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WOMAN IN CORMAC MCCARTHY'S *BORDER TRILOGY*

A MASTER'S THESIS

by

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Muharrem Üney

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WOMAN IN CORMAC MCCARTHY'S *BORDER TRILOGY*

ABSTRACT

Cormac McCarthy is one of the leading novelists of American literature. His Southern Gothic novels have been compared to the works of great novelists such as William Faulkner and Herman Melville by many literary critics. *The Border Trilogy,* along with his previous novel *Blood Meridian or the Evening Redness in the West* represent a transition from the Southern Gothic to the Western and a turning point in terms of recognition for McCarthy. Known as *The Border Trilogy*, his novels *All the Pretty Horses* (1992), *The Crossing* (1994), and *Cities of the Plain* (1998) are more humane and positive in style and mood than his southern novels. In general, the western genre's treatment of women has been the target of experts who conduct women's studies. According to the women's studies scholars, Westerns are places for the exhibition of the adventures of cowboys on horseback, and women are mere ornamental objects with marginal qualities. Such criticism revealed the need to read works written in the modern period from a different perspective. As a result of this new reading, some authors have been subjected to allegations of misogyny. In this thesis, Cormac McCarthy's *Border Trilogy*, which occupies an influential ground in American fiction, will be examined from the different perspectives that feminism has provided, especially, since the middle of the last century, and the place of women in McCarthy's changing style will be examined.

Keywords: *All the Pretty Horses, Crossing, Cities of the Plain*, Feminism, Cormac McCarthy, Woman

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CORMAC MCCARTHY'NİN *SINIR ÜÇLEMESİ*'NDE KADIN

ÖZET

Cormac McCarthy Amerikan edebiyatının önde gelen romancıları arasında yer alır. Güney Gotik türünde verdiği eserlerle çoğu edebiyat eleştirmeni tarafından William Faulkner ve Herman Melville gibi usta romancılarla karşılaştırılmıştır. *Sınır Üçlemesi* olarak bilinen *All the Pretty Horses* (1992), *The Crossing* (1994) ve *Cities of the Plain* (1998) adlı romanları tarz ve hava olarak kötülüğün doğasını irdelediği önceki eserlerinden daha insanî ve olumlu duygular barındırır. Bu açıdan *Sınır Üçlemesi* ve hemen öncesinde yazdığı *Blood Meridian or the Evening Redness in the West* McCarthy için hem Güney Gotik tarzından Batı tarzına bir geçiş hem de tanınırlık ve okunurluk açısından bir dönüm noktasıdır. Genel olarak Batı tarzının kadını ele alış biçimi kadın araştırmaları yapan uzmanların eleştirilerine hedef olmuştur. Çoğu zaman kovboyların at üstündeki maceralarının betimlendiği bu türden romanlarda kadın bir kenar süsü olmanın ötesine geçememektedir. Bunun gibi eleştiriler modern dönemde yazılmış eserleri farklı bir gözle okuma ihtiyacı doğurmuş, bazı durumlarda yazarlar kadın düşmanı olarak etiketlenmiştir. Bu tezde Amerikan romanında önemli bir yere sahip olan Cormac McCarthy'nin *Sınır Üçlemesi*, feminizmin özellikle geçen yüzyılın ortalarından itibaren sağladığı farklı bakış açısıyla incelenecek ve kadının McCarthy'nin değişen tarzındaki yeri incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *All the Pretty Horses, Crossing, Cities of the Plain*, Feminizm, Cormac McCarthy, Kadın

Sayfa Sayısı: vi + 69

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INTRODUCTION

Cormac McCarthy is one of the most prominent novelists of American literature. His Southern Gothic novels have been compared to the works of great novelists such as William Faulkner and Herman Melville by many literary critics. One of the most important characteristics that distinguish him from these novelists is the pessimist tone of his writings. Nevertheless, the fascinating lyricism pervading his works makes him a distinctive author (Grammer 2008:360).

The first novel of the author, who is likened to Faulkner in his style, is *The Orchard Keeper* (1965). His next three novels—*Outer Dark* (1968), *Child of God* (1973), and *Suttree* (1979)—are set in his hometown, Tennessee. However, after he moved to Texas, his novels started to deal with the west as a setting (Evenson 2013:301). McCarthy, who lived a modest life throughout his life, moved to El Paso thanks to the 236,000-dollar-award he received in 1981 and started an exploration of the landscape and history for his new book (Woodward 2005), that is *Blood Meridian; Or, The Evening Redness in the West* (1985), which became a landmark for the McCarthy's fiction. His first western attempt could not reach a wide audience like his previous works (Grammer 2008:360). McCarthy owes most of his recognition to *All the Pretty Horses* (1992), the first book in *The Border Trilogy*. Thanks to the National Book Award he won with this book, the five novels he wrote previously started attracting more readers (Grammer 2008:361). He has been pointed out as one of the most significant American novelists, and his fiction become a fruitful resource for Hollywood movies that have been remarkably successful (Kushner 2007).

Known as *the Border Trilogy*, his novels *All the Pretty Horses* (1992), *The Crossing* (1994), and *Cities of the Plain* (1998) are more humane and positive in style and mood than his previous works, in which he explores the nature of evil. In this respect, *The Border Trilogy* and *Blood Meridian or the Evening Redness in the West* are both a transition from the Southern Gothic to the Western genre and a turning point in terms of recognition for McCarthy.

The Western genre was introduced to literature with dime novels before being adapted to movies (Saunders 2001:2). Owen Wister (d. 1938), one of the notable

authors in this genre, is the most significant figure in the creation of the cowboy cult in literature with *The Virginian*, which was inspired by his personal experiences. Wister is the greatest source of inspiration for almost all works produced after him in the western genre (Payne 1985:5). Tompkins (1992:132) also introduces Wister as the person who gave this genre its classical form.

According to Tompkins (1992:4–6), the west has a critical place in American culture. It serves as a good destination for an escape from the community life. Besides being a symbol of freedom and victory, it is also a tool for personal transformation. Every image belonging to the west makes the person more real. This situation has increased the demand for the Western genre. Until the last quarter of the twentieth century, it was the most common genre in the cinema. Some cult characters and actors in these films acted as role models for the American men. The television and the radio were other means for propagating those role models, therefore, Westerns were hosted by the mass media, as well. The world of literature also joined this trend. In the twentieth century alone, the number of sales of such books hit hundreds of millions. All kinds of people enjoyed reading the Westerns, which is partly because all the images that come to mind when the Western genre is mentioned are actually reflections of the society they belong to.

Westerns are powerfully related to historical perceptions of male identity (Dudley 2013:176). The Western genre, according to Lee Clark Mitchell (1996:151–52), is all about being "man". Here, proving physical masculinity is at the forefront rather than acting like a man. Bathtub and barber scenes, which are frequently used in western movies, serve this purpose. It is also not accidental that the re-emergence of this genre coincided with the feminist movements in America. At a time when women's rights were being emphasized more strongly, the Western genre, with masculinity at its centre, came to the fore in cinema and literature, causing the impression that it was a conscious reaction against women's movements. Similarly, Tompkins (1992) claims that "the Western is a reaction against a female-dominated tradition of popular culture" (132). After comparing the Westerns of the twentieth century and the sentimental novel of the nineteenth century in terms of basic elements such as heroes, environment, and plot, Tompkins concludes that there is a stark contrast between the two genres. According to her, this situation is not

accidental. The western is the “answer” to the most popular genre before it. The antithesis of everything in the female-dominated sentimental novel can be found in the male-dominated Western novels. In contrast to the naive female characters who enjoy the safety of the old-fashioned domesticity, male heroes with high levels of masculinity are blessed in this new type, where the wildness of nature permeates all the characters and events (Tompkins 1992:39).

In general, the way the Western genre treats women has been the target of criticism for experts who conduct women’s studies. In such novels, in which the adventures of cowboys on horseback are depicted, women are treated as ornamental objects with marginal qualities. Criticisms like these have led to a need to read works written in the modern period with a different eye, and as a result, some authors have been labelled as misogynist. One of the most striking textual features of the trilogy, which will be examined in this thesis, is its perspective on women. According to Nell Sullivan (2001:229), McCarthy deliberately pushes women out of the narrative. It is impossible to find a female character that is not stereotypical in all aspects in almost all of McCarthy’s works. With such level of masculinity, which seems to be a necessity of the Westerns, McCarthy’s novels are good examples of the genre (Kollin 2001:569).

Accordingly, in this thesis, Cormac McCarthy's *Border Trilogy* will be examined from the perspective that feminist movements have provided, and the place of women in McCarthy’s changing style will be examined. To achieve this goal, firstly, the historical development of feminism and its effects on the world of literature will be analysed. Then, an evaluation will be made on the place of women in the fictional west created by McCarthy in *The Border Trilogy*.

1. FEMINISM AND LITERARY CRITICISM

In this chapter, first, the emergence and historical development of feminism as a liberating movement will be discussed. Then, the movement's relationship with the literature and utilization of it as a means for communicating the problems that women face will be revealed.

1.1. Feminism

The emergence of feminist thought dates back to the end of the 18th century, when works on equal rights for men and women began to be given (Cuddon 2013:273). As a social phenomenon, the concerns of feminist thought are still up-to-date. In its historical development, scholars has generally evaluated feminism in three different phases. However, studies conducted in recent years indicate that a fourth phase is being experienced. It is not possible to separate these phases, which are generally described as "waves", from each other with clear boundaries. There are also those who oppose the term "wave" as they find it problematic. Ania Malinowska (2020) states that the term "is often considered historically misleading and politically useless" (2). Nevertheless, in this thesis, the same term will be used while commenting on the phases feminism has gone through.

The first wave covers a timespan from the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, when women started raising their voices about human rights, slavery, and the right to vote (Moser and West 2010:50). To give an exact date, the first wave begins with the declaration prepared by Elizabeth C. Stanton after the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. The philosophy and political approach of feminism was determined at the end of this congress, which emphasized the equality of women and men (Rampton 2015). At first, this new movement was most effective in North America and Europe, later it gained a global identity as it resonated in North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Women found the opportunity to express themselves through the press in this period. A new image for women in society was being formed, thanks to the launch of newspapers published by women in the United States and Europe (Malinowska 2020:2).

The second wave commenced with women's movements of the second half of the twentieth century. Feminists rebelled against traditional women's roles and aimed to legally achieve equal rights with men. At this stage, women have begun to examine and re-evaluate their sex and gender roles (Moser and West 2010:50). It is possible to collect the demands of feminists in this period under seven headings. These are "[1] equal pay […] [2] equal education and opportunity […] [3] contraception and abortion on demand […] [4] 24-hour nurseries with free childcare […] [5] financial and legal independence […] [6] an end to all discrimination against lesbians and a woman's right to define her own sexuality" (Cochrane 2013a:63–67), and lastly, the demand that was added to the list after the National Women's Liberation Movement conference held in Birmingham in 1978: [7] "[f]reedom for all women from intimidation by the threat or use of violence or sexual coercion regardless of marital status; and an end to the laws, assumptions and institutions which perpetuate male dominance and aggression to women" (Library). While this last demand emerged as a distillation of the previous ones, it was labelled as radical feminism by some critics (Barrett 2014:261). Advocates of second-wave feminism drew on various popular philosophies and social theories of the time, such as poststructuralism and psychoanalysis, to explain the relationship between the current state of women and what it should be. While doing this, they tried to instrumentalize television, which was gradually becoming a part of daily life. Since television was one of the easiest ways to reach society, women's rights defenders sought to represent women on equal terms with men both on and behind the screen (Malinowska 2020:3–4). The fact that this wave emerged simultaneously with other social movements in the United States became a disadvantage for feminism. Feminism, which was overshadowed by anti-war civil movements and African-American movements at the time, was regarded as marginal. Nevertheless, feminists have transformed women's struggles into class struggles by establishing women-only communities (Rampton 2015). However, while the representatives of the second wave tried to free women from male domination and female stereotypes, they went too far, according to some. Most women kept their distance from feminism because feminists declared war on traditional behaviours associated with femininity, such as

putting on make-up, wearing dresses, or getting married (Jacob and Licona 2005:198).

According to some researchers, despite its numerous achievements, the unified image of women that second-wave feminism tries to portray is a mistake (Jacob and Licona 2005:200). A fresh movement started to appear in the 1990s, with an increase in the number of those who thought that the second wave failed to define female identity. The communal reaction against the social and political changes that started with the women's movements also contributed to the emergence of this third wave (Moser and West 2010:50). Behaviours and dressing styles, which the former feminists believed to be the result of male oppression, were re-adopted by the new movement. Many concepts related to the female body, sexuality, and gender have been redefined. In fact, most women of this phase did not want to describe themselves as feminists, arguing that the term was restrictive. At this stage, there is a completely free and new woman who is freed from the barriers of gender and sexuality, and not limited to a specific geography or culture. Instead of collective movements, individual struggles for equal rights have become prominent in this wave (Rampton 2015). The feminist movement, which started with the struggle for the most basic human rights in favour of women in the 19th century, expanded its scope with the third wave that started at the beginning of the 21st century and assumed the advocacy of the ecosystem that was deteriorated by men as a result of the abuse of natural resources (Ay, Günesen, and Kaya 2020:850).

Some critics regard the women's sensitivity towards the environment and other living things as a harbinger of a new wave. Since it is not possible to solve the new problems of the changing world with old recipes, it is inevitable for feminism to renew the tools it uses to realize its purpose of existence. It may not have been a long time since the third wave began, but there have been changes that would not fit into centuries considering technology and communication. Before the 2010s, a fourth wave has already begun to come in sight in scientific studies. Harriet Kimble Wrye (2009:187) is one of those who think this way. She states that while women's focus was on themselves in the previous phases, they shifted to the world and everything in it in this new wave. Feminism has gone through a transformation from a one-species-centred formation to one that works for the benefit of all living things on earth. Kira

Cochrane (2013b) also saw that a fourth wave was on the rise as the interviews with major feminists for her book had indicated. According to her, the establishment of a new virtual world, thanks to the internet, has made it necessary for feminism to renew its defence mechanism. After her evaluations of the attitudes of women who have been subjected to injustices such as harassment, discrimination, humiliation, neglect, and violence, she concludes: “What's happening now feels like something new again. It's defined by technology: tools that are allowing women to build a strong, popular, reactive movement online” (Cochrane 2013b). Social media tools have emerged as a new instrument in this ancient struggle of women. In this way, the ideas that were advocated by the movement reached more people on a global scale, going beyond the western borders. Women’s representation in the media and women’s access to and use of media tools are emphasized as a way of overcoming class discriminations. In this sense, the internet is a useful tool for the representatives of the fourth wave (Malinowska 2020:5–6). Rampton (2015) accuses the third wavers of thinking that feminism has achieved all its aims. Therefore, the commencement of the fourth wave was inevitable. Feminism, which has gained a place in academia, one of the biggest achievements of the second wave, has found the opportunity to re-integrate with the public through technological opportunities and the contribution of the media. Thus, it has become easier to put the problems, which have not been resolved since the first wave, into the world agenda. According to Rampton, the emergence of the fourth wave is due to the failure of the third wave. That is why she sees the representatives of the fourth wave as the direct heirs of the second wave. Furthermore, the focus point of the fourth wave is not the problem of a single group, namely women, who have suffered injustice. Regardless of gender, age, race, or social group, the troubles of all are within the interest of the fourth-wave feminists.

1.2. Postfeminism

Although “postfeminism” first appeared as a term in a journal article in 1982, there are researchers who date it earlier, as early as the first quarter of the twentieth century, after the acquisition of women's suffrage (Holmlund 2005:116–17). Especially with the second-wave, women achieved significant gains, increased their

share in the workforce, and started to stand on their feet. This situation brought opposition with it. The most prominent representatives of this opposition are postfeminists. For them, the intellectual gap between the third wave of feminism and the second wave proves that feminism is no longer a supportable social movement. Therefore, a middle ground has to be found between the traditional roles of women and the liberal image drawn in this new movement (Malinowska 2020:5).

The meaning of the prefix "post" is another matter of debate among academics. According to some, if a concept is modified with this prefix, it means that it has become outdated and its implications are no longer valid, yet some others perceive the prefix in question as a precursor for a new phase of an ongoing change. This ambiguity makes it difficult to make a fixed definition for postfeminism. Therefore, it is not possible to understand what is meant by postfeminism without a proper context (Genz and Brabon 2009:2–5).

Apart from this, in a research report, Elaine J. Hall and Marnie Salupo Rodriguez (2003:879) identified four main claims put forward by the advocates of postfeminism. First claim says that support for women's movement declined in the two decades after 1980. According to the second claim, opposition to feminism has been increasing among certain groups of women. The third claim is that feminism has lost its importance because it has failed, and that is why women who used to define themselves as feminists now think differently. Finally, a group of people, who refrain from defining themselves as feminists but do not reject the gains achieved by feminism, has emerged.

Hall and Rodriguez (2003:898) took the public opinion regarding these claims as a continuation of the research, however, the results are not confirmative of those claims of postfeminists. The claim that support for feminism has decreased is incorrect according to the findings. Over time, the support given to the women's struggle has either increased or remained the same. Contrary to the second claim, certain groups of women, such as black women, have been shown to be some of the most ardent advocates of feminism. The claim that feminism has lost its importance is also not a valid one. The last claim is also invalid because not defining oneself as a feminist does not mean being against women's movements. In fact, this issue is a breaking point for the historical development of feminism. This is a period in which

a new perspective on women's issues and struggles emerged, which would be termed as the third-wave feminism (Rampton 2015). According to Holmlund (2005), postfeminism, which actually arises from feminism, can be evaluated in three different categories: "chick", "grrrl", and "academic" (116). In this classification, he refers to the "grrrl" movement both as postfeminists and as third-wave feminists. In other words, according to him, the representatives of the third wave of feminism are postfeminists.

1.3. Feminist Criticism

Feminism has been about literature from the very beginning. Women are mostly represented by stereotypical characters in the male-dominated literature of the 19th century. While writing female characters in this period, more focus was placed on the social status that a woman would gain with marriage or the happiness that she would obtain from it. This situation reveals a strange situation in which man is used as a reference to create woman's image (Barry 2017:123). The shocking evaluations about the basic problems of women in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), which would later become one of the cornerstones of feminism, did not make much influence when it was published due to the conditions of the period. In addition, because of negative developments such as the Great Depression, World War II, and the rise of fascism that emerged in the following years, pro-women policies lacked the social ground to develop and flourish. Feminist criticism, which found some space to bloom after the war, focused on how women were represented in male author's works. French writer/thinker Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is one of the pioneers in this field. Although the book was published just before the 50s, it took several decades for Beauvoir to become known in the U.S. The women's movement that became more prominent towards the end of the 60s and the works such as Mary Ellmann's *Thinking About Women* (1968) and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) put feminist criticism into practice (Richter, 2007, p. 1504). According to Abrams and Harpham (2009:110), Ellmann's discussion of the derogatory portrayals of women used not only by male writers but also by some women writers, marked the beginning of feminist criticism in the United States. Millett, on the other hand, accuses most western social arrangements and institutions

of being a covert way of perpetuating male domination and female subordination. She attacks Freud's psychoanalysis for being advocate of male dominance. She reveals how some famous authors exalt their phallic selves while demeaning women as submissive sexual objects. The main purpose of Millett and similar second-wave feminism representatives was to reveal such patriarchal thought patterns that fed gender inequality in society (Barry 2017:124).

One of the contributors to the development of feminism as a literary theory is Elaine Showalter. In her *A Literature of Their Own* (1977:13), in which she analyses British women novelists, she asserts that, like all other literary sub-cultures, women's writings pass through three phases. The first one is the "*imitation*" phase. Here, general rules are internalized while creating works based on the literary examples of the dominant culture. The second is the "*protest*" phase. In this phase, traditional rules and values are challenged and minority rights and values are defended. Finally, in the "*self-discovery*" phase, the author turns into herself and gets rid of all kinds of bonds. The search for identity is the most basic feature of this last stage. Showalter names these phases respectively as "*Feminine, Feminist, and Female*". She states that these processes cannot be separated from each other with sharp lines. It may be possible to find the characteristics of one phase in the writings of women in another phase. It is even possible to find the characteristics of all three phases in different works of the same author. However, she dates the phases for convenience while examining the works of female novelists. The "*feminine*" stage starts in 1840, when female writers began to write under male pseudonyms, and ends in 1880, the year George Eliot died. The "*feminist*" stage begins then and goes on until suffrage in 1920. The "*female*" stage started then and continues to this day.

In addition, Showalter (1997) divides feminist criticism into "women as readers" and "women as writers" (216). The first group aim to read men's literature from women's perspective and keep the reader awake about gender roles in any kind of text. Women as readers focus on the stereotypes, misperceptions about women, and the flaws of men's literature. In the second group, the woman is the producer of all kinds of literary texts. The second group critics study the characteristics of women's creativity, the problem of women's language, women's literary careers,

literary history, and the works of certain authors. Showalter terms this type of criticism “gynocritics” (1997:216).

When applying feminist criticism to literature, it is important to see the emphasis on male dominance in the analysed text. This usually requires a reading against the nature of the text because sexist ideology is often unconsciously embedded in texts of male-dominated literature, and this sexism is not seen as a problem by the public. However, a literary work that draws a male-dominated picture may not be doing so to show that men are superior. On the contrary, it may be to present a critique of the situation. Being aware of this fact is very important in terms of interpreting literary texts correctly. The methods that feminist literary critics use are also as diverse, because women’s problems can be quite varied due to certain social factors. Whatever method is followed, the principal objective of feminist criticism is to facilitate the understanding of women’s problems and to ensure that their values are appreciated (Tyson 2006:117–19).

Most feminist theorists oppose the perceptions created by psychological theories such as Psychoanalysis and social theories such as Marxism, which reinforce male dominance or do not speak out against the problems that the patriarchy causes. The fact that Freud defined woman as the defect of man and claimed that the first-born male child means the elimination of this deficiency for the mother, has evoked a strong feminist reaction. Similarly, Karl Marx was accused of ignoring or failing to see economic oppression that women endure. Nevertheless, feminists did not hesitate to use these and similar theories in their criticism of male domination. For example, Marxism was used to reveal how economic laws are shaped in favour of men while revealing women being treated as second-class citizens in this regard. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, became useful in understanding the psychological foundations of male dominance and revealing the reasons why women submit to it. Like these, the deconstruction technique of the poststructuralist philosophy was used to reveal how literary works implicitly strengthen male dominance while actually trying to criticize them (Tyson 2006:93–94). The relationship of feminism with these fields will be examined in more detail.

1.4. Feminism and Marxism

Feminism, which emerged with the aim of revealing and fighting against the injustices that women suffer, argues that male dominance is consolidated through social, economic, and political arrangements (Jackson 1998:12). Although Marxism was accused of ignoring women's condition just like other male-centred social theories, a Socialist/Marxist interpretation of feminism that aimed to shed light on the economic oppression imposed upon women found ground particularly in Britain in the 1960s and 70s (Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker 2005:125). While Marxism helps to understand the structure of capitalist society, it cannot explain why women are dominated by men both at home and outside. That is because "*Marxist categories, like capital itself, are sex blind*" (Hartmann 1993:8 emphasis in original). To compensate for this, Marxist feminists aimed to discuss the complex relationship between gender and economy (Selden et al. 2005:125).

In the 1970s and 80s, most feminists saw Marxism as a means to answer the question of why women were viewed as second-class citizens. Feminists were no strangers to Marxism thanks to the rising leftist movements around the same time as second-wave feminism. Marxism's oppressed class analysis was used to explain that the roles assigned to women were based on social acceptance rather than being natural. However, it would take a lot of effort to reinterpret feminism with Marxist ideals. Since Marxism emerged to explain the exploiter/exploited relationship between the capital and the working class, it needed certain changes to explain the exploiter/exploited relationship between the sexes. With this aim, feminists have attempted to reinterpret Marxism to explain women's problems. They tried to fit Marxist ideas into feminism by equating capitalism and male dominance (Jackson 1998:12–13).

Christine Delphy (2016:66) states that historical materialism is built upon the analysis of conflicts between classes, and she claims that women's productive aspect in the public is ignored. This means that no gender-based class analysis has been made. This has had various consequences for women. For example, the oppression on women was regarded as an insignificant result of class struggle. In addition, the continuing despotism implemented upon women in the countries where capitalism was abolished was explained with ideological reasons. Delphy (2016) claims that

two different needs for women emerge from this situation: “First, a theoretical need: to find the structural reasons why the abolition of capitalist relations of production as such is not sufficient to free women; and second, a political need: to establish the women’s movement as an autonomous force” (66).

Such efforts resulted in the adoption of extreme ideas by some feminist groups. Most studies on feminism tend to divide feminists into Socialist/Marxist and more extremist ones. However, Stevi Jackson (1998:13) states that the situation is more complex than that. According to her, there are more similarities than differences between Socialist/Marxist feminists and extremists. Marxist feminists regard capitalism as the cause for women’s degradation while extremists blame patriarchy. Both groups benefited from Marxism in different ways. The more conservative ones employed Marxism’s mild ideas; others opted for its more radical ones.

1.5. Feminism and Psychoanalysis

Juliet Mitchell (2000:388–89) defines psychoanalysis as a “talking cure” in which both the doctor and the patient can be male or female. According to her, the psychoanalyst, in a way, listens and retells stories. However, feminists have constantly struggled with Freud’s patriarchal implications and tried to develop women-centred theories as an alternative to them (Selden et al. 2005:156). Feminists in the early 1970s turned their backs on this theory, blaming Freud for misogyny. However, Hélène Cixous (1997a:225–26) criticizes those who reject Freud, and she claims that women go to extremes in such matters. To Cixous, it is almost like not getting on a plane just because it was not invented by a woman. However, humanity is indebted to Freud for his studies on the unconscious. Cixous persists that a work of literature cannot be confined to psychoanalysis’ or philosophy’s inherent limits. According to Cixous, literary works are “beyond” those limits. That is what matters. Neither psychoanalysis nor philosophy can cope with this state of being “beyond” because it is stronger and more difficult to understand than what they are thought to be.

The works of Jacques Lacan were also effective in reducing the hostility towards Freud. As French feminists began to study Lacan more closely, they realized

that psychoanalysis could also be useful for feminist purposes. Lacan's works have greatly influenced feminists. Before Lacan, Freud's theories were only interpreted on the basis of biological differences, especially in the United States. For example, in Freudian understanding, girls define themselves as female through something they do not have, the phallus. With this negative definition, a phenomenon called "penis envy" emerges, which is the cause of the "castration complex" that all women suffer from. Such conclusions caused Freud's theory to be labelled as "phallocentric" by some of his colleagues and the term was easily adopted by feminists (Selden et al. 2005:129).

Lacan developed his own theory drawing on Freud's Psychoanalysis. French feminists benefited from Lacan when they defended the non-existence of a fixed "masculine" authority and truth. Feminists, who were often reactive to Freud's ideas about women, began to accept the phallus as a symbolic concept with Lacan's reinterpretation of the gender development theory. Thanks to Lacan's new perspective, some feminists recognize that both men and women lack sexual integrity, a yearning that can never be satisfied (Dobie 2012:117–18).

1.6. Feminism and Poststructuralism

Feminists have used the deconstruction method of the poststructuralist philosophy to reveal that the male-dominated thought system is based on false contrasts. According to this method developed by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, love is not the opposite of hate, good of bad, or woman of man. The presupposition that the motivator of male behaviour is logic and the motivator of female behaviour is emotion is wrong, as well. Feminists reject such sexist approaches. Since logic and emotion cannot be separated from each other with such clear lines, feminists, who utilize the principles of deconstruction, state that these two characteristics are not specific to any gender but are common for both men and women. The logical bonds people establish with a thought or behaviour are determined by the way that thought or behaviour makes them feel. That is, logic and emotion together direct people's lives (Tyson 2006:94).

One of the feminists who were influenced by Derrida and adopted the poststructuralist philosophy is Hélène Cixous, who is also a French writer of

Algerian origin. Cixous (1997b) opposes the word-centred attitude of western literature and says that thought is erroneously based on binary oppositions such as “culture/nature”, “father/mother”, “speaking/writing”, and “man/woman” (148-50). The general acceptance is that the first of these oppositions is superior and the second is subordinate. Moreover, according to Cixous, the fact that speech-centrism makes thinking dependent on opposite pairs as mentioned is related to the binary of male/female. After all, the first terms of all oppositional binaries are male-gendered. Therefore, Cixous concludes that western thought is not only word-centred but also phallocentric.

Besides, Cixous (1976:878) argues that the “new” woman should free herself from the “old” one. According to her, the way to do this is through the woman's self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is through writing. There is nothing but a handful of works that write about femininity in the literatures of the whole world. Cixous accepts that there has been an increase in the number of female writers since the nineteenth century but she finds it deceptive since these works have the characteristics of male writing.

While claiming that the history of literature is almost entirely phallocentric, Cixous invites any woman to write “her self”. This act of writing will give her femininity back so that she can regain the body that has been denied to her. A woman without a body cannot become a good warrior and cannot go beyond being the slave and shadow of men (Cixous 1976:879–80). Cixous terms this unique writing language of the woman as “ecriture feminine”, which she regards as vital to break male dominance (Newton 1997:210). Despite the complexity of finding a definition to it, Cixous (1976:883–86) asserts that there is such thing as female writing, and, according to her, it will always prevail over masculine discourse. Therefore, a woman must write through her body. She must develop a written language that would shatter the established male order. According to Cixous, this will be the power of women.

1.7. Feminism and Language

One of the questions asked by feminist criticism is whether there is a language that is specific to women or not (Richter 2007:1506). For example,

according to Robin Lakoff (1975), "words like beige, ecru, aquamarine, lavender, and so on are unremarkable in a woman's active vocabulary, but absent from that of most men [...] Men find such discussion amusing because they consider [it] trivial, irrelevant to the real world" (9). Male and female language differences are not limited to the names given to the colours. For example, if people, whose native language is English, are asked to comment on the gender of the speakers of the statements: "Oh dear, you've put the peanut butter in the refrigerator again" and "Shit. you've put the peanut butter in the refrigerator again", they will think that the first was said by a woman and the second was said by a man (1975:10). While Lakoff claims that man's and woman's languages diverge in many such matters, she declares that in some cases these differences are the product of a patriarchal society that treats women as inferiors. According to Lakoff, the way to fix this is through a comprehensive social change (1975:47).

Dale Spender (1990:8) admits that Lakoff is right by stating that she is one of the first feminists to explore the relationship between language and gender, but she criticizes her for the results of her work. She argues that Lakoff's work is constrained by sexist assumptions of language. According to Spender, Lakoff considers the male language superior and she attributes it to men's linguistic performance. She has also tried to evaluate female language by male standards and has taken male language as the norm. Spender notes that the result of such a comparison will naturally be unfavourable for women, so she criticizes this method because she thinks it contributes to the perception of women's inadequacy.

In *Man Made Language*, Spender (1990:12) claims that language is generated and controlled by men, and that men use this situation to prioritize themselves over women. She argues that the situation will not change as long as women continue to use the language made by men. According to Spender, the scholars who conduct studies on gender differences in the language are trying to consolidate male dominance.

Contrary to Lakoff and Spender, there are those who argue that the relationship between language and gender may not be reinforcing male dominance. Deborah Tannen (1990:42–48) illustrates the differences in the way girls and boys relate and deal with their fellows, citing an observational study conducted on nursery

children. Accordingly, she concludes that children acquire gender-specific speech patterns at a very early age. She states that the communication among girls is mostly conciliatory, while the interaction of boys is based on achieving hierarchical superiority. Tannen likens linguistic differences between the genders to cross-cultural differences. According to her, men and women have different cultures, so the interaction between them is intercultural.

1.8. Some Subcategories of Feminist Critique

Feminist critique is not the product of a particular thought pattern. It is divided into many different sub-categories within itself, and these categories contradict each other from time to time. According to Charles E. Bressler (2007), feminist criticism is divided into four groups. These, together with their representatives, are as follows:

> ***Anglo-American feminisms*** *(e.g., Virginia Woolf, Judith Fetterley, Annette Kolondy, Nina Baym, Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar);* ***poststructurulist feminisms*** *(e.g., Luce Irigary, Catherine Clément, Gayatri Chakaravorty Spivak, Monique Wittig, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Joan Scott, and others);* ***materialist feminisms*** *(e.g., Juliet Mitchell, Michèle Barrett, Jacqueline Rose, Rosaling Coward, Toril Moi, Catherine Belsey, Katie King, Donna Haraway); and* ***porstmodern feminisms****, usually datingfrom 1990 to the present (e.g., Jane Gallop, Judith Butler, Diana Fuss, Chandra Mohanty, Uma Narayan, Mary Daly, Gloria Anzaldúa).* (180)

Other critics have subdivided feminist criticism differently. To mention some of them: "**Amazon feminism**" has focused on the image of women in literature and art. It advocates the physical equality of men and women. It opposes false beliefs determined by gender roles. For example, according to them, no profession is specific to men or women, which means women can do whatever men can. "**Cultural feminism**" argues that men and women are different biologically and in personality. According to some feminists who adopt this school, the nature of women is more benign and gentler than that of men, which indicates that women are superior to men. "**Ecofeminism**" claims that male dominance is actually not that old. Ecofeminists argue that societies were matriarchal at first and adopted patriarchy much later. According to them, men are destructive to nature, women, and children. Women, on the contrary, protect the earth, natural resources, animals, and people.

"**Material feminism**" aims to liberate women from their traditional duties such as housework and childcare. "**Separatist feminism**" argues that women should break away from men, either completely or partially. They assert that women should define themselves independently from men, which will be the first step of personal development and individualization (Bressler 2007:181).

1.9. What Does Feminist Criticism Do?

Feminist critics believe that by changing literature and the way it is read, they can make the world a better place for women. Ann B. Dobie (2012:113) maintains that this idea makes them not only an ideological group, but also a fanciful one, and categorizes feminist studies into three groups that overlap in some cases. These are "difference" studies, "power relationships" studies, and the "female experience" studies. The first group that aim to identify the differences between the works of male and female authors, argue that gender determines everything. Here are some questions to be asked while doing a study of difference:

- *Has the writer chosen to write in a genre typical of male or female writers of the period?*
- *Do you consider the content of the piece typical or atypical of a male or female writer?*
- *Does the voice sound characteristic of a male or female writer? That is, is it personal or impersonal, subjective or objective, implicit or explicit?* (Dobie 2012:114)

Those who study "power relationships" argue that women are abused both socially and economically. In the following, there are some questions that those who do this type of study will often ask:

- *Where do you find an imbalance of power among the characters?*
- *Who are the powerful ones, and who are the powerless? Are the latter women and/or minority figures?*
- *What divisions of labor exist between men and women in the work?*
- *Does the work resist a social order that denies equal treatment to all? Or does it accept it?* (Dobie 2012:117)

Those who study the "female experience", on the other hand, are interested in whether a literature specific to women exists or not. Feminists embracing this type of study can ask the following questions:

- *Where do characters speak with mannerisms that seem to be characteristically female, such as unfinished sentences, silences, exclamations?*
- *Does the text include images of motherhood or references to goddesses that suggest creativity and power?*
- *Do you find the female characters conforming to expected norms? Are they nurturing, giving, passive, emotional?*
- *Are there reversals of the expected norms? Do some female characters take on what are considered to be masculine characteristics?*
- *According to this work, what does it mean to be female?* (Dobie 2012:118–19)

Furthermore, Peter Barry (2017:135–36) lines up the things a feminist critic does as such: to ponder upon how women experience the world; to reflect on how women are represented in literary texts; to oppose the representation of women as "other", "missing", and part of "nature"; examining the ongoing power relations in the text and in real life in order to break them down; to view reading as a form of political action; to emphasize the function of language in creating the misperception that the roles that society and culture assign to women are due to natural and biological differences; to read psychoanalysis from a different perspective in order to better understand the men and women identities.

According to Barry (2017:135), another issue that feminist literary critics should focus on is the re-evaluation of women's writings that have been neglected while determining literary norms. The fact that almost no work written by a female author was used as a criterion while determining literary norms makes this situation necessary.

In summary, some of the questions to be answered while analysing a literary text in the context of feminism are as follows:

- *Is the author male or female?*
- *Is the text narrated by a male or female?*
- *What types of roles do women have in the text?*
- *Are the female characters the protagonists or secondary and minor characters?*
- *Do any stereotypical characterizations of women appear?*
- *What are the attitudes toward women held by the male characters?*
- *What is the author's attitude toward women in society?*
- *How does the author's culture influence her or his attitude?*
- *Is feminine imagery used? If so, what is the significance of such imagery?*
- *Do the female characters speak differently than the male characters?* (Bressler 2007:184)

These and many similar questions can be asked as initial inquiries for clues to women's place while examining a literary text. It should also be noted that critics may reach different conclusions while examining the same text from a feminist perspective. The most important thing is to see the contribution of feminism to literary criticism. Thanks to feminist criticism, it has been possible to read literary works from a different perspective and to clarify some issues that were not understood before (Tyson 2006:120).

Along with all this, there are also those who criticize feminist theory. Such scholars often argue that feminist critique is constructed by combining various other theories. They accuse feminist critics of being undecided about what to believe. They accuse them of falling into disagreement even on the definition of man and woman. Indeed, it is possible to find subcategories that criticize each other within feminism. Because of such conflicts, feminists cannot gather around a single ideology. However, as long as discriminatory attitudes towards women continue all over the world, feminist criticism will continue to speak out against them (Bressler 2007:186).

2. GENDER RELATIONS IN MCCARTHY'S FICTION

In this chapter, a general picture of women in McCarthy's fiction will be drawn. The status of male and female characters will be criticized from a gender perspective.

2.1. Appraisal of Masculinity

The history of the United States is filled with myths, and some of the most misleading ones originate in the west. In order to re-establish the link between history and reality, some scholars came up with a term called "The New Western History" at a conference in 1989. The conference was held in Santa Fe, the city that occupies a great significance in Cormac McCarthy's life (Mayne 2001:1). McCarthy's shift from Southern Gothic to Western starts with *Blood Meridian*, his magnum opus, which was released a few years before the conference aforementioned, and is regarded as one of the most significant novels of American literature (Bloom 2001:255; Shaviro 1999:146). Arguments presented in the conference about the effects of old western myths on the American culture would unearth the problem of women's place in the history of the west. The main aim of this enterprise was to help women and non-Anglo-Americans regain due respect, which was deprived of them, for their share in the making of the western history (Mayne 2001:1). McCarthy's western novels have been regarded as critiques of the western myths with their anti-western features. For instance, McCarthy does not abide by the conventional western forms of hypermasculinity in his critically acclaimed masterpiece, as he shakes the romantic theme of nation-building from its basis by portraying the brutal side of the past that no one wanted to see (Kollin 2001:563). His works differ from conventional western narratives with their recurrently disappointing male heroes and the amount of graphic violence they contain. Such aspects of McCarthy's novels make him a "revisionist" of the mythical western history (2001:4). However, women's place is still disputable in his narratives. Women are usually characterized as a source of annoyance, intrusive to

the homosocial relations of men, bearer of the doom for male heroes, or speechless vague entities (2001:6).

In this respect, the most discussed issue about McCarthy's works is, indisputably, women's place. Not only his Westerns, but his southern novels also are devoid of women. Therein, McCarthy meets the old western genre's requirements as its primary interest is masculinity (Kollin 2001:569). None of the novels in *The Border Trilogy* can reach out of the traditional western aspects of the genre. As an allusion to a Biblical story, the title determined for the last book of the trilogy -*Cities of the Plain*- refers to the decline of good old times when masculinity used to be celebrated. According to Kollin (2001:583), McCarthy is well aware of this fact and tries to reinstate the traditional Western to its former brighter days by *The Border Trilogy*. However, the success of this attempt is debatable.

Much of the critique on McCarthy's first close-to-romantic novel, *All the Pretty Horses*, focuses on a modern type of cowboy. The Mexican landscape helps to create this new hero. McCarthy uses the Mexican background as a touchstone to crystallize American manhood revived in this modern cowboy. This new hero does not abide by the prejudices of old western's racial codes. An interracial love affair becomes a way to review the old traditions. Nevertheless, this reconsideration of American supremacy still depends on old arguments on ethnicity and gender. It helps construct new preoccupations on gender and ethnicity while claiming to abolish the older ones. However, the love stories between American and Mexican couples are significant as they show McCarthy's point of view on the relations between two distinct countries and how feasible building a hybrid nation is. This view has been subjected to criticism, as it seems to manifest Anglo-American imperialist ideals, especially through John Grady's relentless quest for conquering Mexican women's hearts (Sugg 2001:117–27).

Such perspectives make McCarthy the target of feminist concerns. Furthermore, the themes that he uses in his works do not help him enhance his position. McCarthy's womanless "male-dominated literary universe" (Woodward 2005) has been a discussion topic in the media, too. Duhm (2015) refers to McCarthy's not-yet-published work as the first novel with a female protagonist in his over-fifty-years of writing experience, apparently ignoring Rinthy Holme in *Outer*

Dark. Another journalist finds his upcoming novel, *Stella Maris*, which will feature a female protagonist, as an exciting turn from a brutal and masculine tone to a much feminine one (VanDenburgh 2022). Nearly all of his published works have a plot revolving around men, which causes him to ignore women in his narrative (Wood 2005). Yet, he names his son after his grandfather, whom McCarthy respects a lot, and who is an early advocate of feminism, as he assured college education to his daughters, which was against mainstream traditions of his time (Kushner 2007). Though *All the Pretty Horses* has brought him a much wider range of audiences with its apparently softer tone about women, he still preserves his masculine ideal in the mentioned novel. So, as an author of issues related to manhood, his prose seldom centres on women and matters related to them, like "sex, love or domestic issues" (Woodward 1992). All that he reserves for his female characters are either stereotypical errands like cooking and sewing or dishonourable professions like prostitution, while men constantly fight or die for their honour. He is first-rate in writing about masculine concerns (Bradfield 1993). However, McCarthy's reluctance –or one may say faintheartedness- to handle women and womanly issues in his works comes from his lack of comprehension of the gender. In an interview, he is asked why "there is not a lot of engagement with women" in all his books. As an answer, he notes that "women are tough. [...] I don't pretend to understand women. I think men don't know much about women. They find them very mysterious" (Winfrey and McCarthy 2007).

Almost all of McCarthy's novels provide a strong support for the canon of masculinity. Thus, it will be useful to examine the link between the work that brought him fame and success and the social context it was written in. The accomplishment that McCarthy got with *All the Pretty Horses* came about the same time with the masculinity crisis of the 1990s. It seems that the social context played a chief role in the achievement of a great recognition of the author who was once appealing to only a small audience. This crisis in masculinity was met with a trend called "mythopoetic men's movement" (Dudley 2013:175–76), which is about "some of society's seemingly most powerful members' complaining about their victimage" (Mechling and Mechling 1994:97).

Typical features of McCarthy's fiction build a concrete relation to the masculinity problem, to this extent; it seems that he cooperates with mythopoetic men's movement in the restoration of manhood in a postmodern context. Nevertheless, John Dudley (2013:177) suggests that McCarthy criticizes conventional masculinity codes with his imperfect male heroes. Except for John Grady in *All the Pretty Horses* and the father in *The Road*, none of McCarthy's protagonists comes close to a traditional western hero. While reading McCarthy's fiction, readers mostly come across a main character, who is either lacking traits of a proper western hero or is morally perverted.

2.2. Dewomanizing the Landscape

One of the biggest problems with McCarthy's narrative is the space that women occupy. Most of the criticism that he gets originates from his narrative attitude toward women. To give an example, from the beginning to the end of *The Border Trilogy,* women are methodically exposed to banishment from the text, which is a peculiarity of the Western genre (Sullivan 2001:229). According to John Dudley (2013:179), the lack of female characters in McCarthy's works is related to abjection, which is defined as "a concept in critical theory referring to becoming cast off and separated from norms and rules, especially on the scale of society and morality" (Wikipedia "Abjection"). McCarthy's first and only female protagonist until today before the publication of the long-anticipated interrelated novels *The Passenger* and *Stella Maris*, which are to be on the shelves by the end of the Fall of 2022, is Rinthy from *Outer Dark*. Dudley (2013) claims that she posits a perfect sample for abject as she is "powerless, violated, homeless, inarticulate, seeping blood and mother's milk" all through the novel (178).

Maybe because of this abject quality, men and women rarely share a life in a mutual domicile. In her comprehensive article on domestic spaces in McCarthy's works, Terri Witek (2009) argues that readers do not usually encounter couples sharing the same living areas in McCarthy's works. The environment for living, like the ranches or campsites in *Blood Meridian* and *The Border Trilogy*, do not generally contain women. Some minor stereotypic characters like Socorro, the housemaid in the Cross Fours Ranch, in the *Cities of the Plain* are only there to help men with the

womanly errands. The living environment itself is subject to constant change. According to Witek (2009), "with such things as cash crops and permanent buildings comes not freedom but alienation" (27) The male characters' continuous flow from one place to another suggests that McCarthy's obviation of women is to prevent his heroes' alienation.

As a result of this effort of prevention, the world that McCarthy creates becomes rather womanless as readers can hardly encounter a serious relationship between men and women. According to Arnold (1999), some rare heterosexual relationships like "the horrifying Rattner husband and wife [in *The Orchard Keeper*], Culla and Rinthy Holme as incestuous parents [in *Outer Dark*], Lester Ballard and his collection of female corpses [in *Child of God*], Cornelius Suttree -who is divorced- and the bisexual prostitute Joyce to whom he plays pimp [in *Suttree*]" (236) are only there either for sarcastic purposes or their abhorrent quality. In the case of *Blood Meridian*, the novel is like a vast desert, in which female characters are as rare as the Spoonmaker's diamond. The first serious love stories are kept for *The Border Trilogy* by McCarthy. Controversially, Arnold (1999) claims that the actual love tales are not between heterosexual couples. Either "men and men" or "men and nature" duos are the address to find love (236). Therefore, *The Border Trilogy* is not different than McCarthy's other works in the way it deals with men's homosocial desires. This, more often than not, occurs as the older male character takes on the duty of protecting the delicate one like in the cases of "Marion Sylder (and Arthur Ownby) and John Wesley Rattner [in *The Orchard Keeper*], Suttree and Gene Harrogate [in *Suttree*], Tobin and the kid [in *Blood Meridian*], John Grady and Jimmy Blevins [in *All the Pretty Horses*], Billy and Boyd [in *The Crossing*], and, […] Billy and John Grady [in Cities of the Plain]" (Arnold 1999:237).

Nell Sullivan (2001), too, claims that the trilogy's romantic plot is not constructed between men and women. However, she is not very sure about the quality of the desire between men is traditional enough to be called "homosocial" (246). In her detailed elaboration of the gender roles in *The Border Trilogy*, she tries to convince the reader that all three books are nothing but manifestations of the hidden homosexuality of the main characters. According to Sullivan (2001), McCarthy aims to remove women from the text by dismissing them from being an

object of craving and "[…] carefully construct[s] a paradigm of desire as a masculine *cul-de-sac*, a paradigm that demands the systematic expulsion of women from the narrative" (252 emphasis in original).

However, women's exclusion from the text does not mean that the trilogy is free of femininity. While female characters are few in the works of Cormac McCarthy, femininity is not ignored or left out of the frame. The void is filled with male characters as some of them represent femininity. When the male duos in the trilogy are investigated, it is usually seen that one of the partners exhibits feminine traits. For instance, Billy Parham in *The Crossing* and *Cities of the Plain* not only crosses the border of Mexico, but also crosses the gender borders of the traditional western genre. *The Crossing* witnesses the gradual vanishing of women characters. There is no thoroughly refined woman character. Even the girl whom Billy and his brother Boyd save from rascals –Boyd will fall in love with her later- is not mentioned by her name. McCarty creates a universe in which men exhibit feminine traits that make women characters useless (Sullivan 2001:229–33).

The Crossing hosts some critical gender role alterations. Boyd typifies a masculine hero trying to prevent inconveniences just like his father would do for his family if he was alive. He is worried about the Mexican girl and attempts to save her from any harm that will spoil her purity. On the other hand, Billy represents femininity. After the gypsies help him cure the knife wound that his horse got, he spends some time by the river before he crosses the border to the U.S. side for the last time. A man joins him there who seems to be the employer of the gypsies that helped him. The man functions as a priest to whom Billy confesses his most secret sins. He admits his brother's superiority: "He was a born natural. He was smarter than me too. Not just about horses. About everthing. Daddy knew it too. He knew it and he knew I knew it and that's all there was to say about it" (McCarthy 1995:429). This way Billy admits his femininity, as the "less smart, less spontaneous, less "natural", […] increasingly feminized and emotive, [and] a singer of corridos […]" (Sullivan 2001:234).

The rifle that Billy carries with him on his first crossing to Mexico with the wolf represents the phallic authority of his father. His family has no other tool to protect themselves, and as a result, his parents are massacred in the deprivation of the

rifle. Sullivan (2001:237) reads it as the castration of the father, and the blood-soaked bedding in which Billy's father is slaughtered explicitly reflects it (McCarthy 1995:166). Billy exchanges the rifle for the wolf's carcass and takes it to the hills for a burial. While on the horseback with the wolf's corpse, his thighs get wet with the wolf's blood. He dips one of his fingers into the blood and tastes it (McCarthy 1995:127) which, according to Sullivan (2001:237), is the moment of merging of feminine spirit into Billy's. Later in a few scenes, where Billy is concerned, the narrator mentions actual blood and moon (McCarthy 1995:127, 279, 280), which easily can be taken as metaphors for women's menstruation cycles. Such analogies reveal Billy's femininity. Furthermore, Billy's rejection from military service because of a heart murmur proves he has a weak heart which is another aspect of femininity. This health problem is directly related to Billy's weeping a few times throughout the novel. As it is against the tradition of the western genre, a crying man can only represent weakness, which is again related to femininity (Sullivan 2001:237–39). Billy's use of his grandmother's language is another feminine aspect of his character. While riding with the wolf's lifeless body, he sings a Spanish corrido, which he listened to from his grandmother, about a female soldier who seeks revenge for her fallen husband (McCarthy 1995:128). As corridos are hardly ever about heroines, this also helps understand Billy's ambiguous character (Sullivan 2001:239–41).

Nevertheless, Billy in the last book of the trilogy adapts masculine behaviours. He uses dirty language, sleeps with prostitutes, fights bare-handedly with a man who swings a knife, and confronts dangerous men. All these masculine sorties are nothing but a mask to hide the feminine behind it according to Sullivan (2001:240–41). Another critic that regards the relationship between John Grady Cole and Billy Parham as homoerotic is Megan R. McGilchrist. She notes that homosexual implications, which are closely related to the theme of death, are common in Westerns. However, as it is not possible for an author of the Western genre to overtly write about the homoerotic relationships between male characters – the conventions of the genre do not allow it-, customarily, one of the partners in such intimacy dies, as exemplified in *The Border Trilogy* (McGilchrist 2010:89). Yet, Arnold (1999:238) objects to the idea that Billy physically desires his fellow men.

According to Arnold, Billy's failed attempts to join the army and the monkish life they maintain on the ranch in *Cities of the Plain* indicate that Billy is stripped of all sexual passions. Indeed, homosexual personalities in McCarthy's works are rare, and the existing ones, though, stand to be despised (Arnold 1999:246).

2.3. Allegations of Misogyny

McCarthy's works have been criticized for their female characters' abject qualities. Reading its definition given previously, one may argue that the concept of abjection can easily relate to misogyny when used to describe women. McCarthy's *Outer Dark* is a case of misogyny with its presentation of abject women images. Sullivan (2000:68) finds misogynist elements in the portrayal of Rinthy Holme, the first female protagonist of McCarthy's fiction. While presenting her arguments, Sullivan stresses Rinthy's depiction as a lifeless manikin in some cases. However, some scholars interpret her lack of motion as an unwillingness to build contact with people that would detain her from the search for her lost baby (Harper 2017:13), which makes her somebody with the agency of her own fate. Nevertheless, the fact that she leaks fluids all through the novel "–tears, blood and milk, the three often combined and conflated" (Sullivan 2000:69) gives the reader another clue about her abject quality. Her body reacts to crying babies by secreting milk like a dog in a classical conditioning experiment. The same abject quality of McCarthy's female characters has not changed from *Outer Dark* to *Cities of the Plain* as there are observable similarities between Rinthy of *Outer Dark* and Magdalena of *Cities of the Plain*, such as the fact that they both are fragile and miserable (70). However, Jay Ellis rejects Sullivan's claims about Rinthy; according to Ellis (2006), the condition that Rinthy is portrayed in arouses sympathy, not disgust as her situation is the outcome of "a pathological condition" (94) that cannot be generalized to an offensive feature for all women. In her analysis on Rinthy Holme, Julia Tulloh Harper (2017) focuses on the character's capacity overflowing from the bare text. The perception that the readers get from the text while witnessing Rinthy's development is what Harper investigates to find answer for a few questions one of which is whether "Rinthy's affective power challenge[s] McCarthy's latent misogyny" (3) or not. She is not an ordinary character whose emotive effect on the readers can be neglected.

That is what makes her effective, which is not present in McCarthy's female characters in his later works. Nevertheless, McCarthy still can be blamed for not avoiding the misogynistic habit of squeezing women into stereotypes like "natural mothers, innate caregivers, and essentially empathetic and self-sacrificial in nature" (Harper 2017:14).

The women in *Child of God* are no different from Rinthy as they serve other examples of "narrative misogyny" (Sullivan 2001:252) in McCarthy's works. Victims of Lester Ballard's necrophilia are portrayed as guilty to exonerate him from his disgrace (Sullivan 2000:75). James R. Giles (2009) declares that "*Child of God* is devoted to exploring the boundary between the human and the animal, the spiritual and the material, the rational and the excessive" (124). Giles (2009:125) notes that the incest scene of the dumpkeeper and his daughter fits McCarthy's misogynist writing style, which is characteristically violative. The single household that embraces Lester Ballard is the dumpkeeper's unethical and perverted family that functions as a milestone in Lester's downfall to a necrophiliac killer. According to Giles, McCarthy aims to test the extremes with *Child of God*. McCarthy's theme choice, necrophilia, which is far worse than to be killed for the victims, is a fruit of this attempt. However, the setting is not very far from real life, as the southern culture is not women-friendly itself. There has been displeasure with the improvements in women's status in all states. However, the southern states were the most unwilling ones to enhance women's conditions. The 60s women's rights movement was confronted with a great protest in those states during the 70s (Spruill 2009:110). McCarthy wrote *Child of God* in such an atmosphere and published it in 1973.

Another sample of narrative misogyny in McCarthy's works is the portrayal of the father in *The Road* as superior, in any respect, to the mother (Åström 2018:117). The mother serves no benefit for both the husband and the son. Thus, the hidden message of the text is that to have only the father is sufficient to constitute a family. Dismissing the mother from the family is a direct outcome of "post-feminist fatherhood, which represents mothers as superfluous or incompetent, especially, in the raising of sons" (Åström 2018:114) *The Road* presents a sample par excellence for "post-feminist fatherhood", in which a boy's only need, during the creation of a

manly character, is a father, whose inspiration is his father and male connections. The narrative misogyny that Sullivan detected in McCarthy's pre-millennial works is present in *The Road* as well (Åström 2018:117).

In her detailed article on *The Road*, Berit Åström (2018) declares her main aim as to oppose the critics that accept the marginalization of the mother, and that find the feminist critique of McCarthy's works improper. Åström blames such critics for "critical co-writing", which she defines as "*ally[ing] […] with an author, rather than retaining a critical distance, and represent[ing] the author's ideas without problematizing them*" (112–13, emphasis in original). There are, indeed, such critics that do not regard McCarthy's narrative as misogynistic. For example, Hillary Gamblin (2011:28), tries to extract a romantic from *Child of God*'s Lester Ballard, who is a widely accepted necrophiliac. Gamblin criticizes Sullivan for reducing Ballard to a misogynist by ignoring his psychological and sociological background, which drives him to build a society of dead, in which he is accepted and not shunned. According to Gamblin (2011), the behaviours of Lester Ballard toward the dead women shows that he is not well educated about the opposite sex, and that is what makes him look hostile to women. The reason behind his ignorance is his constant exile from society. Even the basic social interactions of a family are deprived of him, as both of his parents are absent since his childhood. This deprivation hinders his basic communication skills with other human beings. Gamblin maintains her claim by pointing out Ballard's sharing his bed with the dead, which, according to her, indicates a manner not emerging out of the mere sexual drive, but of a need for socializing through dead bodies, which are, for him, more alive than the living (29–33).

Child of God might be McCarthy's most attacked work with the claim of being misogynistic. So, any critic who tries to offer an antithesis of this claim "seems to offer a way to rescue McCarthy's writing from accusations of misogyny" (King 2011:639). Jay Ellis (2006) points out Lester Ballard's unhousing while investigating the motive behind his necrophilia. According to Ellis, Lester seeks to take refuge in a place that feels like home. Lester's gradual banishment from the spaces that he once called home leads him to mistake "graves with houses, and living family with dead strangers" (72). Another factor lying behind Lester's actions is the blows he got to

his head multiple times in the novel. Ellis (2006) analyses these blows with their symptoms and effects lengthily, then suggests that Lester's violent actions start right after the traumas caused by these hits (73–74). Ellis makes his point clear:

> *[…] Lester Ballard is made a necrophilic murderer by the circumstances and forces of the society that refuses, repeatedly, to claim him in the absence of his family. Abandonment by the mother, witness of the father's suicide, forced homelessness, and several blows to the head are the recipe for the Ballard we see by the end of the book. His craziness is then not something outside us, but implicitly the symptom of more subtle societal sicknesses.* (Ellis 2006:80)

Ellis (2006) efforts to prove Lester Ballard's innocence continue when he claims that Ballard's necrophiliac tendencies arise from a legitimate need for socializing and housing (95). If humanity rejects to give him those opportunities, which it does, then society is the one to blame, not Ballard himself. However, there is another one to blame: the absent mother. Lester's mother has left him and his father, which results in the suicide of the father and solitariness of the son at a young age. The mother's escape is ground zero for the disasters that fall upon young Lester. Ellis (2006) finds it "notable that Lester's mother is gone from his life" (73) while trying to ground Lester's innocence.

Another advocate of the thesis that McCarthy's fiction is female-friendly is Megan R. McGilchrist. According to McGilchrist (2010), critics should not be deceived by the looks, which overtly unfurl elements of misogyny in abundance. Instead, the women in McCarthy's works should be interpreted as symbolic sketches for the landscape. Both the landscape and women are "faithless, damaged, hopelessly desired, ultimately degraded" (5–6). If each can serve as the other, the care and longing that McCarthy's male protagonists show for nature can be interpreted as for women. *The Border Trilogy*, in this respect, host the anxieties shared by its male characters, as the main threat is losing the cowboy lifestyle substantialized with nature and vast lands. Here, McGilchrist (2010) comes up with the idea that McCarthy's great respect for nature derives from something she calls "optical democracy", which she defines as "the equivalence of all things" (9) in a realm "in which everything is as meaningful, or meaningless, as everything else" (193). In this way "McCarthy effectively subverts the gender hierarchies of perception of landscape" (194). McGilchrist openly rejects Sullivan's conclusions about McCarthy's misogyny. According to her, McCarthy's systematic expulsion of

women from the text is to criticize "society, typified in the ethos of western mythology" (182).

One of the harshest feedbacks to McGilchrist's theories came from Sullivan, whom McGilchrist has cited in her work multiple times. Sullivan (2010) blames McGilchrist for not conducting a close reading while dealing with McCarthy's works. That is why she fails while developing her ideas about allegorical aspects of the depiction of women in McCarthy's fiction. McGilchrist's book is far from being academic, as it reads like an "unrevised" (104) dissertation, which lacks style and organization.

Yet, nine years before her review on McGilchrist, Sullivan (2001:230) declared that to see the misogyny in McCarthy's fiction does not require close reading. She claims that John Grady Cole in *All the Pretty Horses* does not care for Alejandra as much as he cares for his horse. Likewise, Abuela character, the Mexican woman who helps to bring up John Grady on his grandfather's ranch, has very little place in the novel and she is valuable only because she cared for the males of Cole family.

As discussed under the previous title, McCarthy attributes female traits to male characters in the attempt to dewomanizing the landscape. Sullivan (2001:235) relates this effort to misogyny. For example, craziness is customarily attributed to women in McCarthy's fiction, however, it is sometimes used to describe male characters' behaviours. Once, Billy is told that "[w]omen are crazy" (McCarthy 1995:38), by an old rancher, and in another scene, he is called crazy (1995:61) by the same man after he sees Billy struggling with the wolf. When a woman pities the injured wolf that Billy tries to cross the Mexican border with, Billy and the woman are blamed to be victims of an outburst of craziness by the woman's husband (1995:72).

In the trilogy, John Grady is seen to be in romantic relationships with three women. However, it does not matter who the women are because the important thing is the role they serve for the male hero. Sullivan (2001:248) draws readers' attention to the narrator's description of the first intercourse between John Grady and Alejandra: "Sweeter for the larceny of time and flesh, sweeter for the betrayal" (McCarthy 1992:148). The term "larceny" is used when '*something*' is the object of

the theft, not '*someone*'. This Freudian slip of tongue exposes hidden misogyny buried deep in the unconscious.

2.4. Women as Doom for Men

Another subtext that crawls out of McCarthy's fiction will be discussed under this title. Seeing a male character perish because of a woman is a common occurrence in the bleak and violent universe that McCarthy creates. The male-centred plots of his works rarely contain positive depictions of women. Women are generally deceptive, unfaithful, abject, whoring, revolting, quitters, weak, fragile, destroyers of men, etc. In short, any kind of degrading and deprecating adjective can be used to modify McCarthy's women characters. If there are any exceptions, they are rare and occupy little space in the progression of McCarthy's plots.

In *The Border Trilogy*, the character of John Grady Cole is developed in a way to manifest American masculinity. Mexico and Mexican women, on the other hand, serve as apparatus for fulfilling American white men's colonial desires. However, these women also bring doom to them. Katherine Sugg (2001) concludes that women in the border trilogy serve as objects of passion for fulfilling male heroes' inadequacies, and points to this fact:

> *Mexico seems to function as a lure, the temptation to a nostalgic and "pure" male experience of sex, "the land," and horses. The lovely, also pure, and yet sexually available and adept Mexican women that John Grady Cole (and Boyd Parnham [*sic*] in* The Crossing*) fall in love with likewise function as chimera that inevitably lead these Anglo youth to violence and death.* (Sugg 2001:128)

As Arnold (1999:233) remarks, in *Cities of the Plain*, there is a strange similarity between Billy and Mr. Johnson, as both suffer the loss of a different Margaret –Billy's sister, Mr. Johnson's niece. Mr. Johnson is the uncle of the deceased wife of Mac McGovern, the owner of the Cross Fours Ranch where Billy and John Grady work. Neither Billy nor Mr. Johnson ever got married. Interestingly, both live long lives. In the scenes where Mr. Johnson appears, he is eighty-five and the reader is not informed about his death in the following chapters. When the last novel of the trilogy ends, Billy is seventy-eight, still alive, and is taken care of by a family in Portales, New Mexico. However, McCarthy's other characters, who have

close relationships with women, either die young or live a bitter life. In *Cities of the Plain*, John Grady dies in the hands of a pimp at the age of twenty. His love for Magdalena is what leads him to the duel that brings his death. Troy's brother Johnny, whose heart is broken by the betrayal of the woman he loved, and who never heals from this heartbreak, dies at a young age. In *The Crossing*, Billy's younger brother Boyd, who falls in love with a nameless Mexican girl, is killed at the age of sixteen. Such occurrences are far from being explained as mere coincidences in McCarthy's universe. The underlying message reads: a womanless life is a prolonged one, while love for a woman is a catalyst for destruction. Whether conscious or not, this bias that McCarthy's fiction retains leads to the conclusion that the "female sexuality inextricably bound up with death and, therefore pose[s] as a source of masculine dread" (Sullivan 2000:68). As Terri Witek (2009:25) stated, the women with strong personalities in McCarthy's works, generally become the stimulant of the catastrophic doom for the male protagonists.

3. WOMAN IN *THE BORDER TRILOGY*

In this chapter, the women in *The Border Trilogy* will be discussed in light of the cited works of scholars and researchers. Each novel in the trilogy will be investigated under separate titles.

3.1. Woman in *All the Pretty Horses*

As the first novel of the trilogy, *All the Pretty Horses* tells the story of a sixteen-year-old American cowboy's quest in Mexico for a new life. When his mother makes up her mind to sell the land, John Grady Cole is left with no choice but to leave everything behind and go look for the lifestyle, which gradually becomes a part of history in the U.S., in another country. He is not alone in his quest. His close friend Lacey Rawlins accompanies him and a young stranger, Jimmy Blevins, joins them on the road. During a thunderstorm, while on the Mexican side of the border, Blevins's horse runs away. They find it in a Mexican's stable. When Blevins steals back the horse, they all become the subject of the Mexican armed forces. They run and split. John Grady and Lacey come to a big ranch and ask for a job. They get the job of breaking wild horses because John Grady is very talented in horse care. Here, he first sees Alejandra, the daughter of the owner of the ranch, and falls in love with her. This is not welcomed by her father and the grandaunt. Sometime later, John Grady and Lacey are arrested and taken to jail. There they find Blevins already imprisoned accused of murdering Mexican men. While they transfer them to another prison, the Mexican police captain kills Blevins as redemption for alleged murders. The new prison becomes an infernal place where they must kill in order not to die. Here, Lacey is beaten very badly, and John Grady kills a man in a knife fight, while he gets severe wounds from his enemy's blade. They are released from prison mysteriously after they are treated in the hospital. Lacey goes back to Texas and John Grady to Alejandra. He finds out that they were released from prison with the help of Alejandra's father and grandaunt in return for Alejandra's word for not seeing John Grady anymore. With his broken heart, he goes to find the police that shot Blevins. John Grady captures the police captain and Blevins' horse and sets to Texas. They

are chased by other men and John Grady gets shot. But John Grady manages to hand the police captain over to some countrymen who are hostile the captain. When John Grady returns home, nothing is the same. His father and his caretaker are dead, but John Grady's quest will not come to an end.

Edwin T. Arnold (1999) describes *All the Pretty Horses* as "a modern bildungsroman set on a foundation of philosophical and ontological speculation" (221), which is "rife with allusions to chivalric romance, primitive masculinity, and violent struggle" (Dudley 2013:176). The novel was published in a background in which westerns were becoming a popular genre in the cinema. Although it intends to help build a new western tradition, *All the Pretty Horses*, still, carries the ideals of the old west, which the main character of the novel cherishes so much (Kollin 2001:570). John Grady Cole, whose physical and personality traits are representations of American masculinity (Sugg 2001:128), yearns for the old times and that is why he takes up a long and dangerous journey to the other side of the border after his grandfather's death. He is the perfect masculine hero according to Nell Sullivan (2001:241–43). Just like his ancestors, his life will end viciously in the last novel of the trilogy. The way he dies, as well, ratifies his masculinity. He is always the dominant character in his relationships. He is an exemplary western hero as he does not talk and weep too much. The amount of blood that he loses during the trilogy serves as proof of his claim of masculinity. It also proves him a serious man, which can be considered the most anticipated tribute of masculinity (Dirda 1994).

John Grady and his mother are not very fond of each other. Because his mother decides to sell the ranch and pursue a carrier in acting, John Grady's lifestyle faces a great threat (Hage 2010:170). Not possessing a ranch anymore indicates the death of the old times. Therefore, to revive those days, John Grady finds himself on another ranch on the Mexican side of the border. Mexico's still-untouched nature offers many possibilities that disappeared in the U.S. after the Second World War (Sugg 2001:118). John Grady's search for those new possibilities changes his life dramatically. All these result from his mother's choice. His mother's decision poses a threat to the cowboy lifestyle, which is firmly related to masculinity. Accordingly, John Grady's quest in Mexico can be interpreted as an epic journey to find the lost masculinity. Susan Kollin (2001:572) points out the dialogues between John Grady

and Lacey Rawlins in the first chapter after they head to the border in the search of lost masculinity, leaving everything behind. The fact that they address one another as "son" and "pardner" indicates their longing for the old west and its affiliate concepts of masculinity and national loyalty, which gradually fade away day by day.

The passing of those times in question becomes clearer when John Grady's father tells him that "the country would never be the same. People dont feel safe no more, […]. We're like the Comanches was two hundred years ago. We dont know what's goin to show up here come daylight" (McCarthy 1992:25). According to Katherine Sugg (2001:141–42), the pronoun "we" represents masculinity and the father is referring to the critical situation that American manhood confronts. The developing petroleum industry threatens the ranch life all through the state of Texas. The big ranches close down one by one, as the number of drilling companies increase. Such fundamental changes in the dynamics of the society are intimidating according to John Grady's father.

The emphasis on masculinity never ceases all through *All the Pretty Horses*. At the very beginning of the novel, where the funeral for John Grady's grandfather takes place, John Grady is outside for some fresh air. He intends to go back to the house, but he hears a coming train and stops there. The narrator gives a detailed depiction of the train: "It came boring out of the east like some ribald satellite of the coming sun howling and bellowing in the distance and the long light of the headlamp running through the tangled mesquite brakes […] (McCarthy 1992:2). James Wood (2005) interprets the train as a phallus and that is why McCarthy calls it "ribald". John Grady, with his hat in his hands, stands there until the train becomes a faint image and is gone. This scene can be interpreted as an allusion to the changing times, as a new era is on the western threshold. John Grady looks as if he is giving homage to the dying western masculinity. Therefore, the funeral is not only for the grandfather but also for the "good ol' days".

The changing times compel John Grady to leave his home. He tries to persuade Lacey Rawlins, his best friend, to go with him. As an argument, he tells him that there is no reason to stay, and no one will leave him anything if he stays. Lacey tries to speculate by comparing the states of Alabama and Texas, to prove that there is worse. Lacey's father is from Alabama, but he ran off to Texas, where he met

Lacey's mother. If he did not, according to Lacey, he would have been born in Alabama. The point Lacy misses here is that his mother is from San Angelo, Texas and, as John Grady reminds him, he "wouldnt of been born at all" (McCarthy 1992:26). Lacey grows up in a patriarchal society, and that is why he thinks he would have been born no matter whoever his mother was. Such male-centred thoughts give clues to the place of women in the novel.

Nevertheless, John Grady seems to be a little different. He educates Lacey about the absurdity of what he thinks is possible concerning human reproduction. He is also knowledgeable about the reproduction of horses, a skill that makes him recruited as a cowboy in the Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción ranch where he meets and falls in love with the daughter of the ranch owner, Don Hector. When Don Hector hears about John Grady's talent, he wants to meet him. He asks John Grady about horse breeding and wants to hear his opinion about whether the stallion or the mare is important while breeding. John Grady declares that both are equally important (McCarthy 1992:121). He does not elevate one against the other. In this respect, this might indicate that he is out of traditional western hero codes and more liberal than many of McCarthy's male characters.

Although John Grady serves a liberal presentation of men in the novel, there are still other men to save masculinity. The Mexican police captain that kills Jimmy Blevins on the way to the prison of Saltillo personifies a masculine character with a level of toxicity. When John Grady says that he should not have killed Blevins, the captain tells him and Lacey a story about his experience with a prostitute when he was young. He tells them that when he was young, he used to befriend boys older than him. One day, when they were drunk, they went and slept with a woman in turn. As the youngest one, he was the last one to visit this woman. However, the prostitute rejected him for he was too young. With his sketchy English, he expresses his feelings:

> *What does a man do? You see. I can no go back because they will all see that I dont go with this woman. Because the truth is always plain. You see. 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.* (McCarthy 1992:188)

Then, he holds his fist up to show how he managed to handle this situation. When he turned back to his friends, everybody was shocked, and nobody was laughing. He is a "serious man", which is an essential attribution of masculinity (Sullivan 2001:241).

Even Alejandra has her share from masculinity. The first time she appears on the text, she is riding a black Arabian horse in full gear. On the way to her father's ranch, she comes across the two American cowboys who ride with Mexican cattle drivers. Apparently, she has passed across a river as the horse and her boots are partly wet. She touches the brim of her hat to greet the cattle drivers. They do the same and she rides on until she disappears down the road (McCarthy 1992:99). Firstly, her depiction as a horse rider with the necessary equipment passing through rough lands all alone, and her salutation manner do not ring female tones. The interesting thing is, John Grady cannot help himself looking to the horizon where she has disappeared. He seems to be impressed by her masculine appearance; however, this brings out a hypocritic situation for him. As a matter of fact, he has come upon a woman who showed manners that were peculiar to men before. Yet, he felt offended in that case. When Mary Catherine, his ex-girlfriend from San Angelo, sees John Grady in the town before he leaves for Mexico, she tries to talk to him. She feels bad for she left him for another boy. Before John Grady moves off, she holds out her hand for a friendly shake. The narration goes like this: "At first he didnt know what she was doing. […] He'd never shaken hands with a woman before" (McCarthy 1992:29). Then he touches his hat brim as a goodbye and leaves. He finds her attempt for a handshake strange, because, according to him, men shake hands, not women. He shows his displeasure with not returning her good wishes for him. He just turns and walks on without looking back to her.

Although Alejandra's first introduction to the text contains some masculine elements, she still suffers counter effects of femininity. When her grandaunt, Alfonsa realizes their relationship, she warns John Grady to keep away from her grandniece. She tries to protect Alejandra from possible harm that may come from this foreigner. Her free will is not under consideration. She cannot distinguish between good and evil herself. Therefore, her grandaunt, whose character will be discussed later, makes the decisions for her, as she is more experienced and authoritative. The fact that the pressure comes from a woman, who has similar experiences to Alejandra's, is ironic.

Yet, what if Alejandra was “Alejandro”? And John Grady was “Johanna”? Would Alfonsa play the protective aunt for her “grandnephew”? Probably, she would not even notice their relationship, and if she did, she would interpret it as an ephemeral youth fever. Such hypothetical questions and answers might seem to sidetrack reality, but the reality is Alejandra feels sick and sorrowful for facing such a treatment. She feels confined, yet she sneaks out with John Grady at night when everybody is sleeping. They maintain their love just like sinners, far from the eyes of rule-makers (McCarthy 1992:139–48).

On one of these nights, when they have an intercourse for the first time, the narrator’s description is pointed out by Sullivan (2001:248): “Sweeter for the larceny of time and flesh, sweeter for the betrayal” (McCarthy 1992:148). The term “larceny” is defined as “the unlawful taking of *personal property* with intent to deprive the *rightful owner* of it permanently” (Merriam-Webster emphasis added). To describe a woman as a property, which can be owned (something that can be owned can be sold, as well), finds its definition in the term “narrative misogyny” (Sullivan 2001:252).

McCarthy sets forth a world in which women are frequently depicted without agency. After John Grady is released from the prison in Saltillo, he goes back to Don Hector’s ranch to find Alejandra. Yet, she is away in another town and, instead, Grandaunt Alfonsa hosts him and at this point the reader is informed that it was Alfonsa who mediated John Grady’s and Lacey’s release from the prison. However, the price is parting with Alejandra, his beloved. Alfonsa has taken Alejandra’s word for not seeing John Grady anymore in exchange for his freedom. She does not ask John Grady to keep away from her niece as she is so sure that she will not break her word (McCarthy 1992:237–48). He leaves the next morning for Torreón. During one of the breaks on the long way, some children come and join him for the lunch. John Grady tells his story and they give him interesting advice.

> *The older of the girls said that if his novia truly loved him she would marry him no matter what but the boy was not so encouraging and he said that even in families of the rich a girl could not go against the wishes of her father. The girl said that the grandmother must be consulted because she was very important in these matters and that he must take her presents and try to win her to his side for without her help little could be expected. She said that all the world knew this to be true.* (McCarthy 1992:250)

The expression “even in families of the rich” needs attention here. As an adverb, “even” indicates the actualization of the least probable option in this context. What about the other options –that is the situation of girls in poor families? Hence, it is possible to make a generalization about girls –no matter rich or poor- that they cannot do anything that is not approved by the patriarch. As controversial as it sounds, in this case, the patriarch is the grandaunt Alfonsa.

When John Grady reaches Alejandra on the phone and wants to see her again, she does not want to break her word to her grandaunt. Nevertheless, she agrees to see him for a farewell. During this last meeting, she tells John Grady that she has informed her father about their relationship before he was arrested. The reader can infer that Don Hector summoned the police to the ranch after his daughter’s confession, as there were already rumours about some Americans committing horse theft and homicide in the region. When John Grady asks her why she did that, she tells him that her grandaunt had threatened to tell her father. She states that “I couldnt stand for her to have that power. I told him myself” (McCarthy 1992:258). This way she evades her grandaunt’s blackmail without knowing the consequences. John Grady asks her if she hates Alfonsa, she answers:

> *I dont hate her. But she tells me I must be my own person and with every breath she tries to make me her person. I dont hate her. She cant help it. But I broke my father’s heart. I broke his heart.* (McCarthy 1992:258)

She reveals her displeasure with the way Alfonsa treats her. She is aware that she lives in confinement with her grandaunt, but she cannot break her father’s heart. This might indicate that she is experiencing a Jungian Electra complex. Alejandra chooses her father over his lover. She cannot do otherwise because the grandaunt is there to claim for what she denies. The rival is powerful; thus she has to stand still even if it means renouncing the lover.

Grandaunt Alfonsa, as the landlady of the la Purísima Concepción, seems to be the strongest woman character in trilogy. She is Don Hector’s aunt from his father’s side, and Alejandra’s godmother at the same time. She is educated, speaks good English, and has had a teaching career. She is not old-fashioned, and she does not like the oppressive environment they live in. She thinks Alejandra does not like it, either. She admits that she was like Alejandra when she was at the same age. She is missing some fingers, as she lost them in a shooting accident when she was

seventeen, Alejandra's present age. She is self-esteemed and does not need any advice. She is as dominant as a super-masculine can be. Her authority imposes itself with such statements addressing John Grady: "It's not a matter of right. You must understand. It is a matter of who must say. In this matter I get to say. I am the one who gets to say" (McCarthy 1992:144). She is raised in a men's world, however, she does not abide by its rules. She is still rebellious as she was in the past (McCarthy 1992:138–42). According to Erik Hage (2010:170), Alfonsa is the only character that defies feminist criticism levelled at McCarthy. Nevertheless, she is still guilty for not letting John Grady and Alejandra unite. Even if she poses a strong feminine personality, she only serves as a means for John Grady's maturation against the difficulties of life.

She is extremely protective of Alejandra. She thinks her grandniece is living in a dream and is not aware of the hazards of the real world. People gossip and Alejandra seems to ignore the consequences of such things, according to Alfonsa. She has seen fatal repercussions of gossip in her family before (McCarthy 1992:143). Therefore, as her godmother, she assumes the protective role toward Alejandra. She tries to compensate for her inexperience and ignorance with oppression and enforcement of a lifestyle that she is not willing to live. When the rumours about John Grady and Alejandra's intimacy reach her ears, she does not warn Alejandra in the first place, as she knows that she will not listen to her. That is why she talks to John Grady to ask for his respect for Alejandra's reputation. A woman's reputation is a very serious issue in the society they live in. Readers are informed about this fact with Alfonsa's following statements: "There is no forgiveness. For women. A man may lose his honor and regain it again. But a woman cannot. She cannot" (McCarthy 1992:143).

Later, Don Hector gives some background information about Alfonsa while playing billiards with John Grady. Here, the novel procures some real-life backdrop. Their family used to have ties with Francisco Madero, who became the 37th president of Mexico after the revolution of 1910. Alfonsa was engaged to Francisco's brother, Gustavo; however, because they were regarded as radicals, Alfonsa's father did not allow their marriage. As Don Hector comments, she never forgave her father for that. She was sent to Europe for her education, where she got revolutionary ideas, and

now, she urges Don Hector to send Alejandra to France. Don Hector is unwilling, but he knows he will not be able to withstand his aunt. He complains to John Grady as follows: “Why do I bother myself? Eh? She will go. Who am I? A father. A father is nothing” (McCarthy 1992:153).

Her father’s interception of her possible happiness becomes a trauma for Alfonsa. She never forgives her father and never marries. However, as a woman whose happiness was hindered by her closest family member, she should have more understanding of Alejandra’s case. Yet, she acts like her father when her grandniece finds somebody that she can love. Understanding the reasons behind this attitude might need a closer reading. She is a woman of great social ideals and the man she loved was someone like her. As revolutionary characters, they fought against the despotism and atrocities of the state, and she paid its price with her beloved’s life. According to Wikipedia ("Francisco"), Madero’s presidency lasted only a little more than two years. He was overthrown with a military coup backed by the American ambassador and assassinated shortly after. Gustavo, as well, had his share of this misfortune, as he was lynched by the supporters of the coup (Wikipedia "Gustavo").

The coup was backed by U.S. officials, which is another thing that Alfonsa cannot forgive. As an American, John Grady represents everything that Alfonsa used to fight against. The revolution was made to establish social justice in Mexico, however, the capital owners backed by the U.S. tumbled everything down. Thus, she regards John Grady’s attempt as another intrusion movement made by the enemy. As was stated before, she sees herself in Alejandra; hence, she tries to accomplish everything that she had failed through her. If she lets John Grady take Alejandra, she will lose the second round with the enemy. Therefore, she cannot allow their unison.

Later, when John Grady comes back to the ranch after he is released from Saltillo prison, Alfonsa talks to him revealing some of her arguments on why she cannot let them be together: “I can scarcely count on my two hands the number of women in this family who have suffered disastrous love affairs with men of disreputable character. […] One does not like to entertain the notion of tainted blood” (McCarthy 1992:237). John Grady’s reputation is tainted as he becomes the subject of a crime. Accordingly, his entrance into the family will violate the chastity of the bloodline, which makes it impossible for Alfonsa to let him in.

Then, she forbids him to think of her as jealous of others' happiness. She continues her discourse by explaining the reason for her solitude.

> *I am not a society person. The societies to which I have been exposed seemed to me largely machines for the suppression of women. Society is very important in Mexico. Where women do not even have the vote. In Mexico they are mad for society and for politics and very bad at both.* (McCarthy 1992:238)

She sounds like an advocate of women's rights. Not a surprise if her intellectual background is taken into consideration. She cultivates her independent thought as early as the age of sixteen, which is frightening for her family. The Madero family has a great role in her maturation of ideals. After she loses some of her fingers, she develops anxiety about incompleteness. Around this time, Gustavo Madero comes to see her. She is afraid of being treated in a different manner, but Gustavo behaves just like in the old days. He helps Alfonsa defeat her anxiety, and she falls in love with him (McCarthy 1992:240–44).

Her father sends her to Europe on the brink of the revolution. The father is not a social justice adversary. As an upper-class landowner, he is aware of their responsibilities over the poor. Yet, because revolutions never go without bloodshed, he renounces the Madero family and bids Alfonsa to do the same for Gustavo. She rejects it, and as a result, is forced to stay in Europe. She cannot forgive her father "either for his political blindness or for his treatment" of her (McCarthy 1992:245).

However, her father is not a traditional patriarch. He is an intellectual and has many books in five different languages in his library. Alfonsa tells John Grady about her fondness for those books:

> *[…] since I knew that as a woman the world would be largely denied me I seized upon this other world. I was reading by the time I was five and no one ever took a book from my hands. Ever. Then my father sent me to two of the best schools in Europe. For all his strictness and authority he proved to be a libertine of the most dangerous sort.* (McCarthy 1992:247)

She both complains and feels thankful for her father. The world they lived in was not a woman-friendly one. She was aware of this fact, and she chose to try the world in the books. The schools that she studied in Europe also strengthen her intellectual background. As can be seen, her father is a "libertine", and except for his denial of Gustavo as a son-in-law because of his preoccupations with the nature of the

revolution, he does not intervene in his daughter's choices. His attitude toward Gustavo can make sense if evaluated with the results of the revolution.

Nevertheless, Alfonsa is not as liberal about Alejandra as her father was about Alfonsa. She is so consumed with her grandniece's future that she is ready to risk everything for her. The dimensions of her oppression reach a point where she stakes a claim on Alejandra's marriage choice:

> *I would like my grandniece to have the opportunity to make a very different marriage from the one which her society is bent upon demanding of her. I wont accept a conventional marriage for her. […] there is nothing to lose. I dont know what sort of world she will live in and I have no fixed opinions concerning how she should live in it. I only know that if she does not come to value what is true above what is useful it will make little difference whether she lives at all.* (McCarthy 1992:247)

If relieving feminist concerns means having masculine traits, then, Hage (2010:170) is completely right in his claim, as Alfonsa is by far the most liberated woman character of the trilogy, yet, the most masculine, either.

3.2. Woman in *The Crossing*

The second novel of the trilogy might be the most ambiguous one. It is the story of Billy Parham who crosses the Mexican border three times, each time with a particular aim, none of which he achieves completely. Billy, sixteen years old, lives with his family in Hidalgo County, New Mexico. They do the cattle work for living. His father teaches him and his brother Boyd how to catch the wolves that haunt their herds. One day, while on his own, Billy finds a she-wolf caught in the trap that he had set. Billy is supposed to kill her, but instead, he decides to take her back to the Mexican mountains that he thinks are her home. He carefully ties her mouth and hauls her to the border. While on the way, he comes across several people that regard him as crazy. Nevertheless, he manages to carry her to the other side of the border, yet the Mexican authorities are not very tolerant and they take it from him, not to release her in a suitable environment, but to sell her to a circus. They use the wolf in a dogfight. Billy cannot stand the violence and to end her pain, he shoots her in the head. He takes the carcass in exchange for the rifle he brought from home. After burying her, he takes a long spiritual journey into the vast landscape of Mexico. When he arrives back home, he finds out that his parents have been killed by some

horse thieves. Boyd has managed to escape. This time Billy and Boyd together cross the Mexican border to retrieve the stolen horses. While looking for their horses, they encounter two molesters detaining a young girl. Billy and Boyd rescue her, and she joins them on their way. The girl and Boyd fall in love with each other. They finally find some of the stolen horses, but they must fight to have them back. During the brawl, they cause the death of the bailiff who claims the horses. The other ranch men follow them and shoot Boyd. His wound is fatal, but he survives with the help of Mexican villagers. After he recovers, he leaves with the Mexican girl without informing Billy. Billy returns to the U.S. and tries to enlist in the army to fight in the Second World War. He gets rejected because of a health problem. He spends some time in the U.S., but then again, crosses the border for the last time in this novel to find his brother. However, while searching for his brother, he finds out that Boyd is killed and has become a local legend. Songs of bravery are being sung for his brother. He retrieves Boyd's body and takes it back home to bury there. This is another bildungsroman as the Billy in the beginning is much different from the Billy in the end.

The novel exhibits contradictory features to the first book of the trilogy. The adventurous nature of the previous novel gives way to a more spiritual journey in *The Crossing*. Edwin T. Arnold (1999:221) thinks the novel is some kind of a return to self for McCarthy. With its heaviness and difficult-to-read tiresome style, it is almost like an atonement to the popularity that McCarthy got with *All the Pretty Horses*. Yet, it offers an abundance of critical cases for the researchers who want to make an analysis of women's place in McCarthy's narrative.

One of them is the androcentric language used by the characters. After Billy buries the wolf and takes a spiritual journey into the Mexican wilderness, he comes across Indian tribes living in wickiups or caves. They share their food with him, wash his clothes and mend them. In one of these encounters, an old Indian man approaches and gives him advice. He addresses him as the "orphan" as if foreshadowing the massacre of his parents. The old Indian speaks Spanish, but the readers only see the narrator's translation. In this translation, the narrator uses the word "men" for seven times to indicate humankind (McCarthy 1995:134). Referring to humankind with male-gendered vocabulary so many times in such a limited

amount of text is meaningful as it shows the narrator's inclination toward male-centred language.

Billy leaves and comes to a town devastated by an earthquake after riding for a few days. Here, an ex-priest, as the only human being in the town, welcomes him and offers him food in the half-destroyed church building where he lives. This man tells Billy a long story about him and a man who used to live in that town before the earthquake. Just like the narrator's account of the old Indian's speech, the man's story contains many androcentric language features. The words man/men are frequently used to refer to humankind. Even God is referred with He/Him (McCarthy 1995:142–58). Of course, this issue is not peculiar to McCarthy. Many novelists before him have attributed God with male pronouns. However, it is worth readers' attention that McCarthy has not managed to escape from traditional mindsets about the masculine language assets.

Another case that reveals women's place in the novel is stereotypes of women. Almost all the female personalities contain cliché characteristics. Billy's mother prepares the dining table and after they say grace, she hands the tray of steaks to her husband. Then, he passes it to Billy. The action is cut here because they start talking about a wolf that haunts their cattle (McCarthy 1995:15). If not, the mother would probably be the last to have her share of the meal. She is self-sacrificial for her husband and children. All through the novel, women do stereotypic errands like cooking, serving, washing, and cleaning for men while men eat, drink, smoke, and ride horses (McCarthy 1995:69, 106, 123, 132, 134, 225, 235, 374). Some of the women help Billy when he is in a miserable situation from fatigue and hunger. The narration of one of such scenes follows: "a woman came out into the street […] and looked up into the child's face under the hat and asked if he were sick" (McCarthy 1995:132). Billy is referred to as "child" to invoke a mother-child relationship in this scene and to indicate the maternal instincts of the woman who helps and nurtures Billy.

For all that emphasis on childhood, Billy becomes a symbol of destabilized gender roles, according to Nell Sullivan. Sullivan (2001) claims that the title of the novel also refers to Billy's "gender crossing". Her arguments for that claim were presented in Chapter 2 lengthily. By feminizing male characters, McCarthy builds a

"closed system of desire that effectively makes women unnecessary" (233). This brings forth another problem with McCarthy's novels, which needs to be scrutinized.

The problem of misogyny might be the most prominent critique directed at McCarthy's writings. *The Crossing* bears many elements that can be counted as sexist. When the Parham family is talking about a wolf that terrorizes the neighbourhood and kills the cattle, the father refers to it as "she". Boyd asks how he knows that it is a she-wolf even though he has not seen it. The father explains: "You could see where she had done her business" (McCarthy 1995:16), indicating the disturbing visual quality of the area of the wolf attack. A male wolf would not cause a rampage that a she-wolf can produce. This apparent allegory implies that women are prone to a kind of violence that men cannot generate.

The she-wolf also represents an ideal spouse. She wears a scabbed wound made by her mate that was caught in a trap. When the she-wolf rejects to leave her mate alone in the trap, the male wolf bites her in order to send her away from the reach of harm. She does not leave the male wolf at any rate (McCarthy 1995:24). An ideal wife is always loyal to the husband and does not leave him in the face of calamity even if she is treated badly, as depicted with the she-wolf and her mate. Maltreatment is not an excuse for deserting a male spouse.

However, being loyal to the spouse sometimes is insufficient. The old rancher that Billy encounters while turning back from setting traps for the wolf asks him if he is married. Billy tells him that he is not and that he is too young to get married. In response, the old rancher warns him against marriage: "Dont get married. Women are crazy. […] You'll think you've found one that aint but guess what? […] She will be too" (McCarthy 1995:38). By the time *The Crossing* was published, McCarthy had divorced two wives and would divorce the third one eleven years later. Hence, this old rancher sounds like McCarthy's inner voice. After catching the wolf and deciding to take her back to the Mexican mountains, he comes across the same man. Billy is struggling with the wolf and wants help, for his horse has run away. The old rancher accuses him of being crazy (McCarthy 1995:60). If Sullivan (2001:233) is right with her claim that Billy is the major feminine character in the novel, then this accusation dubs the old rancher's previous judgment about the craziness of women.

Women and craziness go on escorting each other in the novel. Before crossing the border with the wolf, an acquaintance of Billy's father invites him in to have supper. When Billy asks where to keep the wolf, he jokes:

> *[The rancher] Well I guess it'll just have to lay around the kitchen till we get done eatin.*
> *[Billy] Lay around the kitchen?*
> *[The rancher] It's a joke, son. Hell fire. You brought that thing in the house you could hear my wife in Albuquerque with the wires down.* (McCarthy 1995:69)

They lock the wolf in the smokehouse and the rancher tells Billy that he is "peculiar" (McCarthy 1995:70), which again evokes the old rancher's claim. When the time for leaving comes, the rancher's wife sees the wolf and pities her as its leg that was caught in the trap is in a bad shape. She goes to get some help for the wolf. Her husband's comment "[m]ore craziness, […] We could be in a epidemic" (McCarthy 1995:72), relates madness to his wife's act of mercy. The wife is not afraid of the wolf, as he joked about it. Instead, she feels sorry for it. An act of mercy occurs when someone powerful pities the weak. Here, the wife proves her strength, which is why she is blamed to be crazy.

There are various negative personality traits deemed suitable for women other than craziness. When Billy and Boyd find out three cattle that are killed by the wolf, Billy cautions Boyd not to tell their father. He does not want his father to worry, but Boyd insists that they inform him. After Boyd asks a series of questions to falsify Billy's judgment, Billy tells him that he is worse than their mother (McCarthy 1995:41). Boyd tries to find out the logic behind Billy's demand for not notifying their father about the dead livestock. As the dialogue between them indicates, Billy is not very comfortable with the questions his brother asks to understand the motives for his behaviour. The reasoning is generally attributed to men, but here it makes Billy recall his mother with a negative feeling.

Billy's recollection of his mother with unfavourable feelings is mediated by Boyd's actions. However, some of the women in the novel do not need a mediator for arousing such feelings. The author's depiction of their looks and manners does the job. Billy is looking for a man called Don Arnulfo to have his advice about trapping wolves. Don Arnulfo is a very old man and is being looked after by an eccentric woman. She opens the door and Billy reverently takes off his hat and

politely asks if the old man is inside. She stays indifferent to him and goes on biting an apple in an unpleasant manner. When Billy repeats his question, she finally answers "maybe". Billy interprets her answer as a racketeering attempt, so he tells her that he has no money. Then, she tries to get rid of him by telling him that Don Arnulfo is sick, and he will not be able to talk to him, so he should come later. Billy insists and finally, she lets him in (McCarthy 1995:42). This woman quickly invokes detest in readers' minds as soon as she opens the door. Her depiction of biting the apple indifferently in the face of Billy reverently standing in front of her with the hat in his hands does not arouse favourable feelings, which is the main aim of the narrator.

The insults that women are exposed never cease. Billy, dragging the wolf behind his horse, comes upon muleteers on a path to Mexican mountains. When the mules get the scent of the wolf, they run away in fear and scatter their load all around. The caravan men go get them back, and an old woman and a young girl stay behind. Billy feels sorry for the chaos he has caused, but the old woman does not blame him, as she thinks it was the muleteers' fault. The things she says from the narrator's point of view are as follows:

> *She said that the revolution had killed off all the real men in the country and left only the tontos. She said moreover that fools beget their own kind and here was the proof of it and that as only foolish women would have aught to do with them their progeny were twice doomed.* (McCarthy 1995:88)

According to her, the revolution spared only idiots, while "the real men" gave their lives for the country. The women who married the idiots that survived the revolution are equally foolish, and as a result, their offspring cannot escape from the same fate. The old woman is apparently pro-revolution, and she blames women for the current state of the country. The misogyny that she propagates asserts itself when she compares the wolf's pregnancy with the young girl's: "Va a parir, […] Como la jovencita" (McCarthy 1995:89). The girl is the old woman's daughter-in-law. She is very young, around fourteen, and pregnant. The comparison of the pregnancy of a woman and a wild animal does not sound woman-friendly or human-friendly, especially if it is considered with the fact that the compared human being is her son's wife, who carries her grandchild.

Just like this, misogynistic elements continue to emerge from the text almost each time a woman shows up in the narration. Billy's journey with the wolf does not go on too long, for the Mexican authorities confiscate the wolf shortly after his treading on the Mexican soil. The police hand the wolf to a circus to be exhibited during a carnival. The local women start making up stories about the wolf:

> *An old woman said that the wolf had been brought from the sierras where it had eaten many schoolchildren. Another woman said that it had been captured in the company of a young boy who had run away naked into the woods. A third said that the hunters who had brought the wolf down out of the sierras had been followed by other wolves who howled at night from the darkness beyond their fire and some of the hunters had said that these wolves were no right wolves.* (McCarthy 1995:105)

They are making up stories about the things they know nothing about. The quality of fantasizing might be a good trait for a storyteller, yet these women are not storytellers. They are real women whose ignorance is presented through gossip-mongering as a means to show their irrational nature. This character trait is undergirded by another argument that labels women as superstitious. The old woman, who compared her daughter-in-law with the wolf, tells Billy about her memory of a priest that was shot during the revolution. She remembers how the women came and soaked their handkerchiefs with the priest's blood and blessed themselves as if it was a token from Christ himself (McCarthy 1995:89). Irrational and superstitious woman depictions serve as proof of misogyny in McCarthy's narratives for the scholars of women's studies.

The narrative misogyny that Sullivan (2000) detects in McCarthy's southern novels *Child of God* and *Outer Dark*, makes appearances throughout the novel. While describing the crowd that gathered for the dogfight that will host the wolf, McCarthy creates an atmosphere that every single person there has an important role in the society they live in. With their professions and attire, they represent the upper class. However, McCarthy excludes women from this scene (McCarthy 1995:116), which implies their inferiority. When McCarthy informs the reader about the Tarahumara people, he notes that they had seen so many things during their a-thousand-year inhabitation of the area such as "[a]rmored Spaniards and hunters and trappers and grandees and their women and slaves and fugitives and armies and revolutions and the dead and the dying" (McCarthy 1995:195). It is noteworthy that

in this expression, the word “women” has a possessive adjective, which at the same time modifies “slaves”. Belonging to someone means becoming property, which can be bought or sold. In another scene, Billy and Boyd are at a café for eating something. The narrator emphasizes that the waitress has no pad to write their orders (McCarthy 1995:197). Two different misogynistic implications might be extracted from this short scene. First, the woman is illiterate, which is a characteristic of ignorance specific to her gender; second, she dares to keep the orders in mind, which is not very easy because she is a woman. A notepad would complete her deficiency, yet she goes without it. While waiting for the meal they ordered, they see a Mennonite family going by on the street “in their overalls with the women behind them in their sunfaded motherhubbards carrying marketbaskets” (McCarthy 1995:197). Let alone stereotyping them with “motherhubbards” and “marketbaskets”, the place of women in the line of walk tells too much. Description of women coming from behind is not just a narration of a visual fact, but also a metaphor for women’s value both for the Mennonite family and McCarthy. Billy, too, has prejudices that can be counted as misogynistic. He asks The Primadonna about the show they stage every night. He wonders why the clown kills her in the show. The Primadonna tells him that the clown kills her because he knows her secret, and the secret is that it is the mask that is true in this world. The Primadonna secretly knows that the clown is the real personality of the man who wears the mask. That is why he kills her every night. However, Billy thought that it was because of jealousy (McCarthy 1995:233). Billy’s statement offers an excuse for killing a woman. Considering the number of femicides committed every day out of jealousy all over the world, it is a widely accepted excuse in the patriarchic world.

Misogyny goes on coming into the sight in its ugliest forms. Two men abduct a young Mexican girl in their camp. In an attempt to save her, Billy and Boyd act as if they are just passing and join them for a break while they are drinking. One of the men wants Billy to guess her age. Billy tells him that she is very young, but the man educates him saying “if they were old enough to bleed they were old enough to butcher” (McCarthy 1995:212). This being verbalized in the narration does not surprise the readers of McCarthy. Yet, these rascals deprived of the most basic ethos have their own moral codes. Near the end of the novel, Billy comes across one of

those men, from whom they have saved the young Mexican girl. As Boyd is dead, Billy is alone and unarmed, therefore he fears that the man would seek revenge. However, the man declares that he will give him no harm as reported by the narrator.

> *[H]e harbored no grudge toward any man over a woman for they were only property afoot to be confiscated and that it was no more than a game and not to be taken seriously by real men. He said that he had no very high opinion of men who killed over whores.* (McCarthy 1995:388)

According to their moral codes, women are properties, on which the strongest or the swiftest man has a claim. Therefore, he regards their rescuing plot for the girl as a game. Reviving this man in the narrative after more than a hundred and seventy pages must serve something important for McCarthy's narrative aims. It seems like he wants to say something about women that would not meet hard criticism. The first encounter and dialogues of these men arouse a sense of alarm and detest. Readers can easily hate these two scoundrels and their ideas. However, the second encounter is much softer. The man poses no threat to the protagonist, with whom the reader builds a strong empathy during his demanding journey. Billy is in such a vulnerable position that the reader is almost thankful to the man who expresses the cited statements. Such emotional fluctuations moderate harsh misogynistic messages for the reader. McCarthy generates both positive and negative feelings in a single scene and waits for them to be accepted at the same time.

The girl is an important figure, with the role she serves in the novel. She is the reason for Boyd's ultimate destruction, at least Billy thinks this way. When in search of his brother in the last chapter, Billy finds the man who gave their stolen horses back. The man informs Billy that Boyd is dead. When the man asks why Boyd did not return home like him, Billy refers to the girl as a reason (McCarthy 1995:394). According to him, Boyd's love for the girl brought him his doom. This issue was discussed in the previous chapter. However, the only one that accuses the girl of being the cause of mishappenings is not Billy. McCarthy does not even bother to give her a name as if he is punishing her for the troubles she has caused.

3.3. Woman in *Cities of the Plain*

The last novel of the trilogy brings together the protagonists of the first two novels, John Grady Cole and Billy Parham. The setting is Alamogordo and Juarez of

1952, four years after John Grady's setting off for a new life in Mexico, and twelve years after Billy's first crossing the Mexican border with a she-wolf. They work for Mac McGovern in the Cross Fours Ranch. The novel starts with a scene in a brothel in Juarez. Billy, John Grady, and their fellow cowboys spend their day off in the brothel. There John Grady sees Magdalena, a young, epileptic prostitute, and falls in love with her. Magdalena is the pimp's favourite, and he is in love with her, too. She has a very bitter past, which has led her to prostitution. John Grady wants to save her from this life. First, he persuades Billy to mediate buying off her from the pimp, Eduardo. However, Eduardo is aware of the relationship between John Grady and Magdalena, so he does not let her leave. After the first plan fails, John Grady tries to convince Magdalena to run away with him. She agrees and John Grady starts mending an abandoned adobe house in the perimeters of the Cross Fours Ranch, to use it as a home. Eduardo learns about their plan to escape, and has his auxiliary kill Magdalena. John Grady finds out about the murder and decides to confront Eduardo. In a knife fight, John Grady manages to kill Eduardo, yet he is fatally wounded, too. In his last moments, Billy is right beside John Grady cursing the destiny for not being able to protect another "buddy". The novel ends with an epilogue, in which Billy's life up until the turn of the millennium is summarized. In the closing, Billy lives with a family that fosters him in his old age.

The novel opens on a rainy day. Billy, John Grady, and Troy, a fellow cowboy, enter a brothel and sit at the bar. They have drinks and start commenting about the prostitutes while making their choices. Here is an extract from their troubling dialogue:

> *I come down here for a fat woman and that's what I'm havin. […] when the mood comes on you for a fat woman they just wont nothin else satisfy.*
> *[…]*
> *How about that old big'n in the green pajamas?*
> *[…]*
> *She'd bounce John Grady off the ceilin.*
> *[…] What about the one with the blue windercurtain wrapped around her?*
> *[…] She looks like her face caught fire and they beat it out with a rake.*
> *[…] Parham yonder actually claimed that a man ought not to date anything he couldnt lift. Said what if the house caught fire.*
> *Or the barn.*
> *[…]*
> *You remember the time we brought Clyde Stapp down here?*
> *[…] Picked him out a gal with some genuine heft to her.*

> *[...]*
> *We told Clyde he looked like a monkey fuckin a football.* (McCarthy 1998:2–3)

Every sentence in this dialogue harbours misogyny. The brothel itself is a product of that hate. A woman in a brothel is nothing but a property that can be bought or sold. Therefore, the brothels are products of the androcentric world because they serve to fulfil men's primordial desires by utilizing women. If they are properties, then men can choose their specifications. The right of choice should be met with the diversity of the goods. The brothel has women in diverse sizes and looks to appeal to men who want to buy them. Here, Billy and his friends are picking women, as if they are shopping in a supermarket trying to choose among different brands. The statements cited are between Billy and Troy. John Grady is mostly mute in this dialogue; however, he would probably join them if he was not distracted by a young girl, named Magdalena. A few dozens of pages later, John Grady is looking for her in the other brothels of the city, as she has been removed from the one he has seen her first time. The taxi driver, who takes John Grady to a couple of brothels in Juarez in his search to find Magdalena, comments about the qualities of the prostitutes and the things that must a man pay attention to while choosing one. The driver tells him "that men out for an evening were often likely to accept the first proposal but that the prudent man would be more selective. […] [I]n a healthy society choice should always be the prerogative of the buyer" (McCarthy 1998:57). When he asks him if he understands, John Grady simply says that he surely does. Therefore, one can say that, despite his romantic properties, John Grady, too, regards some women as property. Eduardo is the most overt man regarding this issue. After Magdalena is killed and John Grady is lost, Billy goes to the White Lake, the brothel where Magdalena used to work, to confront Eduardo. Eduardo tells Billy that John Grady is the one to be blamed for Magdalena's death, which was the outcome of John Grady's "coveting of another man's property and his willful determination to convert that property to his own use without regard for the consequences" (McCarthy 1998:247). A property is something one has full rights on, so the owner can do whatever he/she wants with it. Eduardo regards himself as the rightful owner of Magdalena, which gives him the liberty to do whatever he wants with her. In this case, the owner decides to take the life of the property.

The commodification of women in this masculine world is sometimes disguised as zoomorphism. Oren, an elder worker in the Cross Fours Ranch, wants John Grady to assess a filly for a man who does not know much about horses. According to Oren, the man wants to give her to his wife as a gift. When John Grady asks if she is wild or domesticated, Oren answers with a joke: "The wife or the horse?" Another fellow worker JC joins him: "I'll lay eight to five they aint either one […]. Sight unseen" (McCarthy 1998:44). Here, women are reduced to wild animals, which men must tame. Such belittling jokes that radiate woman hate are quite common among cowboys. In the first brothel scene, Billy and Troy make their choices among the women and leave. John Grady stays there staring at the girl sitting on the couch. When the other two come back, they see John Grady's interest in the girl and Troy tries to encourage him to go and take her. However, Billy has a better idea; he advises him to take the one he just slept with, because "[s]he is five gated" (McCarthy 1998:5) just like a well-tamed horse breed. Attributing animal traits to women with a hurting sense of humour is a normal behaviour in the world of cowboys.

Billy is not the same boy as the one in *The Crossing*. He did not have an overall relationship with a woman to make a comment about his attitude toward women in the previous novel. However, in this novel, he has a misogynistic tone. There is an implication that he has had maturing experiences with women during the time that passed between the two novels. When talking with John Grady about Margaret, the deceased wife of Mac McGovern, the owner of the Cross Fours Ranch, he feels the liberty of making comments about women when he says "[y]ou dont get over a woman like that" (McCarthy 1998:11). Margaret had grown up outdoors, which made her less domestic. According to Billy, "a woman raised on indoor […never] turn out worth a damn" (McCarthy 1998:12). This is what made her so special and why Mac "aint goin to be gettin over" her death (McCarthy 1998:12). His criteria for women's worth impel the masculine ideals of Westerns. Interestingly, Alejandra of the *All the Pretty Horses* would fulfil the requirements of the perfect woman, if not constrained by her grandaunt. Maybe that is why John Grady manages to get over her parting without major harm.

Others are not as lucky as John Grady is. Mac has difficult times trying to consolidate his state of mind. However, Troy's brother Johnny is one of those unfortunates who could not overcome the depression caused by the separation from his beloved. The woman that left Johnny for another man is demonized by Troy's elder brother Elton: "Satan hath power to assume a pleasing form. Them big blue eyes. Knew more ways to turn a man's head than the devil's grandmother. I dont know where they learn it at" (McCarthy 1998:25). Troy immediately provides an answer: "They're born with it, […]. They dont have to learn it" (25). Identifying physical beauty as a satanic characteristic has troubling hypocritical implications for men. Troy and Elton agree that beautiful women are evil, yet men cannot help falling for physically attractive women. Even if the description of beauty may differ from man to man, they still judge the women whom they want to be with by their looks as seen in the brothel scene. Then, the hypocrisy is if men intentionally choose evil over good, why do they complain when bad things fall upon them?

The innate evil that women harbour shows itself again when Mr. Johnson talks about his failed marriage attempt. John Grady and Mr. Johnson are talking about the changes that land and people are going through. When John Grady wants his opinion about marriage, he tells him that he cannot give him any advice since he has never been married. That is not because he is opposed to marriage. Once, he had an attempt, but the girl refused him because he was poor. She married another man and died during the birth of her first child. She was very beautiful and younger than twenty when she died. Mr. Johnson cannot forget about her (McCarthy 1998:193). Here, another demonizing personality trait for the women in McCarthy's universe shows up; greed. Mr Johnson's girlfriend chose money over love, which indicates her lack of virtue. Her choice had broken a man's heart, so she was to be punished to purge masculine emotions. The catharsis comes with a plot twist for the woman. McCarthy kills her while waiting for her happiest moment.

In this novel, the problematic partner in intersexual relationships is always the woman. Men are victims and generally suffer from the wrongdoings of women, which alienate men to women and drag them to a reclusive life on a female-free ranch. Oren is one of those hermits, whose pursuit of happiness has been hampered by his mother-in-law. However, he had been warned by his friends. They called him

"crazy", an allegation of femininity that was discussed previously. Yet, he married her anyway, before her "goddamned awful" (McCarthy 1998:209) mother caused their breakup. The father-in-law was not alive then, but if he was, the wife would not have left him according to Oren (209). He indicates that the existence of the man functioned as a tenderizing agent for the wild nature of the woman. When his wife's father died, the mother-in-law became loose of the strings that attached her to a civilized personality.

Women are either demonized or insulted in this masculine world. Even Magdalena's epileptic seizures are utilized for hateful communication regarding women. While reading the details of the first seizure she has, the readers "find her bowed in the bed and raging as if some incubus were upon her" (McCarthy 1998:73). Next time Magdalena has a seizure, she is with a "client" and Eduardo's sidekick Tiburcio comes to deal with her: "He bent over her slightly in his black silk. The soft false whisper of it. A morbid voyeur, a mortician. An incubus of uncertain proclivity […] (McCarthy 1998:190). Both depictions emphasize some "incubus", a mythical malignant spirit believed to violate sleeping women sexually. In the first one, the narration exploits Magdalena in her cramped body posture. This narrative abuse develops into Tiburcio's actions in the second attack. This time, the incubus is material in the form of a sadomasochistic scopophiliac, Tiburcio.

Magdalena's sickness generates confusion among other prostitutes. As ignorant as they are of the medical facts, they tend to explain her suffering with supernatural causes. When one of the women sees her having a seizure, she likens her to demons. Another one cleans the blood that comes out of her mouth with a piece of cloth and keeps it as if it is a relic from the heavens. Some others start chanting hymns, and more others bring little idols either to help the sick girl or to protect themselves from the demons that have seized the poor girl (McCarthy 1998:73–74). Women are again humiliated by being depicted as prejudiced and superstitious. Eduardo warns Magdalena about the other girls' superstitions. He tells her that it should not make her feel special, as her illness was not a divine sign of her sanctity. The other girls assign meanings to what they fear and do not understand. If they believed it would keep them safe, they would easily give harm to her no matter what they believed about her seizures (McCarthy 1998:220). The only woman that is

aware of the worldly grounds of epilepsy is the one-eyed old housemaid, Josefina. However, she has her own preconceptions about women. When she helps Magdalena to prepare for a ceremony, she praises her beauty and tells her that she looks like a princess. Magdalena does not agree with her, and she wretchedly says that she looks more like a prostitute. Josefina gets angry and tells Magdalena that she will "marry a great rich man and live in a fine house and have beautiful children" referring to Eduardo's love for her (McCarthy 1998:103). Such stereotypic models for women, as in Josefina's words, evoke the ideals of women in sentimental novels of the nineteenth century, which, according to Tompkins (1992:39), caused the emergence of the Western genre as a reaction. Therefore, Josefina represents the traditional woman, and because Magdalena refuses such preconceptions about women, she exemplifies the modern version of female characters in the New Western History.

This does not mean that Magdalena enjoys a life free of male dominance. McCarthy compensates for that minute statement of free will when she expressed that she does not want to marry a rich man by making her endure an unbearable amount of suffering. Magdalena is only thirteen when her father sells her to a brothel to pay his gambling debt. She runs away and takes refuge in a monastery. However, the prioress gives her back to the pimp in exchange for money. Then, she gets whipped and beaten but Magdalena manages to run away again, this time to defect to the police. The police, too, rape her, and sell her to the inmates in return for whatever they possess. When they are done with her, the police sell her back to the pimp again. The pimp breaks her arm and makes her sleep with other men while her broken arm is still in plaster. She tells her story to John Grady; however, he cannot stand it anymore, so he silences her with tears in his eyes (McCarthy 1998:143–44). Sullivan (2001:237–39) claims that, in Westerns, crying means weakness, so she relates it with femininity. When Magdalena recounts the story of her bitter life, she draws a quite weak image of herself. That much dose of weakness infects John Grady, the perfect masculine hero, and as a result, he weeps like a woman. The previous novel, as well, contained contagious femininity. Billy's craziness had turned into an epidemic according to the rancher whose wife tried to help the wounded wolf (McCarthy 1995:72). Such patterns in the trilogy help understand McCarthy's perspective about women.

Women have a controversial place in *The Border Trilogy*. Sullivan (2001:232–33) compares the wolf in *The Crossing* with Magdalena in *Cities of the Plain*. According to Sullivan, they face almost the same fate. Billy Parham thinks the wolf does not belong to the plains of the southwestern New Mexico, so he catches it and crosses the border for the first time to take her to the mountains of Mexico where he thinks is the homeland of the wolf. The wolf is later taken from him by the Mexican men, and it faces a brutal end. Just like the way Billy thinks of the wolf, John Grady Cole thinks that Magdalena, an epileptic prostitute, does not belong to the brothel in Juarez, so he tries to convince her to flee and live with him in an adobe in the far end of the Cross Fours Ranch. This metaphorical crossing of the border will lead to the death of Magdalena by the hands of her pimp. Both Billy and John Grady do not respect borders and pay for it with the life of the female character they try to save.

The Border Trilogy hosts many such controversial roles for women, yet the most feminine character is not a woman according to Sullivan (2001:233). As a part of dewomanization of the narrative, which was discussed in the previous chapter, McCarthy sets Billy Parham as the most prominent feminine character in the trilogy. He goes through multiple feminizing experiences in *The Crossing*. On the other hand, John Grady is the perfect masculine hero. His fate is not any different from his ancestors; like them, he meets a brutal end that ratifies his masculinity. He is always the dominant character in his relationships. John Grady reminds Billy of his brother Boyd, who was superior to him (McCarthy 1998:151). John Grady is a better example of a western hero as he does not talk and weep too much. More than this, the amount of blood that he loses during the trilogy serves as more accurate proof of his claim of masculinity. Billy, too, is depicted in blood in the second novel of the trilogy. However, John Grady's bleeding is different from Billy's bloody depiction in *The Crossing*. While the bleeding of Billy is a metaphorical menstruation, John Grady's loss of blood opens the door to exhibit his masculinity in *All the Pretty Horses*. When he sears the bullet wound with the hot barrel of his pistol, which represents a figurative phallus (McCarthy 1992:283), he displays his control over the bleeding, which distinguishes it from female menstruations. Here John Grady does not need a nurse to take care of his wounds. He treats himself, and this self-adequacy

helps him build the most robust masculine character in the trilogy (Sullivan 2001:241–43).

Nevertheless, John Grady goes through feminizing experiences in *Cities of the Plain* very similar to the ones Billy endured in *The Crossing*. Instead of a she-wolf, John Grady has Magdalena to put him in the category of lunacy (McCarthy 1998:122) which is related to femininity according to Sullivan (2001:243–44). Like Billy, John Grady has to give up the gun descended on him by his elders for his love (McCarthy 1998:96). Tasting the blood of the dead wolf sterilizes Billy from his masculinity. In the same way, having intercourse with Magdalena infects John Grady's manliness, and this will bring him to his death in the end. The atonement for this sin will be to reincarnate as a girl (McCarthy 1998:297) in the epilogue according to Sullivan (2001:244–45).

Yet, McCarthy does not let masculinity die with John Grady. In his last moments, John Grady wants Billy to recover his gun from the pawnshop (McCarthy 1998:267). Sullivan (2001:251–52) claims that this way John Grady demands Billy to take up the masculine role of their relationship. In the last page of the novel when Betty calls Billy as "Mr Parham" (McCarthy 1998:298), one can deduct that he has assumed that role.

CONCLUSION

Cormac McCarthy has gained a significant place in American literature with his remarkable works. He has been compared with major novelists such as Faulkner and Melville in terms of style and literary value. Published in 1985, *Blood Meridian* is his first work in the Western genre. With *The Border Trilogy*, published between 1992 and 1998, he both increased his recognition and clinched his success in this genre. Since the Western genre is directly related to masculinity, its view of women has always been the subject of discussion. As the same criticism is directed at McCarthy's *Border Trilogy*, these novels are analysed in terms of their treatment of femininity in this thesis. While doing this, the perspective provided by Feminist literary criticism was used.

Feminism, which first sparked in the late 1700s, was reborn as a type of literary criticism with the Feminist Movements in the 1960s when the works that raised a voice against the representation of women in literature started to be published. The aim of those critics was to reveal the thought patterns that were the cause of gender injustice. They have rebelled against the patriarchy that has surrounded literature, questioned whether a literature specific to women is possible or not, and embarked on deep studies on women writers. In doing so, they benefited from different theories and forms of thought, such as Marxism, psychoanalysis, and poststructuralism. Feminist critics have used Marxism to show that men exploit women economically. They have benefited from Psychoanalysis to explore the psychological foundations of the oppression on women, although Freud’s ideas was accused of being misogynistic and his theories were long ignored by women’s studies. Another field that feminist critics benefit from in women’s studies is poststructuralism. Feminists have used the deconstruction technique to explain that while some literary works try to put women in a better position, they consciously or unconsciously do the opposite. According to them, a way of writing that is specific to women should be developed against the phallocentric history of literature. There are feminists who say that spoken language, as well, gets its share of male dominance. However, some feminists investigating the relationship between language and gender disagreed on the existence of different languages for men and women or their superiority over each other. Conflicts of this kind and more have divided feminists

into different categories, sometimes overlapping and often contradictory. Even if they think differently on many issues, the common goal of those feminist categories is to provide women with a better life, at least, by providing them with equal rights with men in the male-dominated society.

All of McCarthy's novels have been the target of such criticism. According to some researchers, the attempt that started in 1989 to rewrite the western history, which was founded on myths, could not find full support from McCarthy's novels in some respects. The role of women in McCarthy's novels could not go much beyond the old traditional images of women. In his male-centred westerns, women are used as gap-filling tools. Almost all McCarthy's novels are written with themes that reinforce male dominance. To ensure this, women were excluded from the text. Even romantic relationships that have homosexual implications appear between male couples in this male universe, according to some critics. Yet, these relationships do not go beyond homosocial desires. Nevertheless, the most criticized feature of McCarthy's fiction is its misogynistic tone. All McCarthy's novels are full of events and descriptions that insult or humiliate women. Some scholars claim that it is wrong to label McCarthy's narrative as misogynistic, emphasizing on the allegorical quality of his humiliating depictions; however, this is not taken very seriously by others.

All these interpretations are also valid for the trilogy examined in this thesis. Although *All the Pretty Horses* is McCarthy's first novel to feature a romantic relationship between a man and a woman, it is a novel in which masculinity is at the forefront even in its female characters. In particular, the grandaunt character is the most striking in this regard. For some, she is still the ideal female character in McCarthy's novels. However, in this thesis, it is argued that the situation is exactly the opposite. Accordingly, the grandaunt is the most dominant masculine character in this novel. She tries to prevent her grandnephew from being with John Grady and she succeeds. In doing so, she disregards her grandnephew's free will and desires. Even John Grady has to submit to this masculine pressure from the grandaunt.

The second book of the trilogy, *The Crossing*, is far from the adventurous character of the first. This novel, which about Billy Parham's transition from young adulthood to adulthood, includes narratives in which androcentric language is frequently used. Stereotypical female characters do not do much except fill in the

gaps in the events. In fact, this novel is like a desert in terms of the presence of female characters. So much so that the most developed female character is a wolf, not a human. The human woman, who has the most narrative time, lacks even a name. Although women have been pushed out of the text, misogyny itself persists. Throughout the novel, women are humiliated with accusations like being fools, crazy, superstitious, prostitutes, etc. In some cases, they are treated as objects or slaves. In other cases, women are the causes of the evil that falls upon men.

Cities of the Plain, the last novel of the trilogy, is also not lesser than second in misogyny. The novel opens with a brothel scene where women are humiliated. While the characters compare women to animals for their sexual appeal, there is not only misogyny but also a reference to animal abuse. Regarding women as properties continues in this novel, as well. Also, again, men suffer because of the wickedness of women. Thus, women are demonized as a reflection of the inherent misogyny of the text. In addition, women are portrayed as illogical, unrealistic beings living in a world of dreams. Even femininity itself is treated as a contagious disease.

In conclusion, McCarthy has drawn controversial depictions of women in *The Border Trilogy*, as in his previous novels. In this respect, it was concluded that the accusation of misogyny directed at his narrative might be justified. It is hoped that this thesis can be beneficial as a guide for future research on the female image in McCarthy's novels that have not yet been published.

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VAN YÜZÜNCÜ YIL ÜNİVERSİTESİ

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

LİSANSÜSTÜ TEZ ORİJİNALLİK RAPORU

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: **WOMEN IN CORMAC MCCARTHY'S *BORDER TRILOGY*** **07/06/2022**

.....

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu belirlenen tez çalışmamın Kapak sayfası, Giriş, Ana bölümler ve Sonuç bölümlerinden oluşan toplam 65 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 07/06/2022 tarihinde ~~şahsım~~/tez danışmanım tarafından TURNITIN intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtreleme uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı %4 (yüzde dört)'tür.

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08/06/2022
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Prof. Dr. Bekir KOÇLAR

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