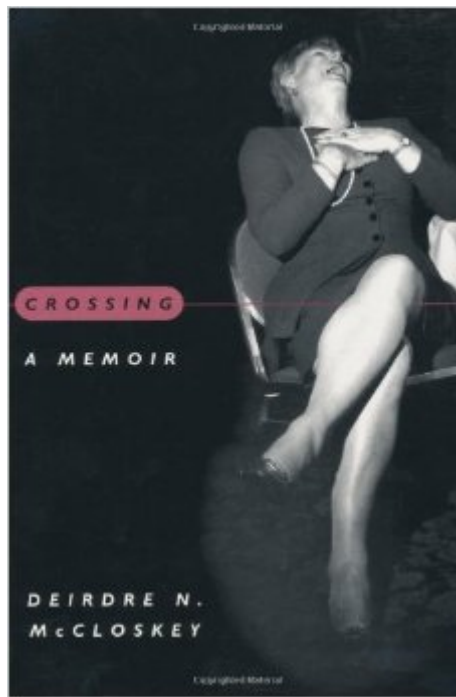


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Crossing: A Memoir



Synopsis

We have read the stories of those who have "crossed" lines of race and class and culture. But few have written of crossingâ "completely and entirelyâ "the gender line. Crossing is the story of Deirdre McCloskey (formerly Donald), once a golden boy of conservative economics and a child of 1950s and 1960s privilege, and her dramatic and poignant journey to becoming a woman. McCloskey's account of her painstaking efforts to learn to "be a woman" unearth fundamental questions about gender and identity, and hatreds and anxieties, revealing surprising answers.

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Customer Reviews

This is a book about someone who has gone through an amazing experience. The problem is that the author doesn't seem to grasp most of what she has done. For example, she is hurt beyond belief that the woman she was married to when she was a man can't accept that she is now a woman. But prior to this revelation, he had been lying to his wife, and he had a secret life. He seems to have no sense of what a major revelation this was, no ability to understand what it might be like to discover that your husband has been deceiving you and now intends to change his (and your) life profoundly and That This Is Not Open For Discussion. (Never mind that if you resist the changes he

is proposing for your life, you will instantly become the enemy.)Also, she has a strange view of what it means to be a woman. Near as I can tell, any woman whose experience of being female is different than hers is a "radical feminist" and the enemy. She not only accepts second-class treatment, she seems to crave it. She brags about doing the cooking and cleaning with the other women while the men in the group are chatting in the living room. She seems to have chosen friends who will reinforce her ideas about what it means to be a woman. In the end, she is living out a man's fantasy of what it is like to be female. More power to her, but I think she would find more acceptance (which she clearly longs for) if she would start with a little empathy. It's all about her, all about what she wants, and not at all about what it might mean for those who started out loving him. Her sister tried several times to get her committed to mental institutions, in order to prevent her from having the surgery. This was vile and evil, and intrusive.

"Crossing" is an honest account of a high-profile intellectual's sometimes terrifying journey to herself through a maze of psychological, social and physical barriers. A noted economist and economics historian, Deirdre McCloskey is currently UIC Distinguished Professor, University of Illinois at Chicago. and a visiting professor at Erasmusuniversiteit Rotterdam. She began this career as Donald McCloskey, and her gender change was heralded by accounts in The Chronicle of Higher Ed and elsewhere. Arranged in three sections named for a progression of personae -- "Donald," "Dee," and "Deirdre," the book follows decades of furtive cross-dressing to a moment of epiphany in 1994 at the age of 52, followed by learning to "pass" as a woman, by loss of family and some friends, by painful surgery, and on to discovering new friend, and rediscovering the world (and the academic discipline of economics) through the eyes of a woman. Joys -- a child born, named for her -- sorrows -- her own children, long since grown, refusing to acknowledge her. Well paced yet thoughtful, "Crossing" reads like a novel despite its long passages of musing on the economic, social and political aspects of her situation and of that of other crossers, of women, and of men in a "free" society that is severely oppressive to those whose free choice is to redefine their gender expression. Want to know more about these issues? Or just want to know a brave new woman better? Buy the book.

Kudos for the first completely honest and exceptionally well-written presentation of the difficult road a transgendered person must travel to define his/her place in the world. I was especially pleased to see how well-balanced this book is and the obvious pains the author took to show the many sides of this issue. Especially impressive are those instances where Ms. McCloskey is able to describe the

mistreatment, lack of understanding, and downright cruelty of others without lapsing into vengeful remarks or angry tirades. Instead of using it to deride the mistreatment she received at the hands of the ignorant, Deidre's multi-dimensional story leaves the reader with an empathy for the plight of the so-called 'transsexual' and the need for us to rethink our view of the subject. Through her story we begin to understand in a very personal way the limiting nature of the male and female definitions of gender. This is not a historical or medical book. As the subtitle says, it's a memoir. I've struggled through books on this subject by other transgendered writers like Rikki Wilchins and Kate Bornstein, but this is the first I've found that is written in a way that makes the subject accessible to those who haven't had to deal with this situation. Ms. McCloskey has adopted a use of the third person which is wholly appropriate to her subject. Given the pronoun limitations for referencing gender, she has done a remarkable job of presenting the different aspects of herself while retaining the sense of a completely unified individual. As an educator and writer, I believe that "Crossing" should be recommended reading for people of all ages.

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