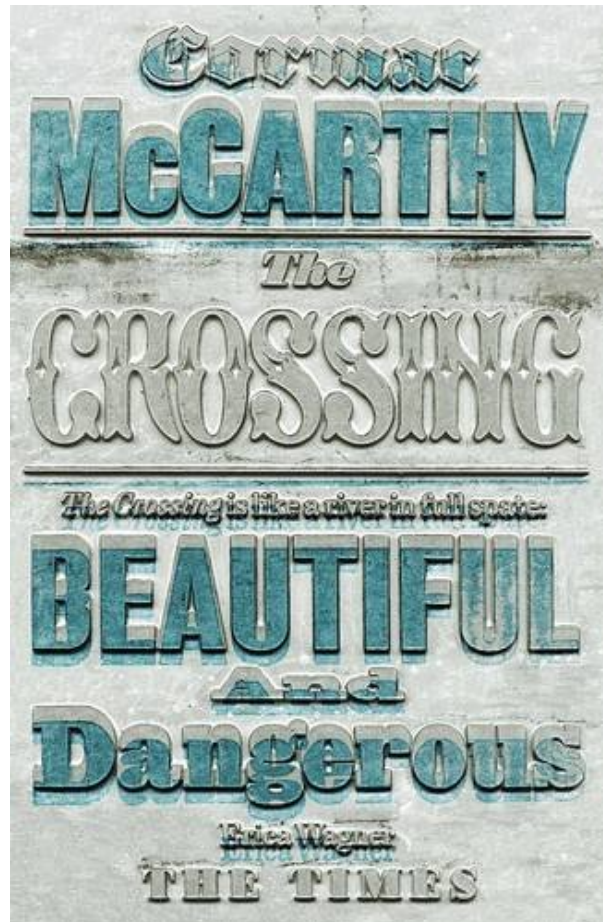
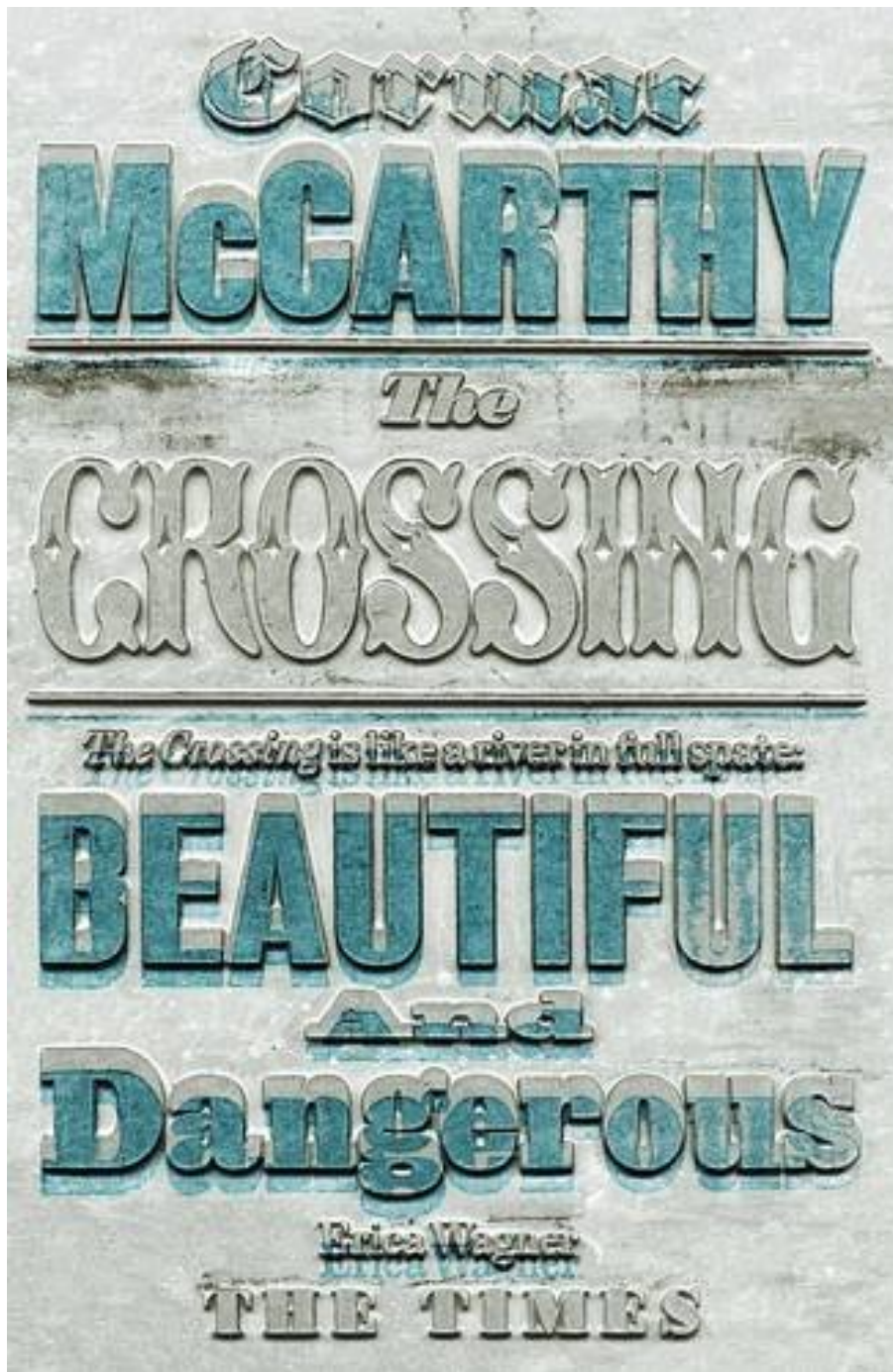


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The Other Side

By booknblueslady

It begins as an innocent story of two young brothers, Billy Parham, 16 and Boyd Parham, 14 giving food to an Indian. Billy and Boyd live on a ranch with their parents in New Mexico and are required to help with the work there. One of Billy's tasks is to trap a wolf who is attacking and killing their cattle. Billy becomes intrigued by the primitive and wild creature, who seems to intelligently elude capture. He attempts to learn about the wolf by asking an old and learned man about the ways of wolves. As Billy begins to feel a kinship with the wolf he discovers it caught in one of his traps. He realizes that he cannot kill it and impulsively sets out for the Mexican border to return the wolf to where it came from. By crossing the border, Billy adventures into a nether world. It is not simply another country, but another reality.

We could easily call *The Crossing* a coming of age story, an adventure story, a quest or an epic poem, but it is all that and much more. As with any coming of age story, Billy Parham's loss of innocence comes with a price of great consequence. Like an adventure story *The Crossing* is filled with action and unexpected situations. As with tales of quests as the *Iliad* and *Gulliver's Travels* we meet strange and interesting creatures along Billy's path. Like an epic poem *The Crossing* is filled with lyrical prose, both in Spanish and English.

Cormac McCarthy is one of the great American authors of the twentieth century and he proves it in once again in *The Crossing* the second book of his border trilogy. His prose is beautiful to read, with dialogue devoid of quotation marks and contractions missing apostrophes. He shifts from English to Spanish can be challenging to the non-Spanish reader. His scenes rich with descriptors can be stark and ruthless. The reader should be prepared to be shocked and moved.

Reading McCarthy comes with a price. After reading one of his books the reader feels changed, drained and at a loss. I, like Billy cannot retrieve my innocence. It disappeared when I went south of the border with him. As the Spanish Gypsy tells him

"We think we are the victims of time. In reality, the way of the world isn't fixed anywhere. How could that be possible? We are our own journey. And therefore we are time as well. We are the same. Fugitive. Inscrutable. Ruthless."

I cannot help but be moved by Cormac McCarthy's work and *The Crossing* was perhaps the favorite, which I have read.

27 of 27 people found the following review helpful.

McCarthy proves that he does humorous as well as grim - a review of "The Crossing"

By The Invisible Pam

Well what can I say. More brilliant writing by a master AND for the first time I found myself laughing -a lot- while reading a McCarthy book. I know you might not believe me, but truly there are some extremely funny bits in this story. [My husband kept looking at me wondering if perhaps I had slipped the dusk jack for "The Crossing" onto another book.]

And alas, lest you wonder, McCarthy was just leading me on. Up, up he took me. Wonderful story (expected). Humor (okay, not expected). But I was laughing and soaring and I was beginning to wonder if this book might be wildly different from the others. Certainly neither "The Road", nor "Blood Meridian" had me cackling: those were all grim fare. But rest assured. As high as McCarthy took me, that was where he dropped me from. It was a long plummet but finally I was back on familiar territory... heart torn out... feelings wrenched and twisted.

Five Stars. "The Crossing" is a McCarthy story that should make you laugh and then cry. Simply a wonderful tale with characters to care about. Exquisite prose.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Not his best work, not his worst work

By Robert Jacoby

This is not McCarthy's best work, but neither is it his worst work. It's the 2nd book in what is referred to as his "Border Trilogy," even though it's a completely different story than the first book in the "trilogy," All the Pretty Horses. I'll read the third book in the trilogy, Cities of the Plain, which picks up in 1952 with both main characters from the first two novels.

The Crossing is a good enough story. McCarthy's prose is powerful and carries the book where his actual story lags. The main character Billy Parham sets off to Mexico and ... (see other reviews for story details). Point is: McCarthy has poor Billy wandering all over the countryside, meeting mostly monosyllabic characters but occasionally meeting someone who has the mind of a Kierkegaard or Thoreau. Seriously. McCarthy has to do this because of his "God" pov. He never gets into any single character's head -- not really. I think I saw one "he thought" in the final 100 pages of the book. So, be aware of what you're getting into. The scenery/setting *is* a character. That's just McCarthy.

So: I admire McCarthy's prose style, very much, but at the same time I can say that the characters in this book read to me as either very flat or outrageously unreal. It's that "God" pov again. Because McCarthy the writer has so much to say, he must find a way to say it, either as "God" or through a character. He's best handling "God" through his own voice, because when he gives that voice to a character it becomes wildly unreal. There are, literally, pages and pages of text spoken by characters that could read from a philosophy textbook. Or Mann's Magic Mountain. If you want to go there, great! (As an aside, in Blood Meridian this works magically because those lines/philosophy are given to the judge, one of the greatest characters in all American literature.) Here, it doesn't always work, for me. By the end of The Crossing I felt that Billy Parham is a pretty dumb young man, indeed, almost deserving all he's gotten.

I recommend this book for any fan of McCarthy. And if you've not read any McCarthy at all, I'd recommend as a first read something else of his, like Child of God or No Country for Old Men, or even All the Pretty Horses. Savor his finest novel -- what I believe is one of the finest works of literature ever written: Blood Meridian.

PS: When reading *The Crossing* you'll want to have a computer nearby to look up both English and Spanish terms. Unless you read Spanish, you'll also want to have *A Translation of Spanish Passages in The Crossing*. Just search "mccarthy the crossing spanish words" and you'll find a pdf file for (most of but not all) the book's Spanish language text.

I liked it

4/5 Amazon

3/5 Goodreads

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