

Nihilism and Existentialism in Cormac McCarthy's The Crossing

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Cormac McCarthy's second book in *The Border Trilogy* offers an impressive array of worldviews all competing together in the larger narrative framework of the novel. These are not only expressed through the life of the protagonist Billy Parham and his brother [Boyd](#), but also in the narratives of the many people they encounter on their horseback journeys through the hot desert sands of Mexico. Critic Robert L. Jarrett, associate professor of English at the University of Houston-[Downtown](#), suggests the same in Cormac McCarthy, noting that "Despite the claims of the ex-priest [in *The Crossing*] that all men's tales are one, such visions or tales are individual, highly particularized, hence the necessity for the interpolated tales, each containing a unique vision of the world" (147). He goes on to suggest that "The McCarthy novel is not only stylistically divided in its narration and in its inclusion of regional and professional dialects, but it is also divided among contradictory ideological, philosophical, and ethical visions that resist easy integration into a unified ideology by readers or critics" (Jarrett, 147). In my own reading of *The Crossing*, however, I propose that a compelling case can be built for an overarching view of

existentialism-if not its marriage to the dark-skinned nihilism-under the watchful and perhaps complacent eye of God as the Unknowable, Impersonal Absolute: the "wholly" Other.

The [minute](#) the word nihilism is introduced into the topic of discussion, visions of actively participating in the tearing down of creeds and the intentional destruction of all moral, philosophical, and religious values present themselves to the mind. Nihilism to many ...

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