th century (cf. Nichols 1937: 536; Gálvez 1990: 164-165). At this point, the gaucho of the late 19th century no longer worked as a hunter, nor did he deal in contraband. Instead, he had become a rural
worker who mainly pursued the trade of the cattle driver (cf. Gálvez ibid.). Thus, Güiraldes’s depiction of his gauchos’ work does not deviate from historical facts. When it comes to the gauchos’ reputation, the novel offers a truthful representation, as well. Towards the end of the 19th century the gaucho was no longer a man with a bad reputation. On the one hand, his contributions to the Argentinian independence had earned him respect among the population. On the other hand, his image had been promoted positively by literature for decades. In Don Segundo Sombra we can even find a reference to one of the most important and popular works of the literatura gauchesca, Martín Fierro, which per se had turned the gaucho into a national symbol. Although it is a fact that the historical gaucho was originally a disliked person, the perception of the Argentinian herdsman had changed a great deal by the time Güiraldes’s novel is set. Therefore, the novel’s representation of the gauchos as respectable members of the society is not far-fetched, either. Nevertheless, according to Lockhart (cf. 1997: 404) an idealized depiction of the gaucho’s life is absolutely to be found in the novel. Lockhart (1997: 404) argues that “Don Segundo Sombra presents a highly romanticized version of the gaucho way of life, one that had disappeared by the time Güiraldes published his novel”. He goes on to say that “it presents the positive aspects of the ranch hands’ work, while negating the very destruction of the gaucho way of life brought about by the landed aristocracy to which Güiraldes belonged”. From this perspective, the representation of the gauchos’ world in Don Segundo Sombra does indeed appear idealized. In Güiraldes’s novel, which offers a nostalgic look at the time the gaucho still existed, we experience an idyllic and peaceful world of the gauchos in which they carry out their work contentedly and unimpeded. There are, however, no references to the economic changes, such as the fencing of the Argentine land and the rise of modern technology, which also took place at about the time the novel is set, and which had a considerable impact on the life situation of the gauchos (cf. Gálvez 1990: 164; Slatta 1992: 6). Instead, the pampa, for example, which in real life was becoming more and more inaccessible for the gauchos due to its fencing, is associated with freedom and described as being large (Güiraldes. Don Segundo Sombra 26, 85). We do not get the impression that the pampa in Don Segundo Sombra is fenced or that the gauchos’ access to it is restricted. On the contrary, Fabio refers to the gauchos as the owners of the pampa who do not consider it as foreign land. Furthermore, we do not find any hints at technological advances or changes that might influence the gauchos’ work. Life in Güiraldes’s novel is still fairly simple and does not appear to be affected by technology. Thus, the novel does not seem to offer an historically accurate representation of the gauchos’ situation in the late 19th century, since it omits the fact that the gaucho way of life was threatened to come to an end by all the changes the aristocratic
landowners and the country’s elite brought along. Consequently, Lockhart’s view is easily comprehensible, as it can indeed be said that Don Segundo Sombra does present a romanticized and idealized version of the truth when it comes to the gaucho and his life.

As it is set towards the end of the 19th century Güiraldes’s novel sheds light on one particular period of the gaucho’s existence, namely the last one before his disappearance from the Argentinian soil (cf. 1990: 164). As previously mentioned, the economic changes in Argentina had a great impact on the gauchos. According to Slatta (1992: 6) they “ended traditional gaucho life”. Now, being forced to conform to these changes in his country, the gaucho was transformed into a rural laborer in this final period of his existence and his main business became the driving of cattle of hacendados alongside the pampa (cf. Gálvez 1990: 164-165). With respect to this, it is important to mention that in Don Segundo Sombra gauchos are also frequently referred to as paisanos, which translates into English as countrymen or peasants. In so doing, Güiraldes treats these two groups as one and the same and demonstrates that the gauchos in his novel have already turned into peasants. We can also experience the final stage of gaucho existence in Güiraldes’s novel through the portrayal of Fabio, Don Segundo and their gaucho companions as cattle drivers which was the main occupation of the gaucho in the period before he ceased to exist (cf. Gálvez 1990: 164-165). In addition, they also work as farmhands and break horses, which are typical tasks that represent the work of a peasant laborer. Thereby, the gauchos’ work and existence in the novel seem to be limited, for the most part, to the duties they carry out for the estancieros. Taking into consideration that the historic gaucho was originally not necessarily dependent on the jobs provided by hacendados, as he was in the first place a hunter and contrabandist who could survive on the Argentine prairies by himself, it is to be highlighted that Güiraldes mainly represents his gauchos as employees who live from being hired by estancia owners. Some of them are independent and occasionally look for jobs, such as Don Segundo and Fabio, while others seem to stay and work at the estancias more permanently. Nonetheless, all of them represent the gaucho in his stage of development as a rural worker. It is also worth mentioning that the only way for Güiraldes’s paisanos to feel like free gauchos and to leave their farmhand lives behind them seem to be the cattle drives and round-ups. In the following quote Fabio describes the transformation of his gaucho companions from farmhands into cattle drivers: “Todos me parecían más grandes, más robustos [...] De peones de estancia habían pasado a ser hombres de pampa. Tenían alma de reseros, que es tener alma de horizonte. Sus ropas no eran las del día anterior; más rústica, más práctica [...]” (They all appeared taller to me, stronger [...] the peasants from the ranch had become men of the pampa. They had souls of cattle drivers, which means having souls of the horizon. Their clothes were not the same ones
from yesterday; coarser, handier [...] (Güiraldes. Don Segundo Sombra 21). Here Fabio perceives the transformed cattle drivers as being taller and stronger than they were as peasants. He even refers to them as men of the pampa who have souls of the horizon. However, we do not only notice the disappearing of the gaucho tradition and existence in Don Segundo Sombra by observing the gauchos’ work, but also by focusing on the main characters, Don Segundo and Fabio. Throughout the novel Don Segundo is referred to as a phantom, a shadow and rather an idea of a person than an actual being (cf. Lockhart 1997: 404). According to Gálvez (cf. 1990: 164) Don Segundo is an abstraction and symbol that serves as a nostalgic memory of the gaucho and his lifestyle who had already ceased to exist at the time the novel was written. In fact, his shadowy nature, indicated also by his surname Sombra, which is translated into English as shadow, can be understood to represent the fading of the gaucho existence (cf. Gálvez 1990: 164). Don Segundo is regarded the ideal gaucho which in real life was already becoming extinct towards the end of the 19th century. Hence, by making him appear as a shadow or phantom Güiraldes uses Don Segundo to portray the ending of gaucho existence in his novel. We can also observe this at the end of the story when the old gaucho is gradually vanishing from Fabio’s sight after bidding good bye to his protégé. Here Fabio describes his padrino as a silhouette and as rather being a figure of imagination than an actual man. Consequently, we can interpret Don Segundo’s disappearance in the vastness of the pampa as the final disappearance of the historical gaucho. As far as Fabio is concerned, he also symbolizes the fading of the gaucho tradition and existence. His transformation from a gaucho into an hacendado at the end of the novel can be compared to the situation of the gauchos in real life. To be sure, Fabio’s fate is not the norm and gauchos rarely climbed the social ladder that easily and became estancia owners. Nevertheless, his forced transition from a free, independent gaucho to a settled estanciero and countryman comes close to what the historic gaucho was confronted with in the last few decades of his existence. Just like Fabio, the real gauchos were deprived of their lives in freedom and lost their status as rulers of the pampa. Instead, affected by the economic changes that came about in their home country and which they had no control over, they had to become peasant laborers whose freedom and independence were restricted and who maybe even got bound to estancias as farmhands. Consequently, in Don Segundo Sombra we can find several hints at the disappearance of the gaucho, either by focusing on the profession of Güiraldes’s herdsmen, or by examining the representation of Fabio and Don Segundo in more detail.

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13 This translation from Spanish into English has been provided by the author of this thesis.
To conclude, in *Don Segundo Sombra* we receive vast amounts of information about the gaucho and his life. We do not only gain insight into his work, but also his leisure activities, and learn about his qualities, characteristics, ideologies and the animals he works with. In general, after reading Güiraldes’s novel one might feel as though they know everything about the gauchos. Although the information about the Argentinian herdsman we are provided with is rather detailed and appears to reflect reality, it is important to point out that the representation of the gauchos in the novel is partly idealized and romanticized and deals with the gaucho at a certain period of his existence. First, the depiction of the gaucho we are offered in *Don Segundo Sombra* concerns the gauchos at the end of the 19th century, a time when the gaucho was already ceasing to exist and was only still active as a rural worker. In fact, in the novel the reader is given several hints at the disappearance of the gaucho, on the one hand, through the work Güiraldes’s gauchos carry out, and on the other hand, through the main protagonists who symbolize the fading of the gaucho tradition. Then, although the disappearance of the gaucho becomes a relevant issue in *Don Segundo Sombra*, there are no references to reasons for these changes. In Güiraldes’s novel the gauchos’ existence is not threatened by any economic changes, despite the fact that these changes were very present in real life at the end of the 19th century and had a considerable impact on the future of the gauchos. Consequently, we can find a major idealization of the truth in *Don Segundo Sombra* and the gaucho as we perceive him appears as a romanticized, almost legendary being.

### 5.2. Masculinity in *Don Segundo Sombra*

One topic that deserves attention in *Don Segundo Sombra* and that is worth examining is gaucho masculinity. In fact, in the novel we gain insight into the masculine principles and concepts of the gauchos. In addition, Güiraldes sheds light on other aspects related to manliness, as well. In this chapter not only the masculine principles and ideals of the gauchos as represented in the novel will be outlined, but also an analysis as to what extent Fabio meets the requirements set for a masculine appearance, behavior and attitude by the gauchos is provided. Furthermore, I am going to examine how the gauchos claim their masculine identity and what helps them to feel manly. Finally, my analysis in this chapter will deal with the relationship between Fabio and Don Segundo and Don Segundo’s influence on the adolescent as a male role model.

Taking into consideration typical characteristics of the gauchos one attribute that is ascribed to them and that probably comes to everyone’s mind when thinking of them is their masculine appearance. Kaminsky (2008: 56) points out that even nowadays “the gaucho remains a potent
symbol of Latin American masculinity”. Likewise, in *Don Segundo Sombra* the expression of manliness and the following of certain masculine ideals undoubtedly plays an important role in the world of the gauchos. One principal concept illustrated in Güiraldes’s novel is that being a gaucho equals being masculine. This idea is conveyed to the reader by Fabio who regards the gauchos as real men, and maybe even as the ideal representatives of manliness. It can be said that at the beginning of the novel the 14-year-old, who is at the age of puberty, is in search of a suitable masculine identity. Growing up without a father and lacking a male role model in his life he seems to be looking for a way to attain manhood. When he comes across Don Segundo and decides to follow him, Fabio is not only about to become a gaucho, he also enters a world in which he can become a man. For example, soon after his work as a cattle driver begins Fabio mentions that he is filled with pride to carry out one of the most masculine jobs: “Había empezado mi trabajo y con él un gran orgullo: orgullo de dar cumplimiento al más macho de los oficios.” (I had begun my work and with it I felt proud: proud to be carrying out the most masculine of the professions)\(^1\) Güiraldes. *Don Segundo Sombra* 21). This statement demonstrates that Fabio has found a way to live and express his masculinity by becoming a gaucho. It is this world of men that he wants to fit in, however he initially struggles to do so.

Focusing on the representation of gaucho masculinity in *Don Segundo Sombra* it becomes clear that Güiraldes’s gauchos are ascribed stereotypical characteristics which are commonly associated with a rather traditional concept of manliness. In general, they are portrayed as brave, strong, fearless and tough men who do not shy away from dangers or obstacles. They spend most of their time among men and keep women out of their business and their lives. Furthermore, they appear rather hardened, and regard the expression of emotions as a weakness (cf. Doub 2010: 24). Now, at the beginning of his career as a gaucho Fabio does not really fulfill all the masculine ideals of his fellows. He is brave and ambitious, but he lacks endurance and toughness, which seem to be indicators of masculine appearance in the novel. In connection with these two qualities, endurance and toughness, one concept that is commonly associated with maleness and that is also mentioned in the novel is the idea of the *ley del fuerte*, in English the law of the strongest. According to this law, which is explained to us by Fabio, only the strongest survive in the pampa while the weak do not have any chance (cf. Güiraldes. *Don Segundo Sombra* 99). Fabio initially struggles to deal with the demanding conditions of working as a gaucho and frequently complains to the reader about his physical pain and worries. Although he tries to hide his aches and pains from the other gauchos and intends to appear tough, they still notice that he is struggling to endure the new circumstances that the trade of

\(^1\) This translation from Spanish into English has been provided by the author of this thesis.
the gaucho involves. Consequently, Fabio still has to learn to become tough, strong and enduring if he wants to be considered a real man in the world of the gauchos. Furthermore, Fabio is a rather emotional person. Although he usually hides his emotions from his companions, since the overt expression of feelings is regarded as weak among the gauchos, the reader experiences Fabio as a very emotional human being. In fact, Fabio relates all his feelings and perceptions to the readers and is not ashamed of doing so. For example, we discover that he is melancholic and sad about leaving behind Aurora and Paula. Furthermore, he expresses his compassion for the injured and dead animals on the cattle drives and round up and feels bad for them. It is also worth mentioning that Fabio is a pensive person who ponders on the events in his life uncontrollably and intensively and that these ruminations are frequently rather emotionally charged. At the end of the novel Fabio falls into an emotional turmoil after finding out that he inherits his dead father’s estancia. Refusing to give up his gaucho life he feels sad, angry, lonely and scared and this time he cannot hide his feelings from Don Segundo. Another scene in which Fabio gets very emotional can be found in the last chapter of the novel when Fabio bids farewell to Don Segundo. Here we find Fabio very sad and disappointed, nevertheless he does not turn a hair and hides his feelings from his padrino again. Now, we generally get the impression from the novel that expressing one’s feelings is taboo in the world of the gauchos, which becomes clear when we focus on their remarks and behavior. For instance, in the novel it is indicated several times that being emotional is associated with a typically feminine behavior and therefore inacceptable, which will be dealt with in more detail in the next paragraph. The question arises whether it is impossible for a gaucho to be manly and emotional at the same time. Although Fabio also regards the displaying of emotions as a weakness himself, which is a lesson he has probably learned from Don Segundo and the other gauchos, he serves as the perfect counterevidence. Despite hiding his feelings from his companions most of the time, he is very emotional in his character. He confronts the image of the unemotional gaucho we receive through Don Segundo who never shows his feelings and appears as the serious, tight-lipped and almost inaccessible gaucho prototype. For example, in the farewell scene Don Segundo aims at making the situation appear as emotionless as possible by only shaking hands with Fabio instead of hugging him. They have spent eight years together without parting and now their farewell remains without any expression of emotions. In the same scene Fabio would probably like to express his feelings, but he refuses to do so since sadness is regarded cowardice among the gauchos (cf. Güiraldes. Don Segundo 111; cf. Doub 2010: 24). Nonetheless, because of his rather emotional nature that is perceived by the readers Fabio proves that a gaucho does not have to appear as an unemotional, hardened person in order to be
manly. Furthermore, Fabio does not appear less a man in the novel because of openly expressing his emotions when he finds out about his inheritance. He only believes that by displaying his feelings he is not masculine and weak, which is an idea he has been made to believe by his gaucho friends, who adhere to old-fashioned concepts of masculinity that regards showing feelings as unmanly. In fact, it could be argued that Fabio is even stronger than the other gauchos because he is emotional and displays his feelings, even if he only does the latter to a small extent. In comparison with the other gauchos he at least voices his feelings to the reader and does not conceal them and bottle them up. Another way in which Fabio does not really come up to the masculine principles of his gaucho companions is his relation to women. On the one hand his views of women match with the ones of the gauchos, which becomes clear when we consider his derogatory and somewhat macho comments about the opposite sex. For example, when being reminded of his aunts by an unfriendly female cook he tells the reader that he does not understand what women are there for. He immediately responds to his own question by saying that women’s main purpose is the amusement of men, but that unpleasant women should be get rid of: “¿Pa qué servían las mujeres? Pa que se divirtieran los hombres. ¿Y las que salían fieras y gritonas? Pa la grasería seguramente [...]” (Güiraldes. Don Segundo 14) (What are women there for? For men to have fun. And what about those who are furious and loudmouthed? To the grasería with them)15. On the other hand, however, he falls in love with Aurora and Paula and despite not having relationships with them they mean more to him than just random encounters. In the world of the gauchos, relationships with women are not necessarily welcomed, since women are regarded as being troublemakers that can have a negative impact on the gaucho community by causing fights among the herdsmen (cf. Doub 2010: 25). The only closer contact that Güiraldes’s gauchos maintain with women seems to be of sexual nature, but in the novel none of them is in an actual romantic relationship with a woman (cf. ibid.). After meeting Aurora Fabio cannot get her out of his head and is sad because of leaving her behind. When it comes to Paula, he even gets into a fight with Numa over her and it saddens him that he and Paula do not become a couple. It is worth mentioning that Fabio could actually be together with Paula if he returned to her and asked her to be his girlfriend. Since he regards asking a ‘scheming, ensnaring’ woman for her love, however, as a weakness, he and Paula part ways (Güiraldes. Don Segundo 78). Fabio’s behavior when it comes to Aurora and Paula show that he yearns for love and a romantic relationship with a woman. When he finally says that he is left without love after leaving behind Paula we realize that he struggles to be a gaucho devoid of romantic relationships. He learns that he wants somebody to love him,

15 This translation from Spanish into English has been provided by the author of this thesis.
an experience he has never had, since he is practically an orphan (cf. ibid.: 78). Nevertheless, having a permanent relationship with a woman is not really an option for a gaucho. Despite eventually choosing his gaucho life over Aurora and Paula, which might have him considered a real man among the gauchos, he still seems to want a relationship with a woman. Consequently, Fabio does not fulfill all the requirements of a typical masculine gaucho behavior and attitude. He not only lacks endurance and toughness at the beginning of his gaucho career, he is also emotional and does not necessarily keep women at distance. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the fact that he does not fulfill these requirements does not make him appear as less of a man. On the contrary, it makes him appear as a normal human being who has got weaknesses and who does not give up his own ideals by sticking to fixed and predefined ideals of a bigger group.

The gauchos in Güiraldes’s novel are generally depicted as utterly manly beings who seem to be sure of their masculinity. Living according to their own masculine principles and firmly abiding by them they have a fixed idea of what is manly and what is not. The questions of what their sense of manliness is based on and how they are able to claim a masculine identity arise. As far as identities are concerned, Ellis and Meyer (cf. 2009: 1) refer to Hegel’s “concept of otherness” and explain that identities and the self are commonly formed by an awareness of ‘the other’. In other words, by focusing on groups they can compare themselves with and maybe even compete against human beings find a way to define themselves. When it comes to gender men and women have always tried to define themselves by making comparisons with their respective counterpart. Liggins et al. (2000: 7) point out that „gender is defined and measured in terms of difference“. However, the formation of an identity based on differences and the otherness can also result in negative consequences for the opposite party. A misuse of this identity formation can frequently be found among men who suppress and devaluate women in order to claim superiority and dominance, and consequently a suitable masculine identity. They regard women as the ‘other’ who serve as a means to enhance their masculinity. In Don Segundo Sombra it also becomes obvious that the gauchos establish their masculine identity by viewing women as ‘the other’ and by derogating and depreciating them. In so doing, they are able to distinguish themselves and to appear as the superior sex. For example, at various points in the novel it is indicated that women are too emotional and weak while men are considered brave and tough. When Fabio tells the reader about his bad physical state during his first cattle drive he says that he would have cried if he were a woman (cf. Güiraldes. Don Segundo Sombra 32). At the end of the novel when Pedro Barrales delivers Fabio the letter and addresses him formally, Fabio tells him that it is not good to screw up one’s face like the women do.
Thereupon, Don Segundo reprimands Fabio, tells him to read the letter and adds that Fabio will not be that startled at the message in the letter since he is neither a woman nor a child (cf. ibid.: 103). In all these three remarks, which deal with women in a derogatory way, we undeniably realize that Fabio and Don Segundo attempt to strengthen their masculine identities by making women appear as the inferior sex. They suggest that women struggle to cope with the hard work of the gaucho, that they cannot handle shocking news well and that they tend to get too emotional. In contrast to this, men appear strong, brave and hardened. However, the fact that they include these remarks on women in their conversations and the narration demonstrates that they are, in fact, not so sure of their masculinity. Instead of being confident about their own manliness they need something, or rather someone they can measure it against. It can be said that were they sure of their masculinity they would not devaluate women to achieve the effect of appearing masculine. Furthermore, the fact that they take advantage of women to secure their masculine identity makes them, in fact, appear weak, which is the opposite of what they want to accomplish with their behavior. In general, we find the gauchos’ derogatory attitude towards women and their attempt at defining themselves as manly by devaluing the opposite sex throughout the novel. Among Güiraldes’s gauchos, women are mainly regarded as troublemakers and have a rather bad reputation. This becomes clear since they are usually expelled from the world of the gauchos. As previously mentioned, they are believed to complicate a gaucho’s life and destroy the gaucho community, which, is illustrated in the novel by knife fights due to women (cf. Doub 2010: 25). For instance, the reason for Fabio’s injuring of Numa is Paula and at the pulpería one man gets killed in a fight because of a woman. Furthermore, women are, as Doub (ibid.) puts it, regarded “sources of temptation not to be trusted”. At the ball, for example, Fabio describes the women as appearing seductive like ripe fruit waiting to be picked (Güiraldes. Don Segundo Sombra 37). Having this view of women, we realize again that the gauchos in Don Segundo Sombra aim at distinguishing themselves as the better sex. Women are considered to be a threat to men while men have to protect themselves from the troubles that women cause. In fact, women appear as a necessary evil according to the gauchos’ ideology. Although they are believed to have a bad influence on the gauchos, the herdsmen also cannot live without them and need the women, for example, to satisfy their sexual needs. Thus, their position on women is contradictory. However, one certainty is that they use women to claim a masculine identity that is based on a devaluation of the other sex. In doing so, however, they do not attain the manly appearance they aim at, since they do not appear so sure of their masculinity by needing another group to base it on. When it comes to the gauchos’ establishing of a masculine identity, women are not the only group that helps them to
define themselves as manly. In fact, the animals they work with also appear as ‘the other’ and seem to enable the gauchos to strengthen their sense of manliness. Of course, Güiraldes’s gauchos are typical herdsmen who treat the horses and cattle appropriately and do not abuse them. Furthermore, a certain harsh treatment of the animals is part of their job. Nevertheless, their work with the animals also seems to provide them with a sense of power and superiority. This becomes obvious in various scenes in the novel in which they drive the cattle over the pampa, break horses and hunt cattle on the round-ups. In most of these scenes the expression of dominance over the animals plays an important role and is vividly practiced. For example, when it comes to horse breaking the gauchos bring themselves into the position of the dominators of the animals and bring the horses to obey by whipping them. During the cattle drives they force the animals to move along, and on the round-ups they deprive the cattle of their freedom. Yelling with the animals and bringing them under their control, for instance, they show them who the rulers are. Although it is never explicitly indicated in the novel that they feel manlier by treating the horses and cattle like this and it is part of their profession, this treatment of the animals seems to enable the gauchos to exercise power over a different group and, thus, reinforces their masculine identity in a way.

Another important aspect concerning masculinity in the novel is the father-son-like relationship between Fabio and Don Segundo. Focusing on the two of them it soon becomes clear that the old gaucho is not only a figure of admiration for Fabio, but in fact, Don Segundo has a larger meaning in Fabio’s life than that of a friend or acquaintance: he serves as a male role model for Fabio, and even more as a father figure. At the beginning of the novel the 14-year-old does not have anyone he can hold on to emotionally or from whom he receives love and affection. After the death of his mother he grows up with his two aunts who treat him rather harshly and complicate his life. In addition, as previously mentioned, Fabio does not know his father. He only occasionally gets to meet a man called Don Fabio Cáceres in his childhood, who later turns out to be his father, but they neither have a relationship, nor does he acknowledge Fabio as his son up until his death. Consequently, Fabio does not only lack a male role model in his life, he also lacks parental love. Don Segundo arrives in the opportune moment in Fabio’s life and fulfills both roles, that of a father and that of a role model. Throughout the novel we can find scenes which suggest a father-son relationship between Fabio and Don Segundo and which make Don Segundo appear as a role model. For example, one very indicative scene takes place during the first cattle drive that Fabio takes part in. After Fabio falls off his new horse while trying to mount it Don Segundo finally shows him how to saddle the horse. While doing so he seems to treat Fabio like a son whom he teaches something new and gives advice to, and Fabio
mentions that he fully trusts his padrino. A similar scene can be found later in the novel when Don Segundo helps Fabio break horses. Furthermore, Don Segundo teaches Fabio lessons about being a man and about women. For example, Fabio mentions that through Don Segundo he has learned to distrust the opposite sex (cf. Güiraldes. *Don Segundo Sombra* 34; cf. Doub 2010: 25). This lesson, however, makes Fabio assume a derogatory attitude towards women and it can be argued whether Don Segundo is a good male role model that should have influence on Fabio. Although Fabio regards Don Segundo a father figure he never really shows his feelings about it to his padrino up until the end of the novel when he openly addresses him by the word ‘father’. This behavior results from the gauchos’ principle of not expressing one’s emotions overtly. Nevertheless, taking into consideration Fabio’s admiration for Don Segundo and his wish to stay with Don Segundo no matter what it becomes clear that Fabio is looking for a father-son relationship with his padrino. When it comes to Don Segundo, the old gaucho never really expresses his emotions either, and also does not do so when it comes to his relationship with Fabio. Nonetheless, he seems to have fatherly feelings for his protégé. For example, he tells Fabio that he wants to show him how to saddle his horse so that Fabio does not serve as a source of amusement for the other gauchos anymore (cf. Güiraldes. *Don Segundo Sombra* 30). Here it becomes obvious that Don Segundo feels something for Fabio as he seems to look after him and care for him. Finally, at the end of the novel Fabio calls Don Segundo ‘father’. Don Segundo accepts Fabio’s word choice and even reprimands him by referring to himself as his father: “-Si soy tu Tata, le vah'a pedir disculpas a ese hombre que has agraviao.” (Güiraldes. *Don Segundo Sombra* 104), which means in English ‘If I am your father, you apologize to the man you have offended’16. Furthermore, Don Segundo’s readiness to stay at Fabio’s ranch for three years demonstrates that Fabio is important to him. He does not leave Fabio behind and helps him get accustomed to his new life as a landowner by living at the ranch, although he temporarily has to give up his life as a free-roaming gaucho which means a lot to him. This decision of Don Segundo can be viewed as something only a father does for his son. Fabio finally finds out who his real father was by receiving the letter from Pedro Barrales, nevertheless, he does not view the man he knows from his childhood as his father. In addition, even though Galván becomes his legal guardian towards the end of the novel and could be regarded a potential father figure for Fabio, as well, Don Segundo still seems to be the only father figure Fabio has ever had.

16 This translation from Spanish into English has been provided by the author of this thesis
In conclusion, in Don Segundo Sombra we are provided with great insight into gaucho masculinity. Güiraldes’s gauchos follow principles and ideals associated with a rather traditional image of manliness, and are described as tough, brave and strong men who choose their gaucho lives over women. Fabio, who is in search of a masculine identity, benefits from his encounter with Don Segundo and is not only introduced to the world of the gauchos, but he is also given the opportunity to become a man among the Argentinian herdsmen. However, he struggles to reach all the requirements they set for a typical masculine gaucho attitude and behavior. He does not only lack toughness and endurance, he is also rather emotional and secretly wants a relationship with a woman. Nonetheless, despite not reaching these masculine standards of the gauchos, he does not appear less a man, but can be viewed as a normal human being with weaknesses. In addition, by being emotional Fabio proves that a gaucho does not have to appear unemotional in order to claim a masculine appearance. Furthermore, in the novel it also becomes clear that the gauchos claim a masculine identity by devaluating women. By focusing on women’s weaknesses and regarding them as troublemakers and a potential threat to their gaucho existence, they attempt to represent themselves as the superior and better sex. Instead of being perceived as such, however, they appear weak since they take advantage of another group to enhance their sense of manliness and achieve the exact opposite goal of what they aim at. The same kind of behavior can also be found regarding the gauchos’ treatment of the animals, which also seem to enable the herdsmen to express a certain superiority, and thus, masculinity by having the horses and cattle under their control. Another important aspect in Don Segundo Sombra, which does not deal with gaucho masculinity but is a very important motif in the novel, is Fabio’s and Don Segundo’s father-son-like relationship. Fabio, who lacks a male role model and a father figure, finds both of these roles in Don Segundo. However, Fabio is not the only one who strives for this kind of relationship with Don Segundo, his padrino also seems to develop fatherly feelings for his protégé. At the end of the novel the two of them acknowledge each other as father and son.

5.3. Coming of Age: Reading Don Segundo Sombra as a Bildungsroman

Focusing on the plot, structure and characters in Don Segundo Sombra it becomes clear that coming of age is an important aspect of the novel that is worth examining in more detail. Telling the story of a young boy who leaves his home town and spends several years learning the trade of the herdsman through a gaucho called Don Segundo before he finally returns home more experienced and mature the novel serves as a perfect example of the Bildungsroman. In this
chapter I am going to examine the novel for all the elements and characteristics of the Bildungsroman it comprises. Furthermore, I am going to demonstrate to what extent Don Segundo Sombra follows the tradition of the classical European Bildungsroman and in which ways the novel differs from the model.

Just like in the classical European Bildungsroman the Bildungsheld in Don Segundo Sombra is subject to a so-called Bildungscurriculum. As mentioned in chapter 3, the Bildungscurriculum, termed by Gutjahr (cf. 2007: 8), marks the protagonist’s development, who, after living under certain conditions throughout his or her childhood and adolescence sets out on a journey that leads to his or her maturity. Finally, he or she matures, as they obtain social integration and self-discovery at the end of the novel. The first step in this course of formation and one of the protagonist’s most important experiences is leaving behind their old life before embarking on a journey. In Don Segundo Sombra our Bildungsheld is Fabio, a 14-year-old boy who lives together with his two aunts in a small town in Argentina. His mother died, and he does not know his father, which makes his two aunts the only family he has. However, they are very strict and make life difficult for Fabio who is constantly reprimanded and blamed for things that happen at home. He seeks his freedom by going on errands in town where he gradually becomes very popular among the townspeople. Nevertheless, despite his popularity, he soon also grows tired of his life as gossipmonger and jack-of-all-trades. The 14-year-old’s motivations to leave his old life behind him are not only the struggles with his aunts and his boredom, but also his encounter with Don Segundo whom Fabio is deeply fascinated with. Finding out that the mysterious gaucho is looking for a job at Galván’s estancia, Fabio decides to leave his home town in order to follow Don Segundo and become his helper and protégé. According to Michelsen (cf. 1992: 822) Don Segundo is his chance to start a new life, a life in which he is free and independent and can figure out who he really is.

Fabio begins his journey by stealing away from his aunts’ house and moving on alone to the estancia of Galván where he wants to get a job and await the arrival of Don Segundo. Being hired as a farm worker, Fabio initially gets to carry out rather lower-level tasks, such as preparing maté and sweeping sheep manure. It is worth mentioning that he carries out the work he is assigned very diligently hoping to appear as a grown man by doing so: “Hacía mi trabajo con esmero, diciéndome que por él era como los hombres mayores” (Güiraldes. Don Segundo Sombra 12) (I did my job diligently, telling myself that by doing it I was like the grown-up men”). Although Fabio does not necessarily get to demonstrate skills and talents at the ranch,

17 This translation from Spanish into English has been provided by the author of this thesis.
since he is still inexperienced in the work of the herdsman, Galván’s estancia, nevertheless, serves as a kind of first Bildungsstation for Fabio, as he receives his first impressions of the world of the Argentinian herdsman and farm worker there. After Don Segundo’s arrival at the ranch Fabio is introduced to parts of the work of the gaucho by watching him breaking Galván’s feral horses. Only two weeks later the 14-year-old joins Don Segundo and some other men from the estancia on their cattle-driving trip and takes up the profession of the cattle driver, which is an important experience for our Bildungsheld since it adds to his maturity process and marks an essential step that will influence his future life. Before setting out, however, Fabio meets a girl called Aurora whom he grows fond of. Although they only meet twice and there is no actual romantic relationship between them, he cannot get her out of his mind. Consequently, leaving her behind because of the cattle drive appears to be a difficult situation and a trial for our protagonist. According to Doub (cf. 2010: 3) trials related to love are common experiences of the average Bildungsheld. It saddens Fabio not to see Aurora again since she obviously means something to him. Nevertheless, his anticipation of the cattle drive appears to be greater than his feelings for her. Furthermore, it does not seem to be an option for Fabio to choose Aurora over the cattle drive, given the facts that the two of them hardly know each other, and that Fabio wants to roam the pampa alongside Don Segundo. He decides to go on the cattle driving trip, but still likes the idea of having a girl crying over his departure (Güiraldes. Don Segundo Sombra 22).

This cattle drive that Fabio participates in is one of the protagonist’s most essential Bildungsstationen. In fact, the entire time Fabio spends driving Galván’s herd of the 500 cattle with Don Segundo and the others from the estancia across the pampa contributes immensely to his formation as a herdsman and his coming of age. On this drive he learns important lessons about being a gaucho, even though not all of them are pleasant. At the beginning of the trip Fabio is confident and believes that he has got what it takes to become a good gaucho (cf. ibid.: 22). Despite his companions’ attempts at intimidating the 14-year-old, he remains calm and optimistic about being able to cope with the work of the herdsmen. However, he soon realizes that the life of the gaucho is not always easy and bears challenges, especially for a novice. For example, trying to mount his newly acquired horse he is thrown off it and gets injured. In general, Fabio is not used to the life of the cattle drivers and has difficulty adapting to the conditions of his new job. Affected by the pain from his fall he struggles even more to endure the heat, the long-lasting horse riding and the work itself. In the following quote from the text Fabio describes the downside of cattle driving and refers to his discomfort and exhaustion:
At 11 o’clock my hands and veins were swelling. My feet felt like they had gone to sleep. My shoulder and hip hurt like I had been beaten up. The young cattle were moving along heavily. [...] My body was dry like jerked meat, and all I could think about was lying down and taking a rest [...]\(^{18}\)

Fabio’s self-confidence also seems to fade as he grows desperate and disappointed by himself after being thrown off the horse and failing to help slaughter a mutton. He envisioned being a gaucho very differently from what it is really like and now learns of the unpleasant aspects of it. Consequently, he ponders on what he still has to learn in order to become a good gaucho:

Antes de andar haciéndome el «taita», tenía por cierto que aprender a carnear, enlazar, pialar, domar, correr como la gente en el rodeo, hacer riendas, bozales y cabestros, lonjear, [...] y qué sé yo cuántas cosas más. Desconsolado ante este programa, murmuré a título de máxima: «Una cosa es cantar solo y otra cosa es con guitarra». (ibid.: 28)

Before becoming a *taita* \(^{19}\) I certainly had to learn how to slaughter, to lasso, to tame, to run like the people in the roundups, to make reins, halters and cabestros\(^{20}\), to cut leather into strips [...] and what do I know how many more things. Inconsolable in the face of this program, I murmured the maxim: «It is one thing to sing alone and another thing to sing with a guitar»\(^{21}\).

It is worth mentioning that in this quote Fabio refers to the list of skills he still needs to acquire if he wants to be a gaucho as a learning program that he has to undergo. Thereby, it becomes clear that he is not only aware of his learning process, but that he also reflects on it. Furthermore, he demonstrates the desperation that he feels regarding this learning program. Wallowing in self-pity, Fabio finally learns the probably most essential lesson when it comes to living the life of a gaucho – he is told to become tougher by Don Segundo. Realizing that the trade of the gaucho requires a certain toughness and perseverance, Fabio subsequently tries to hide his pain from his companions and decides not to give up. At the end of this cattle drive Don Segundo teaches Fabio how to saddle his new horse in the absence of the other cattle drivers, since Fabio struggles to deal with their humiliating comments. With the help of Don Segundo, he finally manages to tame the horse and can demonstrate his skills. As a result, he not only experiences a sense of achievement, but is also praised and treated with respect by his other companions. It can be said that Fabio’s first cattle-driving trip represents one relevant trial for our

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\(^{18}\) This translation from Spanish into English has been provided by the author of this thesis.

\(^{19}\) *taita* = a man who masters an activity, usually in terms of urban folklore – use in Argentina (translation from https://dle.rae.es/?id=YxN65oh) [2019, June 28]

\(^{20}\) halter

\(^{21}\) This translation from Spanish into English has been provided by the author of this thesis.
**Bildungsheld.** As such it is a trial related to work, since Fabio is gradually being introduced to the trade of the gaucho and learns what it means to be a cattle driver. Throughout this trip he can figure out whether he really wants to be a herdsman and whether he has got what it takes to become one. He finally draws the conclusion that he needs to get out of his comfort zone and become tougher if he wants to be like the other gauchos.

After a leap in time of five years we find Fabio’s next essential places of formation on several cattle drives and Argentinian *estancias*. Still roaming the pampa alongside Don Segundo, he has meanwhile become a more experienced and skilled young gaucho who has become accustomed to living the life of a herdsman. Nevertheless, his formation is not over yet, since he still has to learn important lessons. Don Segundo undoubtedly assumes a fundamental function when it comes to Fabio’s formation as a gaucho, namely that of the boy’s mentor. According to Jacobs and Krause, who are quoted by Gutjahr (cf. 2007: 46), the guidance through a mentor is a common experience of the average *Bildungsheld* and, thus, marks a relevant characteristic of the Bildungsroman. Don Segundo, who readily accepts the role as Fabio’s guide and instructor, teaches the adolescent everything he needs to know in order to become a good herdsman. In the following quote Fabio tells the reader what he has learned from Don Segundo over the past five years and how he himself has become a man of the pampa:

> Él fue quien me guió pacientemente hacia todos los conocimientos de hombre de pampa. Él me enseñó los saberes del resero, las artimañas del domador, el manejo del lazo y las boleadoras, la difícil ciencia de formar un buen caballo para el aparte y las pechadas, el entablar una tropilla y hacerla parar a mano en el campo, hasta poder agarrar los animales dónde y cómo quisiera. (ibid.: 34).

It was him who patiently guided me towards all the knowledge of the gaucho. He taught me the knowledge of the cattle driver, the tricks of the horse-breaker, the handling of the lasso and the *boleadoras*, the difficult science of training a good horse, how to drive a herd and make it stop in the pasture, and how to catch the animals wherever and in what way I wanted.  

Apart from the extension of his professional skills, Fabio has also grown tougher and more steadfast through the guidance of his *padrino*, qualities that prove necessary and helpful when it comes to his overall formation and maturity process as the *Bildungsheld*. In general, Don Segundo does not only serve as Fabio’s teacher when it comes to the profession of the herdsman, but Fabio also learns important lessons about life through the old gaucho. For example, among other lessons, Don Segundo has taught the young gaucho to accept the unchangeable, to be leery of women and alcohol, and to trust in friends (cf. ibid.: 34). In the

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22 This translation from Spanish into English has been provided by the author of this thesis.
following chapters of the novel Fabio now gains insight into the remaining facets of the life of the gaucho, which, of course, he is introduced to by Don Segundo. These aspects of gaucho life, however, do not only concern the gaucho’s profession, but also his leisure activities and amusements. For example, in addition to all the lessons about work and life Don Segundo has taught Fabio to play the guitar and how to dance, which are typical skills of a gaucho outside of work. Furthermore, the old gaucho takes Fabio to a cockfight where the now 19-year-old bets on the fighting animals, an experience that the adolescent loves to reminisce about in retrospect. They also attend an auction where Fabio buys himself a new horse with the money he won from the cockfight. Later in the novel the two of them bet on a horse race and Fabio loses most of his money and five horses. Although these events do not necessarily add to Fabio’s professional formation as a gaucho, they, nevertheless, play an important role when it comes to his coming of age. Doub (cf. 2010: 23) comments that Fabio’s trials help him temper his youth and prepare him for something bigger at the end of the novel. Even though these experiences are not necessarily trials, it can be said that they allow the adolescent to enjoy his youth and to make mistakes that he can learn from. For instance, after the horse race Fabio probably realizes that he still needs to learn to handle money and to be careful when it comes to betting. As it is typical of Bildungsromane, all these experiences, whether they are positive or negative, contribute to Fabio’s maturity process.

At one of the estancias, the 19-year-old finally gets to carry out the work of a gaucho without the help of his padrino and has the chance to demonstrate his already acquired skills. Participating in a round-up of wild cattle he joins a group of two other adolescents of the same age with whom he is supposed to catch wild cows and bulls in the dune landscape by the sea and drive them to the ranch. This round-up does not only represent an important Bildungsstation for our Bildungsheld, but also a trial he faces in which he needs to show whether he is already an experienced gaucho that does not need assistance from Don Segundo anymore. Together the three boys hunt the feral cattle and herd them together, just like the other groups of more experienced gauchos that also take part in the round-up. Although the three of them fail at their first attempts at hunting the wild animals, Fabio does a good job and appears to be well-versed in the profession of the herdsman. He knows how to round up cattle and, in the end, carries out the task satisfactorily. Then, however, trying to catch an escaping bull his horse gets injured. When seeing the bull again, Fabio, mad with anger, decides to take revenge on the wild animal and confronts it. In this confrontation the young gaucho manages to kill the bull, but gets severely injured himself. Although Fabio initially seems to handle the round-up very well without the help of his mentor and appears to prove that he is already a well-experienced
gaucho, this act of revenge on the bull and the fact that he placed himself in unnecessary danger, however, demonstrate his immaturity and make the reader doubt the adolescent’s mastering of the profession. Consequently, Fabio does not appear ready to work as a gaucho without Don Segundo at his side yet. After the incident with the bull Fabio is taken to the estancia where he is supposed to recover from his injuries. There he meets Paula, one of the girls at the ranch and Patrocinio’s sister, and he soon grows fond of her. Gradually recovering he tries to win her over. However, there is also another young man called Numa at the rancho who is interested in Paula. One day, Fabio unintentionally gets into a fight with Numa and injures him with his knife in an act of self-defense, whereupon Paula is disappointed by Fabio and loses all interest in him, even though Fabio was not the one who started the fight. After leaving the estancia, which he regards a necessity after the fight, Fabio is sad and melancholic and views the whole incident as an injustice of fate. While riding off, he even considers returning and asking Paula for her love, an idea he turns down, however, since he regards it a weakness. Although he was not in a relationship with Paula and they did not share any romantic or erotic adventures, she means something to him and therefore plays a considerable role for his formation, as well. It is important to mention that it is not necessarily a trial that Fabio faces here, even though trials related to love are common in the world of the Bildungsheld according to Doub (cf. 2010: 3). Instead, it is a negative experience our protagonist needs to deal with and which adds up to his maturity process. The only thing we can interpret as a trial is his thought about returning to Paula which would make him fight for their love. Finally, however, by considering this move a weakness and an inconformity with the gaucho way of life he opts against a love relationship, although he also makes it clear to the reader that he is without love and looking for someone to love him. In the end Fabio decides to continue his life as a herdsman by going to see Don Segundo and demonstrates once again that his life as a gaucho means more to him than a romantic relationship.

Afterwards, Fabio carries out the duties of a gaucho again. Reuniting with Don Segundo he continues roaming the pampa with his padrino and looking for occasional jobs as a cattle driver and farm hand. The two of them are finally offered jobs as horse breakers at a young man’s estancia. Here we can observe Fabio being rather self-confident since he immediately accepts the estanciero’s offer despite mentioning to the reader that it is his first attempt at breaking horses. He justifies his decision by telling us that he is strong and has confidence in himself. Furthermore, he explains that he has already passed his first tests as a herdsman, which, from his perspective, qualifies him for this new task. In general, Fabio has grown in self-confidence over the past five years. When he started his career as a gaucho he was rather insecure, doubted
himself and worried about his progress. Now he trusts himself to take on fresh challenges, such as breaking the horses or going on a round-up without hesitating or being worried about his skills. In fact, by rising to these new challenges he becomes even more self-confident and settled in the trade of the gaucho. Managing to break the horses, for example, he mentions that by carrying out this gaucho duty successfully he is filled with self-confidence (Güiraldes. *Don Segundo Sombra* 95). Fabio’s maturing as a gaucho is also recognizable in his last cattle drive. Throughout the drive, the 19-year-old does not seem to let himself get bothered or scared by the work that easily anymore. Instead, he appears to be a brave and focused cattle driver who keeps a stiff upper lip and does not necessarily grow desperate in the face of new obstacles, for example when he and his companions face adverse weather conditions through which they need to drive a herd of 600 cattle. Although Fabio does complain about the difficult situation to the reader, he remains calm and appears to perform the task brilliantly. At the beginning of the novel Fabio complained a lot about the hard and demanding lifestyle of the gauchos and lacked endurance, as well as toughness. Now he seems to have become accustomed to the work of the herdsman and has got out of his comfort zone. Furthermore, he seems to have become tougher. However, before considering Fabio a full gaucho we must not forget that he is still dependent on his padrino. Ever since his formation as a herdsman Fabio has been at Don Segundo’s side and has performed all the gaucho tasks with the help of his mentor, except for the round-up. While describing the horse breaking, for example, in which he also receives assistance from his padrino, Fabio refers to himself as an instrument in the hands of Don Segundo. He goes on to say that he accepts Don Segundo’s commands as facts, that he follows his mentor’s voice like his own and that he even cannot stop thinking about the teachings in his periods of rest (cf. ibid.: 95). Fabio is not independent yet and still needs his padrino’s instructions. Nevertheless, he is aware of his passivity in this working relationship and makes clear that he anticipates his independence as a fully trained gaucho and that he is confident about his future: “Sentía mi pasividad y me hubiese molestado, de no haberme dicho mi propio deseo de independencia: «Déjá no más, que al correr del tiempo todo eso será tuyo».” (I felt my passivity and I would have been upset, if I had not said to myself my wish of being independent: «Let it go, over time all of that will be yours»)23 (ibid.: 95). Consequently, one can say that Fabio has become more self-confident and tougher as he has grown into the gaucho role. However, he still needs to learn to be an independent gaucho who shifts for himself, a development that Fabio will not undergo anymore in the novel.

23 This translation from Spanish into English has been provided by the author of this thesis.
The final and most important trial for Fabio can be found at the end of the novel. After his last cattle drive, he receives a letter in which he is informed about his father’s death. Being the son of the rich man Don Fabio Cáceres, whom he knows from his childhood, he is supposed to inherit his father’s estancia. This message leaves the adolescent shocked, scared and angry. He does not want to give up his life as a gaucho in order to be an estanciero whose existence is bound and limited to his properties. Being in fear for his freedom and gaucho life he turns to Don Segundo who calms him down and consents to accompany his protégé to Galván’s estancia, who is now Fabio’s legal guardian. On his way there, Fabio is sad because he does not want to leave his gaucho life behind him. Preferring being poor as a gaucho to the wealth that is expecting him he plans to disclaim his inheritance as soon as he arrives in his home town. When he finally bids farewell to his former cattle driving companions he feels like he is bidding farewell to himself and soon after arriving at the estancia he feels like he has stopped being a gaucho (cf. Güiraldes. Don Segundo Sombra 105). Despite Fabio’s initial determination not to change his lifestyle we find him as an estancia owner who has become accustomed to his new life after a leap in time of three years in the last chapter. Deciding between keeping his gaucho life and starting a new life as a rich landowner represents a major trial for our Bildungsheld. Up to now he has always chosen being a gaucho over other things, such as his family and love relationships. Nothing has restrained him from roaming the pampa alongside Don Segundo. This time, however, he opts for ending his career as a gaucho and becomes a wealthy man, which contradicts everything he wanted for his life. At this point, it could be said that Fabio gives up his life as a free and independent gaucho, as well as his ideals for money and possessions. Even if this was true, it is, nevertheless, important to point out that Fabio does not necessarily seem to be satisfied and happy as an estanciero. He mentions to the reader, for example, that in his first two years as a landowner he kept a vivid wild instinct and continued showing peculiarities of his former gaucho existence: “Conservaba yo muy vivido un instinto salvaje, que me hacía tender cama afuera y escapar de todo encierro. También continué levantándome al alba y acostándome a la caída del sol, como las gallinas.” (ibid.: 110) (I kept a vivid wild instinct, which made me sleep outside and escape from the isolation. I also continued to stand up at daybreak and to go to bed at sunset, like the hens)24. Furthermore, he appears to regret his decision, which becomes obvious when he says that he would still be a gaucho if he had followed his feelings back then when he decided to become a landowner. Fabio also explains that the principal reason for him to accept the inheritance was Don Segundo’s consent to stay at the ranch (cf. ibid.: 110). Now that his padrino is leaving the

24 This translation from Spanish into English has been provided by the author of this thesis.
and continues to roam the pampa Fabio gets to live in a world he does not want to be in. He is indeed getting used to his new life, but he does not necessarily appear happy to the reader. Nonetheless, Fabio has not entirely given up his gaucho existence. For instance, he keeps breaking horses with Raucho, Galván’s son and his best friend, and describes their friendship as being gaucholike (cf. ibid.: 110). Thus, he keeps being a gaucho, even if he does not carry out the respective profession anymore.

A typical characteristic of the Bildungsroman, that can also be found in Don Segundo Sombra, are the protagonist’s reflections on himself or herself and his or her development and experiences. Fabio is a very reflective character who spends a lot of time pondering his life, his decisions and fate. He is frequently lost in thought, especially while roaming the pampa. For example, at the beginning of the novel he ruminates on his decision to leave Aurora behind. He also cannot stop worrying about whether he will be a good gaucho and about what he still needs to learn in order to become one (cf. Güiraldes. Don Segundo Sombra 22-23). Later, after experiencing the knife fight between the two gauchos at the tavern, for instance, he considers death and fate and the readiness of human beings to kill (cf. ibid.: 99). Most importantly, his reflections, however, also help him to get clear about his experiences and life, which becomes obvious in the scene in which he looks back at his entire life while talking to Raucho, his best friend at the end of the novel. Here Fabio says that for the first time he thinks about the episodes of his existence in detail (cf. ibid.: 109). In connection with Fabio’s reflections it is also important to mention that the novel can be divided into three parts which represent three stages of Fabio’s life and that we find retrospections at the beginning of each of these. These retrospections help Fabio give the reader a summary of his progress (cf. Michelsen 1992: 821-822).

As far as the ending of the novel is concerned, Don Segundo Sombra generally follows the tradition of the European Bildungsroman. By accepting his inheritance Fabio leaves his gaucho life behind him and starts a new life as an estancia owner. In doing so, he integrates into society, which is the final goal the average protagonist in the Bildungsroman is supposed to achieve. In fact, the now 22-year-old represents the ideal Bildungsheld according to the European model. He initially leaves his origins and family behind him in order to set out on a journey. This journey lasts for five years and provides Fabio with numerous lessons and experiences. Having undergone his formation and maturity process he finally returns to his former home town where he becomes a full member of the society. All the experiences he has gathered and the lessons he has learned throughout his five years of formation now have an influence on his new life.
According to Doub (2010: 23) the skills he has learned as a gaucho, such as “to toughen up” and “to control himself physically and emotionally”, are also relevant for his new role as a leader. It is, however, worth mentioning that Fabio’s integration into society appears forced. He is convinced to accept his inheritance by Galván and Don Segundo although he initially refuses to give up his freedom and to become a rich man and estancia owner. After his padrino finally leaves his protégé’s newly acquired estancia we find Fabio rather disillusioned and unhappy with his decision, which shows that he does not really want this new life and situation. Furthermore, Doub (2010: 3-4) mentions that the hero’s integration into society “symbolizes his maturity and acceptance of social norms”. Although Fabio becomes a well-respected landowner in the end and accepts most of the new social norms his position entails, he still seems to push against them, which we find out, for example, when he says that being a legitimate son and bearing a name which indicates a rank and a family represent a restriction of freedom for him (cf. Güiraldes, Don Segundo Sombra 107-108). Furthermore, in the first two years after taking over the estancia he frequently slept outside of the house and did not regard it as his residence of choice (cf. ibid.: 110). To some extent Fabio still seems to need to figure out how to find “a means to negotiate a balance between the self and society” (Doub 2010: 6-7). Although he now has a lifestyle that is socially acceptable, which was not really the case when he was a gaucho, he seems to be happier if he could still roam the pampa alongside Don Segundo. Even though he integrates into society, which is the aim of the Bildung process, he is not happy about this change in his life. When it comes to the other designated goal of the Bildungsheld in the Bildungsroman, namely self-discovery, Fabio struggles to find his role and identity. Although he is a rich, highly esteemed landowner now, he still feels like a gaucho inside and still clings to his former life as a herdsman. At the same time, he gradually becomes accustomed to his new life after three years and does not appear entirely averse to it. In general, it seems like he has not found out for himself who or what he really is. Of course, he now knows who his father was and has an official identity. Nevertheless, we must not forget that he spent five years considering himself a gaucho and now finds himself in a new position with a new identity. According to Michelsen (cf. 1992: 822) at the beginning of the novel Fabio wants to become the person he really is. Hence, he is looking for an identity that fits him and manages to find it throughout the time he spends as a gaucho. However, he finds himself facing the same quest again when he becomes a landowner. Consequently, although Fabio integrates into society, he does not necessarily do so willingly. Furthermore, he does not achieve self-discovery at the end of the novel. Therefore, it can be said that the ending of Güiraldes’s novel deviates from the traditional European Bildungsroman model.
In conclusion, *Don Segundo Sombra* almost entirely fulfills the requirements of the European Bildungsroman. The book tells the story of a young boy who leaves his home town and gradually matures throughout the novel. Undergoing the *Bildungscurriculum* Fabio, the protagonist and *Bildungsheld*, goes on a journey on which he learns to become a gaucho under the guidance of his mentor Don Segundo, an old gaucho he admires and follows everywhere he goes. Spending five years roaming the pampa and working as a gaucho Fabio learns important lessons and gathers experiences which do not only relate to the profession of the herdsman, but also life. Finally, at the end of the novel Fabio returns to his home town where he becomes a rich landowner and integrates into society. Throughout his formation the protagonist passes through several *Bildungsstationen* and faces various trials which prepare him for his future life. His maturing can mainly be observed in terms of him becoming more self-confident and tougher. Nevertheless, it must be highlighted that the protagonist does not become an independent gaucho at the end of his formation, since he still needs Don Segundo at his side. At the end of the novel, however, we can find deviations from the European Bildungsroman model. Although Fabio integrates into society by accepting his inheritance and becoming a man of social status, he does not seem to want this lifestyle. He regrets having made the decision to give up his gaucho life and does not necessarily feel comfortable with his new position and the social norms it entails. He continues being a landowner, but the reader does not experience him as being a happy person. Furthermore, he does not obtain self-discovery, as he is again in search of a suitable identity after giving up his gaucho existence.
Conclusion

One essential part of my analysis in this diploma thesis focused on the representations of the cowboy and the gaucho in *All the Pretty Horses* and *Don Segundo Sombra*. Although both novels provide the reader with images of the respective herdsman, they do not do so to the same extent. I discovered that Güiraldes offers great insight into the gaucho tradition, culture and lifestyle by incorporating actual gauchos into his novel’s plot, while McCarthy’s representation of the cowboys is limited to the information we receive about John Grady Cole and his friends who imitate the cowboys. This results from the fact that the cowboys had largely disappeared from the North American prairies at the time McCarthy’s novel is set. The protagonists in *All the Pretty Horses* want to live the cowboy life, but they are unable to detect the cowboy tradition in Texas anymore. Heading south into Mexico they hope to encounter something comparable to the Wild West there and, finally, end up becoming vaqueros, which are the Mexican equivalent to the cowboys. Consequently, in McCarthy’s novel the cowboy’s representation takes a backseat and is partly replaced by that of the vaquero. Nevertheless, the cowboy in *All the Pretty Horses* is not the only herdsman whose existence is fading and who is gradually disappearing from the plains. The gauchos in *Don Segundo Sombra* are also represented in their last stage of existence, namely as cattle drivers and farmhands. Thus, both novels look at the two herdsmen at a relatively late period of their existence. In addition, it could be said that while McCarthy seems to attempt to revive the cowboy tradition in his novel, Güiraldes appears to bid farewell to the gaucho tradition with his work. Another important point that was raised with respect to the representation of the cowboy and the gaucho in the two novels concerns the literary idealization of the two herdsmen. The question arose as to what extent McCarthy’s cowboys and Güiraldes’s gauchos appear as idealized and romanticized beings. At a first glance, it seems like the two novels offer truthful depictions of the herdsmen that abstain from literary idealization. In both *All the Pretty Horses* and *Don Segundo Sombra* we experience the cowboys, or rather vaqueros, and the gauchos as hard-working, down-to-earth people who drive cattle, hold round-ups and break horses. Contrary to the idealized images of the herdsmen in literature and popular culture which make them appear heroic and honorable McCarthy and Güiraldes represent their cowboys and gauchos as simple herdsmen who live for their profession. Nevertheless, as far as *All the Pretty Horses* is concerned there are indeed notions of heroism and literary idealization to be found in the novel according to Owens (cf. 2000: 66). Owens argues that John Grady Cole and his friends are so-called ‘American Adam’ heroes, a term coined by R.W.B. Lewis, whom Owens refers to in his book. McCarthy’s novel even employs a villain, the police captain, which is a typical characteristic of the Western novel and
part of the romanticized cowboy world. Interestingly, the Natives in *All the Pretty Horses* are not represented as villains, but instead as rather peaceful people. Furthermore, a literary idealization of the gaucho way of life is also to be found in *Don Segundo Sombra* according to Lockhart (1997: 404). Lockhart explains that the novel, being set at the end of the 19th century, does not offer a truthful representation of the Argentinian herdsman. According to Lockhart *Don Segundo Sombra* does not reflect the economic changes that led to the disappearance of the gaucho and that were going on at the time the novel is set. Instead, Güiraldes just depicts the gauchos as living peacefully and enjoying their herdsman existence without many restrictions. Consequently, both novels provide the readers with idealized representations of the cowboy and gaucho, respectively.

Another important aspect which was analyzed in this diploma thesis concerns the cowboy’s and the gaucho’s masculinity as depicted in *All the Pretty Horses* and *Don Segundo Sombra*. It is important to mention that most of the masculine images of the cowboy and gaucho we are provided with are represented with reference to the novels’ protagonists. However, while in *All the Pretty Horses* we gain insight into the masculine world of the cowboys by merely observing John Grady Cole and his friends, who are not really cowboys, in *Don Segundo Sombra* the gauchos’ masculine image is not only conveyed to the reader through Fabio, but also through his actual gaucho companions and Don Segundo. Therefore, Güiraldes’s work offers us a more accurate depiction of the American herdsman’s masculinity. Nevertheless, what can be found in both novels is the protagonists’ quest for a masculine identity. John Grady Cole and his friends, as well as Fabio are young boys and adolescents who are in search of something that enables them to establish a masculine identity, which is the herdsman in both novels. Throughout their journey into Mexico John Grady Cole, Rawlins and Blevins try to define themselves as manly by emulating the mythic cowboy figure and in Mexico they hold on to the vaquero to gain a sense of manliness. They also find other ways to make themselves feel manly, but the cowboy is their main source of manliness. Likewise, Fabio also manages to establish a masculine identity by becoming a gaucho. It is worth mentioning that John Grady Cole’s and Rawlins’s quest for a masculine identity results from their feeling of being emasculated in their Texan home town due to women’s emancipation in the United States. In contrast, Fabio does not necessarily have a reason for his quest. He is just at an age in which he feels a need to define himself as manly. Although the protagonists in both novels find ways to become men by emulating and living like the herdsmen, they also struggle and fail to do so. John Grady and his friends cannot claim a masculine identity based on the mythic cowboy, since the mythic cowboy does not really exist. They finally manage to feel manly by living the lives of vaqueros, but are
soon deprived of this lifestyle, which makes them continue their quest for a suitable masculine identity. As far as Fabio is concerned, he does not fulfill all the requirements set for a masculine behavior by the gauchos. However, despite not meeting all the masculine standards of the American herdsman, the protagonists demonstrate that certain deviations from masculine concepts do not imply that somebody is less a man. Furthermore, in both Güiraldes’s and McCarthy’s works we find that strength is not always strength and that weaknesses can be strengths too. For example, Fabio is an emotional person and refuses to express his feelings openly since it is regarded an unmanly behavior amongst the gauchos. One time, however, he cannot retain his feelings and displays his emotions. This scene demonstrates that something which is seen as a weakness (in the world of men) can, however, also be a strength, since Fabio does not bottle up his feelings like the other gauchos and, thus, appears stronger. As far as the establishing of masculine identities is concerned, in both All the Pretty Horses and Don Segundo Sombra identity is formed based on other groups. When it comes to men’s identity formation in Güiraldes’s and McCarthy’s works, women play an important role. For example, in All the Pretty Horses the protagonists leave their home town since women there are continuously getting liberated and independent from men. Arriving in Mexico, they find a world where men still exercise superiority and dominance over women and, thus, claim a masculine identity by suppressing women as a different group. Likewise, in Don Segundo Sombra women are represented as ‘the other’ and Güiraldes’ gauchos enhance their sense of manliness by derogating the opposite sex. When it comes to the cowboys in All the Pretty Horses, however, we do not find any devaluating behavior or attitude towards women, except for some derogatory remarks on women from Rawlins, which, however, do not represent the cowboys’ common view of the opposite sex. What we find in both novels, however, is the cowboys’ and gauchos’ formation of a masculine identity by treating their animals like the ‘other’. Furthermore, in Güiraldes’s and McCarthy’s works we can also encounter other relevant topics and issues concerning masculinity, for example, Fabio’s and Don Segundo’s father-son-like relationship, the expression of macho masculinity in Mexico, objectification of men and men’s propensity to violent behavior. During my research I found that while there is a lot of investigation done on cowboy masculinity, gaucho masculinity is a field that has not yet gained much attention. Since the gaucho, however, is considered a symbol of manliness there should be more research conducted on his masculine principles, ideologies and concepts. This applies to the literary, as well as to the historic gaucho.

Another focus on All the Pretty Horses and Don Segundo Sombra in this thesis was related to coming of age and implied reading the two novels as Bildungsromane. In fact, the two
protagonists’ coming of age and formation play a central role in both novels. Furthermore, both novels share the common structure and classification of the European Bildungsroman model which is regarded the original and classical concept of the Bildungsroman originating in late 18th century Germany. Correspondingly to this concept both novels employ so-called Bildungshelden, which in McCarthy’s and Güiraldes’s works are John Grady Cole and Fabio. As Bildungshelden they need to meet the requirements of a certain course of formation, which is also referred to as Bildungscurriculum by Gutjahr (cf. 2007: 8). In general, both protagonists meet these requirements which qualify a novel as a Bildungsroman. They are adolescents who want to escape their lives and the (social) restrictions and norms in their home towns. John Grady Cole’s principal motivations to set out are the selling of his grandfather’s ranch and the social changes as far as the existence of the cowboy in the Texas of the 1940s is concerned. In contrast, Fabio leaves his old life behind him because he cannot stand living with his two unloving aunts anymore, because he grows tired of his life in his town and because of his admiration for the old, mysterious gaucho Don Segundo whom he decides to follow. Subsequently, both protagonists embark on journeys that are supposed to prepare them for their future lives and lead them to maturity by teaching them important lessons and enabling them to gather experiences. Throughout their maturity processes both protagonists learn lessons at different Bildungsstationen and gather experiences, for example, concerning love and the work of the herdsman. However, although they both acquire the necessary skills of the cowboy and gaucho, respectively, their experiences with respect to love vary. While John Grady Cole is in a romantic, secret relationship with Alejandra and even has erotic adventures with her, which is an important characteristic of the Bildungsroman, as well, Fabio struggles to be together with Aurora or Paula. As it is an essential part of the Bildungsheld’s formation, both John Grady Cole and Fabio are also faced with disappointments, struggles and conflicts. It is, however, worth mentioning that their negative experiences have a different impact on the two adolescents: while Fabio holds his ground and does not grow desperate, John Grady’s experiences leave him embittered and upset at the end of the novel. Nevertheless, it can be argued that John Grady’s experiences are more violent and dramatic than Fabio’s as, for instance, John Grady kills a boy in the prison and is left conscience-stricken. The duration of their journeys greatly differs in the two novels. Fabio spends five years acquiring the skills of the herdsman and learning lessons about life while John Grady’s formation only takes a few months. With respect to this it could be said that McCarthy and Güiraldes have different understandings of how much time the Bildungsheld needs to reach maturity. Like in the classical Bildungsroman their journeys finally end and both protagonists return to their home
towns. There, they are expected to integrate into society and achieve self-recovery. However, although most of the two novels’ contents correspond to the concept of the European Bildungsroman, there are major deviations from the model at the end of both novels. In *All the Pretty Horses* the protagonist does not integrate into society since he cannot come to terms with the social changes in his home state, Texas, he does however achieve self-discovery to some extent. In contrast, in *Don Segundo Sombra* the Bildungsheld integrates into society, but does so unwillingly, and does not achieve self-discovery. Consequently, both novels deviate from the European tradition. This demonstrates, to a certain extent, that the American Bildungsroman, which in this framework includes the North American and the South American *Bildungsromane*, has developed its own form and does not conform to the strict guidelines of the European model anymore. In the original European model, the integration and self-discovery of the protagonist into society were a crucial part of the Bildungsroman, since it was an essential goal to be achieved for a young man to find a place in European society in the 18th century. The American Bildungsroman, however, appears to delve into the topics of social integration, the requirements set by society and self-discovery from a different point of view. In fact, both novels make the original European model of the Bildungsroman and its focus on society appear antiquated and outdated and offer a different perspective on the genre.

In conclusion, it becomes obvious that the similarities with respect to the portrayal of the cowboys and gauchos in the two novels outweigh the differences. Both novels share various features, ideas and content-related characteristics with respect to their depiction of the herdsman, masculinity and coming of age.
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