

CROSSING



A MEMOIR

DEIRDRE
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A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

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homosexuals in Oklahoma"—but people whose stories are heard and talked about and might even be imagined as one's own. It's the difference between shame and life.

For this age of openness I praise the Lord, blessed be her holy name. I began to see that Christianity resembles the secular stoicism circa the 1930s in which I was raised, A. E. Housman to Hemingway, in that it promises no bed of roses. The world is mysterious from a human point of view, as both the stoic Housman and the Christian Gerard Manley Hopkins would say, and it contains bad news as well as good. I found Christianity in this way grown up, admitting sin. That is God's own truth.

And slowly as the story ended I began to hear the good news of forgiveness, the duty to offer it and the grace to receive.

PART ONE



DONALD

An odd-numbered day of the month, so Donald was up early, a little past 4:00 a.m., to dress as Jane. The agreement was odd days, a little joke. On the even-numbered days he ached for the day to end. His wife had been gracious the evening before about the next day's being a Jane day, but at 6:30 a.m. Donald as Jane was on a BBS at the computer and his wife burst in and "caught" him. It was like a mother bursting in on her son smoking pot in his room. She was playing gender cop. But nothing more happened. His wife went to the Nursing College and Jane finished a review essay. Donald was on leave that fall.

A few days later Donald's mother called.

"I'm out in Michigan seeing Granny." She was in Saint Joseph, Michigan, two hours east of Chicago, five or six hours from Iowa City.

"That's nice."

"I'm coming out to Iowa City."

"Mother?"

"Yes. I need to come." She was worried. Donald's sister had been hinting to her.

Five hours later his mother arrived. As he came out to meet her at the car she said, "Oh, Donald. What is it?"

"What do you mean?"

"You've lost so much weight! Is it AIDS?" She hadn't seen him for a year.

"No, mother, it's eating less fat. The little labels on the boxes? Stay below 5 percent and you get back to a sensible weight."

"Oh, thank God! I thought you had AIDS."

"Turned gay and gotten AIDS in a few months?"

"Oh, thank God!" Seeing his wife, she said, "Hello, dear" Sullen. "Hello."

They went inside. His mother grew calm as she listened to her son tell her that he wanted to become her daughter. Donald was amazed and moved and thought back to his economist's balance sheet of costs and benefits: his mother would not be able to take it, he had calculated. Here she was, taking it. He had expected her to be scornful, to disbelieve him, to treat him as a patient, to act like his wife and sister. Those two had been having conversations on the phone, trading anxieties and schemes for forced treatment. What to do about him? They were developing their theory that Donald was not actually a gender crosser; no, nothing of the kind. A pill, his wife hoped. A month or two in the madhouse, his sister proposed.

His mother, though appalled and worried, as she later told Detre, offered advice at the time from one who loves in Aristotle's third sense, respect as much as absorption, love for the loved one's own sake. Be careful, she said. Choose your doctors carefully. Move to New York if you can: the Midwest is not tolerant, she declared, out of her experience of growing up in Michigan in the 1930s. Will it hurt your career? Are you *sure* it won't?

"You know," she said, revealing the memory that was frightening her, "there was someone at Christ Church, Cambridge, in the 1950s who wore his wife's hat to Easter service. No one took him seriously again."

"I understand, Mom. Times are different." *I hope*, he thought.

"No they're not."

His wife stayed through the first hour but then grew angry and went off to bed. She had told Donald, "I expect your mother to support us," support in the gender cop and psychiatric nurse approach.

"What do you mean 'us'?"

"Last night I talked to your sister again. I'd like you to take pills for your mania. She wants to commit you as mentally incompetent."

"Jesus! How stupid can you get?" He scorned the notion of a commitment, inflamed by imaginings a thousand miles from the events. His sister sitting appalled in Boston seized on the diagnosis of mania

as soon as Donald started talking openly about gender crossing. Cross-dressing's one thing. She never did visit Donald to test her hypothesis. She spent the autumn in faraway Boston trying to confirm it.

■ The next day when Donald came downstairs he found his mother scrutinizing the stock quotations in the newspaper over a cup of coffee.

He said, "Mom, would you mind if I dressed? It's an odd day of the month."

She looked up, the thought of Home Depot's stock quotation disappearing from her face. "Son, of course I wouldn't mind. Don't be afraid of me."

"I didn't want to offend!"

"No offense!" and went back to the stock quotations.

He went upstairs and showered, put on makeup, and dressed in Jane's denim skirt, a white formal blouse, heels. He came back to the TV room.

"Goodness!" His mother seemed startled by the change. "But you shouldn't wear rings on every finger!" Jane agreed and took some off, though he loved rings.

They spent the day talking about intellectual things as they always did, mother-son talk in the McCloskey family about art and politics. But they also talked in a mother-daughter way about life and relationships, the inexhaustible subject. Jane found it riveting to talk as a woman. Donald would have been bored or embarrassed once the talk moved beyond exchanges of salient fact and lofty opinion and What I Just Accomplished. He had been puzzled as men are by the endless gossip of women. "Gossip," the male jibe. How do they find things to talk about? I mean, without sports.

Donald's wife came home from work, clattering at the back door, and looked into the sunroom, where Jane was sitting with his mother. She smiled sarcastically as she threw down her purse and said, "Why, hello Jane!" and went upstairs to change.

"I don't know why she can't control her anger," Jane said to his mother. "It's September, and she's been angry for months and months, wearing me down with lack of love."

"It's hard."

His wife went out with her friends to eat and didn't return until late, with a friend Jane changed to male clothing, though by this time the friend knew. A lot of his wife's friends knew.

DONALD

■ An even day of the month.

"You know," Donald's mother said to the husband and wife standing in the kitchen, "yesterday I talked easily with Jane. Today I've talked easily with Donald."

"What's your point?" said his wife, irritated.

The next day, an odd day, Jane's mother drove back to Michigan. Her visit seemed to have calmed the house. Donald's wife and Jane cleared shelves in their daughter's room for painting. Jane thought,

Doesn't she notice our calm as two women?

■

Donald came out by e-mail to his Dutch friend Arjo (ARR-yoh) Klamet, the first person he told outside his family. They had been closer than most men for years, visiting, talking, collaborating on projects. At a conference in Holland earlier that year Arjo and his wife Marijke (marr-EYE-kuh) had been worried by Donald's loss of weight and a certain oddness of manner, and Marijke, a clinical psychologist, had gone down the list of possibilities with Arjo: Transsexuality? No, they agreed, that would be absurd for macho Don.

When in August Donald confessed, Arjo rapidly started discussion about his coming to Erasmus University of Rotterdam to visit for a while, perhaps a year or even two.

"Do I need to know Dutch?"

"Not in Holland!" Donald clutched at the idea. ***It would lessen the strain on my wife, with me away for a long while, starting in a few months. And Holland is tolerant.*** Or tolerant enough. Slowly it emerged that Donald was to be the Visiting Timbergen Professor of Economics, Philosophy and Art and Cultural Studies, starting that very January. Maybe. It needed to be approved. October. November. As a woman.

■

Donald spoke on the phone to his sister in Boston.

"Donny, you aren't going to attend the meetings of the Economic History Association as a woman, are you?"

"Jesus, what are you talking about?"

"You think you're a woman."

"I don't think I'm a woman. I want to be one. I'm not imprudent."

"You go to class in drag."

"For Lord's sake, of course I don't." A small misstatement, because when teaching the spring before he had sometimes underdressed.

LOSING A FAMILY

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"For one thing, I'm on sabbatical this term, so I'm not going to class. But I've told no one except you and Mom and Arjo, and I won't go full time until January at the earliest, if I go to Holland. I crossdress in public 240 miles from here, if at all. I go to entirely private meetings of my club. Get this: I'm not crazy; I'm crossgendered. You ought to come out here and get a reality check."

"You're planning to show up at the meetings in Chicago in women's clothing?"

"Where do you get these ideas?"

"Donny, I think you should go to a psychiatrist." She wanted him to be crazy. Treatably crazy.

"I am, on September 11."

"Can I have his phone number?"

"Sister dear, you shouldn't get involved." Donald had not yet worked out that her attitude had shifted since their pleasant talk in June.

"Your wife told me she's been to a lawyer about a divorce."

"That was news. I repeat: you shouldn't interfere. You don't know us well enough. You don't know me at all: our conversations are about your academic career and have been for twenty years. You don't know me or my wife or the situation. Be my sister, not my father!"

"But I love you."

"I know that." He thought later: *A love like ownership.*

■ In bed that night Donald asked his wife, annoyed, "Did you go to a lawyer? My sister told me on the phone tonight that you went to a lawyer."

"As usual she got it a little wrong," she replied in a weary tone. "Tomorrow I will just to see my options."

"Lawyers!"

"It's just to see my options."

"Why can't we work on the marriage?" He was indignant, his wife silent. "Why can't *you* work on it? Going to law! What a stupid idea."

"What am I supposed to do, help you become a transsexual?"

He raised his voice. "Not to *become*. I am, and always have been. Can't you grasp that? And why *wouldn't* you go on loving me and helping me?"

"Don't shout: the neighbors will hear. I love *Donald*, not *Jane*," she said with as much venom as she could get into the word.

"What do you mean? I'm me, the person you say you've loved for a third of a century." She lay silent. "Do you know what love means?"

he continued, relentless, feeling the betrayal—though he could not feel her loss of a husband. "It's not about fun or convenience. It's about Aristotle's third and highest kind of friendship, for the friend's own sake."

"You and your books. That's what *you* know about love. Anyway, the best thing for your own sake is to stop you. I think you're manic."

"Manic? Good Lord, you're getting that from my sister. It's silly."

"I don't think so." Donald did not see the danger in her reply. Manic = crazy = disloyalty = men in white coats.

"You and she are medicalizing the situation. You, the nurse, demand pills. She, the psychologist, demands compulsory confinement."

"You *should* try some Prozac." Now she too was shouting. They were standing now in the bedroom. "Slow down and try the pills. For your own good, and your family's."

Donald was angry, because he half believed her, worrying for a moment that he was mistaken, and because he felt betrayed. "You are a failure as a wife."

She looked at him startled. "What . . . what did you say?"

"I said you're a pathetic failure as a wife. You don't know what love means. I can't imagine not being willing to help *you* in your considered dreams." She stared at him open-mouthed. *No going back now*, he thought. He would say what he felt. Usually it was she who raised the stakes sharply in a quarrel, hurting in ways that could not be taken back. Men fight fair. *The dopes*. "In fact, I have helped you, dear, for thirty years. You've done nothing but complain to protect your convenience. Someone to escort you to square dances. Or what the neighbors will think. As you get older you get worse. The crossdressing and the transsexuality just test it. You know what? You've failed the test." He twisted the emotional knife as it went in.

She rushed out into the hall and back into their daughter's empty room in the corner of the house, slamming doors as she went. *She'll be crying*, he thought as he stood in the middle of the bedroom, his heart throbbing, fight or flight. He could hear her yet behind three doors. Husbandly pity and remorse rose in him, and he went and knocked.

"Go away!"

He went back and got into bed. His red-painted toenails comforted him. Her.

■ His wife wept to their son on the phone, and the son, stouthearted, drove from Chicago to help. He had no idea. He arrived in the early

afternoon, and Donald in men's clothing sat down to tell him everything. He reacted with amazement but with the sort of toleration Donald expected from him. *Good. My loving son. Man of the world. It's going to be fine. No sides. Support both parents in their troubles.* Later, while Donald was doing chores, his wife got her time with him, and by dinner the son was primed to urge slowing down. The wife and son viewed it as a passing mania. They couldn't credit Donald as a potential woman, this masculine man. His son had never seen him dressed as a woman. They were frightened he would do something to show it to the world. The shame, the shame.

Donald replied to them—to his wife again—that nothing to be done was irrevocable. The irrevocable step was publicity, and by telling her friends his wife had done more to cause publicity than Donald had. "Slowing down is not what I need to do," he continued, warning to his theme. "I need to learn about transsexuality and about being a woman and about the futures I can or cannot have. Jogging in place is not sensible. You, my dear wife, have had eight months and have shown no signs—zero, nada—of adjusting even to more open crossdressing than the sort I've been practicing all our married life. You resist learning anything about transsexuality, as though ignorance would make it go away. You declare you will never adjust. I have to believe you." The professorial speech did not comfort them.

His son started driving home to Chicago late that evening, after hugging them both. But in a divorce the children normally side with the mother, and a son especially would want to protect her. If she claims hurt and demands a choice he would have to take her side. Donald didn't realize as his son drove off in the dark that he had lost him, his firstborn child.

His wife touched a psychological truth when she complained about Donald's "going too fast." He did and would go fast. Many went slower and saved their families. Kate Cummings, who offered to try going back to being a husband for a year, to not dress at all in that time, kept one loving daughter out of three. Susan Marshall kept both her daughters and remained a friend to her wife. Jan Morris kept everyone, and they kept her. Yet many went slowly and did not in the end save anything. Suzy Roberts's two years of therapy did no good. In Donald's family the refusal to go to therapy or to read books or to see Jane or to talk about the problem except to urge secrecy and slowing down made the outlook poor.

Yes, Jane/Donald went fast. The same Suzy, who was with Jane the first night she went to a Tri Ess meeting and then to Temptations, had

been out and active in the crossdressing community for two years and thought herself transsexual. She was divorced, on her own, and able to do what she wanted. She was more experienced and more passable than Jane. Yet by the time Jane/Donald decided he was Deirdre, Suzy had still not bought clothes in drag. A few months after the first Tri Ess meeting that last spring, Jane had shopped a mall with another gender crosser in drag, had gone to Truly Falls in Des Moines by himself in drag, had shopped a resale store in Chicago for a couple of hours in drag. Suzy started electrolysis, did it for a few hours, then stopped on financial grounds. Full-beard electrolysis for an average male costs about the same as a low-end American automobile. If and the operation are the two essentials. People manage car payments. Two small cars or one full size. By the time of his epiphany Jane/Donald had already done sixty hours of electrolysis in a month.

Yes, Fast. That was the truth that his wife's fear had spotted. She said, Go slowly, slowly. Please. Stop. No. No. I will divorce you.

SWEET OCTOBER

October 2: I'm back from the "Southern Comfort" convention in Atlanta, which I decided to attend when I realized it had a full program on gender crossing. The event itself was not as exciting as my trip in June to Be All in Cincinnati. Only one first time.

On Sunday morning a couple reaffirmed their marriage vows, he in a fancy wedding dress, she in a simple one. They looked out of place on the patio around the pool with a dozen amateurs wild for shots and a German TV crew and Mariette Pathy Allen the photographer who wrote *Transformations: Crossdressers and Those Who Love Them*. The ceremony was performed by a crossdressing Presbyterian minister, himself recently and disastrously outed. He did an ecumenical service, and I often got teary, as I do.

I noticed a line of civilians standing some distance away, stunned by what was going on, and I walked over to them professor-style with gender education in mind (Would a woman think of doing such a thing?) The main talker was a woman about my age who was amazed to discover that in fact all these people were men, except the other bride, and that it had nothing to do with homosexuality. People merge all sexual abnormalities into one weirdness—any deviation from the mis-

siogary position between man and wife on Saturday night is thrown in with rape, child molestation, and mass murder. Anything weird is weird and just like all the other weirds.

It's hard to get people to admit that they have elements of both male and female in them. The woman turned to a grizzled older man and asked with ironic intent, "Joe, you got any female in you?" It was tempting for her to enforce the gender rules this way, for reasons of her own.

One of the men said, "I used to drive a busload of them from San Francisco all over once a year. Not a real woman among them." I took a chance and asked him whether they were clean, honest, polite, upright, courteous, reverent, and so forth, and he said, yes, they were all of these. It wasn't much of a chance, because he wouldn't have remained the driver of the bus year after year if the crossdressers hadn't been all right.

On the way to the airport from the convention I met Stephan Thorne, a female-to-male police sergeant in San Francisco. I had heard his presentation the day before to the ABC 20-20 cameras describing his recent outing as a gender crosser (he transitioned on the job a year or so ago). The female-to-males are going up the status hierarchy, which I think is less threatening to the born men. Men seem worried about holding it together, staying men, as though they were threatened with slipping down into womanhood. They do regard it as "down."

Stephan told of his epiphany, similar to mine: When he was she, she was with her lover saying to herself, "I am a lesbian and a San Francisco policewoman. Cool!" Then he said, "Like glass breaking," the conviction came, "Wait a minute. I'm not a lesbian. I'm a *man*." And that was it. She became one. So like De Kalb.

There seem to be two patterns: either you've always known you were of the wrong gender or you've constructed a psychological dam against the realization, which suddenly breaks, usually in mature adulthood. The categories correspond to Richard Docter's of primary and secondary gender crossers. Docter, a psychologist, has written on gender crossing: I must get his book.

October 4: At home now, I made dinner for us both, and my wife and I had a peaceful evening. She said, "You're treating me nicely." I replied, "If you accept what I'm doing and re-

spect me, we'll have no problems." I don't understand why she can't grasp this. She really does think that I gratuitously attack her, because she views the dressing itself as an attack. That I do not intend it so, and that on the contrary I would like to keep her love, and that in other ways I treat her with love and respect, is not relevant in this way of thinking. It sounds like people who view homosexual behavior or liberal politics or Catholic religion itself, without any actual damage to be cataloged, as an "attack" on their values.

Of course it's horrible for her, painful, a shocking revision of the story she had of her life. She seems to reason so: "I am hurt by his behavior. Therefore he is to blame. Therefore his behavior is bad, to be punished." The notion that two people in a relationship can hurt each other without intent or blame, because they feel they must be themselves, is not a notion she's ready for. Maybe she will be later. For now it's his bad behavior, and blame and punishment, because she is hurt. I guess.

On a Sunday Donald went to his eating club, university men and women he had known for years. At dinner he was sitting at the end of the table, with men on either side. He applied Tannen again. Without changing his tone he adopted women's rules for conversation. Listen, do not interrupt, support the speaker, maintain eye contact, do not gratuitously change the subject. Tannen explains that it is a cooperative rather than competitive theory of what a conversation is for. Not *to, to*. Whether or not this blithe view of womanly interaction is wholly correct, within a few minutes the two other men were treating Donald as a woman. They were going on with their ping-pong of competition, not looking, interrupting, not listening to him. He was out of it, as women are in men's eyes. Later he did the same thing in a group of women, and again within minutes the women's rules had led them to treat him as another woman. He went home in the dark elated.

■ Donald as Jane went to an Iowa Artistry meeting at a crowded motel in Cedar Rapids, dressed for a party. The motel clerk gave him a second, startled look. *Irritating not to pass.* A wedding group sent a representative over to the Iowa Artistry room to ask someone to come over and speak. Just thought it would be fun. As the professor and professional talker in the group, Donald did it, the usual gender educa-

tion. We crossdressers are harmless. It's not about sex. Notice that we have real jobs and families. No, we are not homosexual. Notice that most of us are married. No, we do not want to become women. ***Though I do,*** he added mentally.

■ One evening that sweet October Donald and his wife watched *Pride of the Yankees*, the Lou Gehrig story with Gary Cooper, and Donald found himself reacting to it as a woman might. It was not a matter of following page 35 of a manual on *How to Be a Girl*. Without effort he listened as a woman. The sporting scenes now bored him. (He would click past baseball and football games on the TV that a couple of months earlier he would have seen it as his duty to study briefly.) The love scenes in the movie entranced him. The sentiment about the crippled kid Gehrig hit two home runs for made him choke up. He thought, ***I expect the same will be true of every piece of fiction I have read or seen enacted. I will see King Lear not from his point of view but from his youngest daughter's. It's a new pair of glasses, and the world is differently focused and colored. If it's true of fiction it would be true of poetry, song lyrics, epic: I see myself weeping for Queen Dido abandoned by Aeneas instead of thinking, "For Lord's sake, he's got to get on with the founding of Rome."***

October 10, Monday night. My wife came home and as usual was visibly disappointed to see me as Jane. The odd-even rule has been dropped, and she's increasingly depressed. She's still not adjusted to the reality, still hopes that by giving me dirty looks or by sneering or by talking in some magical way she can stop it. It's the impulse I heard about from a female-to-male whose mother continued to use "Cindy" when everyone else had adjusted to calling him "Ralph."

My wife bitched at me about not stripping the second bed that was occupied by one of two house guests: she is trying to show me that I do not know how to be a woman. I had given and cleaned up a party, buying and cooking everything for it; had stripped the *other* bed; had just finished ironing a pile of clothes, half hers, and so on. She asked if I had taken the trash out to the street, and when I said yes she snapped, "I didn't see it there." Her patience is gone.

The last bit of male behavior she can evoke in Donald is angry shouting. At least at the top of his lungs Donald is behav-

ing like a man, which is what she bargained for. I know I am disappointing her, not slowing down—as perhaps I could, and as she deserves, my loving wife of thirty years. But can someone ask you for their continued routine of life to give up who you are? Oh, Lord, peace, peace.

I forgot to tell her that I went to the speech therapist and had a wonderful experience (she would have sneered). The professor who handled it was unfazed when I told her what was up; and within hours had found someone to try to teach me to speak like a woman.

"Loft" the voice, they said, in a series of sessions over the next month. Make it come from the top of your throat, not from your chest like a man. Stress the sibilant quality of ssssss. Vary your pitch within the sentence.

October 15: Called the surgeons, one for voice and the other for face. I had met them both at Southern Comfort in Atlanta. The voice surgeon's office had given me a weeklong run-around. I do not know where surgeons, much less secretaries, get the idea they should prevent people from getting harmless procedures. I called the face guy in San Francisco, Douglas Ousterhout and his excellent office manager Mira, and it was from night to day. They are private and considerate. And enormously expensive.

Donald had a conversation with himself about whether what he was doing was unusual. On the one hand, *I wonder why more people aren't doing this*. But then, *You don't get it, do you, Donald? Most people don't want to change gender*.

Puzzled in return: *Oh, You don't say. That's funny*.

October 23: My wife comes back from her (male) divorce lawyer always with fresh aggressions. This time she shouts that she will make the divorce painful and expensive unless I let her stay in our house in the spring at a greatly reduced rent—she suggests a figure of zero, as penance.

She has become the masculine force in the house, brimming with aggression, unwilling to talk. Yesterday she was yelling at me about some silly issue that neither of us really

thought was important, and I said, "I have a tape recorder in my pocket." A stupid, challenging thing to say, when what she needs is sympathy. She attacked me. We struggled for a while. I fended her off, trying not to hurt her and to keep her from hurting me. War of the Roses.

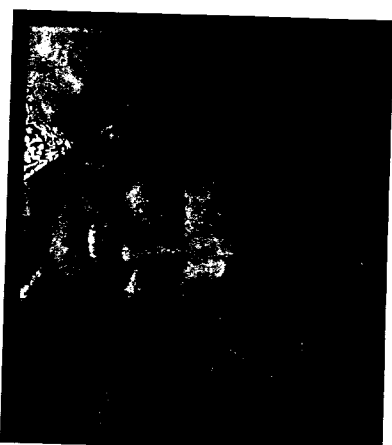
I came out by e-mail to my two oldest friends in economic history, Joel Mokyr of Northwestern and Richard Sutch of Berkeley. I wept when Joel sent back his reply: "I admired you from the first time I met you. It matters not what your gender is."

On Halloween, two and half months after the epiphany, a month and a half after starting hormones, no physical effects yet (those took months and years), Donald was alone in the house. His wife was out of town on business, and he was in male clothing. Three little children with their father came to the door demanding treats. Before the new role Donald would have offered conventional praise for their costumes and gone back to watching the football game on TV. But without intending it he/she went nuts over the children. They were so cute, the little girl of six, who will be plain but doesn't yet know it; the boy of four, much prettier; and the tiny girl in tow who did not grasp Halloween. Donald wanted to adopt them. He wanted their father to leave forever. It was a grandmotherly reaction. *A month and a half and the hormones are working*, he thought at first. *Or was it merely that the real person could now stand up?* Was he stripping away the accretion of maleness, setting into the calmness, the warmth of womanhood? Biology or core identity?

Deidre later would correct herself: *That way of putting it naturalizes a difference in gender, putting it "deep" within the individual, whether in mind or in biology. At one level, I have found, gender is "deeply" superficial, a performance, something that must be studied and learned. We are our masks*. The third and nonessentialist possibility explaining Dee the grandmother at Halloween, then, was "doing gender," a way of being in the world learned over decades even by the other gender: just do the opposite of "being a man." We make ourselves with our habits, as William James said a century ago, speaking in a tradition going back to Aristotle. Doing gender can be viewed as an accretion of learned habits, learned so well that they feel like external conditions, merely the way things are. It is a shell made by the snail and then confining it. The reaction

to the children at the front door felt "natural." But society is involved in shaping such a nature, a second nature.

Nature, nurture? One can't be sure. Even I, inside the experiment. Yet what does it matter? she asked herself, with a philosophical pragmatism she knew would annoy both sides, who insist on one or the other as a test of ideology. Gender must be enacted daily in a hundred ways, but to be enacted it must be felt, too, "from the inside." Like method acting. Pretend you're an orange. Be an orange. Be a woman of the 1990s. I feel like one.



PART TWO

DEE

That December in San Francisco Dee needed to buy some serious clothing. Marty said the idea was for Dee to present to the American Economic Association convention, meeting downtown in early January, as a "professional girl economist," with ironies about "girl" and "professional." Christmas came and went with elegant parties, and then Dee, Marty, Esther, and a couple of other women from the First Baptist Church went downtown for the clothing sales and wandered a big department store in a slow-moving herd to outfit the professional girl economist, the other women bringing likely items to the changing room. The clerks took her for a large woman. In the end she bought a blue blazer and two suit dresses that she wore a lot afterward, one red and the other blue.

That evening they went to the movie *Pride and Prejudice*. After the movie the other women had to go to the ladies' room. With her large bladder Dee didn't, and she was still hesitant about urinary segregation, so she waited outside, nervous before the large crowd in the foyer. No one gave her a second look. *It's OK. I pass.* She felt like crying again, as they all had done in the weepy movie.

The debut for the professional girl economist was on the day before the convention started, a meeting at the San Francisco Hilton of the twenty-person executive committee of the Association. Dee had

been elected to it as Donald, and the staff of the Association had been broad-minded about her crossing. Yet she worried as she went into the meeting room: *Will my professor colleagues be broad-minded, too? Economics is not the most progressive discipline. Will they merely laugh and dismiss me? Better a committee of anthropologists. They know "strange."*

She was acquainted with most of the economists there, in the slight way of academics. Being a professor is not something you do in a team. The committee was mostly men, with only three other women. Before the start Dee went up to an older man who had been a colleague at the University of Chicago. He looked at her puzzled. Who is this woman? Do I know her? Dee said, "Haven't you heard? I'm the former Don McCloskey." He hadn't heard, but he was amused and courteous and instantly started calling her Deirdre. Another committee member, who had been an assistant professor with Dee at Chicago, was genial and had indeed heard, as most of the profession had by then. They chatted about their families. *My lost family. No. It will get better.*

The committee members used her name—"I disagree with Deirdre," "As Deirdre said"—because it was hard to substitute "she" for "he" on short notice, and Dee's voice was still Donald's. She didn't talk as much as Donald would have, not because Dee had less to say but because like most other women she did not view conversation as a hockey game. Who knows? Biology or core identity or social role or socially constructed performance of a lifetime? In any case Dee was less pointlessly assertive than Donald had been. The chair was a woman, the second woman president in the history of the Association. Economics is a macho discipline, like chemistry or engineering. In a while Dee found herself exchanging significant glances with the chair and the two other women about the little-boy behavior of the men, *to, io*. Dee later sent cards to the women. Pleased to meet you. After the meeting there was a cocktail party. The secretarial staff, who lived in Nashville, were womanly and southern and courteous about the new woman. Ordinary people are theoretically repelled. How can you *stand* to be with him/her? *Disgusting. Craazy. But he/she walks up to you at a cocktail party and you have to decide whether to imitate Jesus.*

At the party Dee was trying to persuade a dean to hire her at Berkeley, the way academics sell themselves, doing a little business, and said to him without choosing her words carefully, "If you want that, I'm your man!" As soon as it was out of her mouth she felt the idio-

The dean looked at her and smiled. "Not my 'man'!" She laughed nervously. *A month and a half: I need practice.*

The next day her sessions seemed to have larger audiences than one might have expected. *I'd be curious too. Very.* She commented on papers or presented her own papers in a professional girl economist style, and Marty was pleased. The women economists were mostly welcoming, the men mostly tolerant though sometimes uncomfortable. Economists tend to be libertarian: "If he . . . she . . . wants to do it and does not by the action hurt anyone else, *laissez faire*." The definition of "hurt" is crucial: mere annoyance is not to be counted, or else no individual freedom in a society could be justified. You could once be committed in Iowa as a danger to others if you merely annoyed them, a tyrannical clause that a law school friend of Dee's caused to be modified.

Dee went up to a bar table where a professor from Notre Dame and his students were gathered. The professor had long struggled with Donald as though Donald was some sort of older brother he was unhappy about.

"Hi!" Dee said with a bright smile.

He looked puzzled. She waited, smiling demurely. It took him a full ten seconds to recognize her, so slow that she rewarded him with a kiss, older-sister style.

She ran into Judith, a British economist she knew slightly and who later became a girlfriend, and she and a male economist and Dee went out to eat in San Francisco. Judith took her shopping at the department store across the street from the Hilton, and Dee bought a handbag to reward the store for not reading her. Judith bought a striking outfit, though later Dee couldn't recall its details. Deirdre later got better at fashion recall.

A columnist for the Boston *Globe* whom Dee knew a little did a favorable story about her work at the conference, which was reprinted in the Chicago *Tribune* and some other places. He emphasized Dee's sober participation as speaker or chair in four sessions, a professional success for the new woman. But he also wrote that she had on a "brilliant red dress, a major wig and lots of gold jewelry." It made her sound like one of the less restrained participants in the Mardi Gras parade and helped distance the straight author from his queer subject. The phrase kept coming up in stories derivative from the *Globe*, such as a squib in *Fortune*. It made the guys feel better.

The last job before Holland to get the voice operation in Philadelphia. She had to go there in December for tests, and then again for the operation. She had it at the Graduate Hospital in a six-hour outpatient procedure (an hour in the operating room) and went back to California scribbling notes, silent for a week. It was interesting to have a note conversation with the woman beside her on the plane, who therefore did not read her. Write but do not read. "How many children do you have?" the woman asked. "Two," she wrote.

The voice didn't seem to work, but Dee hopped. She would have to go back to Philadelphia for a third time to have the operation assessed. Three transcontinental fares. *Thanks, Sis.* January was complicated by a big snowstorm in the East, so she went first to Iowa City and cleared out. She needed to rent the house, settle the new mortgage, say good-bye to people. She would stop off in Philadelphia again on the way out to Holland.

She came back to the deserted house in Iowa City, hers now by purchase with a new mortgage, opening closets to see what Donald's wife had left. The division of the property had been fair, on a day in November walking through the rooms. His wife bargained, and wept the tears of things: the sideboard from Chicago in 1980, the antique clock

It's hard to pass. You just try it, Dee would say. I mean really try to pass as the opposite gender, not just put on a joke dress and a lampshade hat for the Lions picnic. You'll be surprised at how many gender clues there are and how easy it is to get them wrong. Scores of them, natural and unnatural, genetic and socially constructed.

No, hundreds. Women stand and sit at angles. Men offer their hands to shake. Women put their hands to their chests when speaking of themselves. Men barge through. Women look frequently at nonspeaking participants in a conversation. Men don't look at each other when talking. Women carry papers and books clutched to their midriffs, men balanced on their hips. Women smile at other women when entering their space. Men never smile at male strangers. Women put their hands on their hips with fingers pointing backward. Men use wide gestures. Women frequently fold their hands together in their laps. Men walk from their shoulders, women from their hips. And on and on.

Dee watched other women in her culture for characteristic gestures and practiced them on the spot. *The way the hands gesture together, as though in a little dance. The way the fingers lie up the arm when the arms are crossed. Standing with feet in a ballet pose. Pulling your hair from under a coat just put on.* (It was some time before her hair was long enough to make that fem-

inine gesture useful.) Years into her transition she could amuse herself in a dull moment in a mall or airport by breaking down other women's gestures and trying them out. Like square dancing: hundreds of calls.

Rest one elbow on the back of the other hand, laid horizontally across your middle, the free hand stretching vertically to frame your face from the bottom, palm out. In touching your face, which you should do frequently, hold the hand in a graceful pose. For situations such as display at the dinner table, learn the hand pose used in ballet—fingers arched and separated, middle finger almost touching the thumb. Pinky up, but not too much, since it's an obvious parody of the ladylike. Overacting evokes the theatrical tradition of drag. Try to create a somewhat played effect with the fingers, angled up, instead of masculine cupping. When shaking hands—don't be the first to offer—use no strong grip, and place your hand sideward into the other person's. Check your hair frequently. Play idly with your jewelry. Check your clothing (a set of gestures that women's clothes require more often than men's, or else you stride out of the ladies' room with the back of your skirt up around your behind). Always stand more on one foot than the other. Stand with your legs crossed (a youngish gesture, this). Never stand manlike with feet parallel and legs spread wide. Angle your feet when you stop at the corner before crossing. Rest with hands together, not sprawled all over like a man's. When sitting cross your legs, either knee over knee angled to one side (never lower leg crossed horizontally over the knee, like the Greek boy in the statute removing a splinter) or to one side beneath the chair ankle over ankle. Never slouch when you sit. Stick your rear end solidly into the back of the chair, and never stretch your legs out, crossed at the ankles. Keep your knees together when you sit—"close the gates of hell" used to be the misogynist joke about it—which is easier if your knees are naturally angled inward, as girls' and especially women's are. If your feet are not crossed when sitting, keep your legs together from feet to knees. "Take up less space" is one formula; another is "keep your wrists loose," and still another "keep your elbows close to your body," this one imitating the effect of a female angle in the elbow, a piece of biology. But the formulas are hard to apply, like formal grammatical rules. Imitate, imitate, the way girls learn it. Deirdre was congratulated three years into full time: "Last year your motions were a little abrupt, now they are convincingly feminine." The gesture language is probably imitated with the same ease and at the same age as the spoken language, and like the spoken language it is

hard to learn as an adult. Little girls act different from little boys, independent of the slight structural differences in their bodies. By age ten many girls even know the secret smile.

Much of behavior is gendered. A lot of it is culturally specific and variable from person to person. European men cross their legs in a way that in America is coded as feminine. American soldiers in Vietnam would sneer at what they read as femininity in their Vietnamese allies and enemies: "They're all queer, you know." Mediterranean and Middle Eastern women make broader gestures, not the little dance of hands that upper-middle-class women in America use. The gender clues figure in any culture in an abundance that only a gender crosser or Dustin Hoffman preparing for *Tootsie* can grasp.

Of course if you are *aiming* to be funny then you want to be read, even if you are skillful at giving appropriate gender clues. Passing is not at issue. The Australian comedian who has developed the character "Dame Edna" is good at it. Without a leer or a nudge, he simply *is* the absurd Dame and sometimes spends hours in character, yet of course his audience knows. Miss Piggy of the Muppets is similar. She is gloriously who she is, yet everyone knows it's cross-speaking—her voice is always that of a man using falsetto. Getting read is part of the joke.

If you are not trying to be funny, you do not want to get read. Really, you don't. A sincere but detected attempt to jump the gender border from male to female—and no joking about it—creates anxiety in men, to be released by laughter if they can handle it or by a length of steel pipe if they can't. A 1997 survey claimed that 60 percent of cross-gendered people had been assaulted. Deirdre knew a gender crosser who had been beaten by four young men outside a bar even in peaceful Iowa City. The director of Gender PAC noted that "RubPaul is funny so long as she stays in a television studio. But try walking to the subway and she'll be a grease spot on the sidewalk before she makes it home." (If a female-to-male crosser was read by men maybe he would be regarded as cute, or rational: after all, it's rational to prefer to be a man, isn't it? Like the daily prayer by Orthodox Jewish men thanking God for not making them women. On the other hand, Brandon Teena, a pre-op female-to-male thief outed by the Falls City, Nebraska, police department was raped, complained about it to the police, who did nothing, and the next week in 1993 was murdered. Not by women.)

The anxiety is weirdly strong. A standard routine in the movies is that two men are forced to sleep with each other by circumstances (oh, sure), and then one of them dreams that he's sleeping with a woman. The other man, horrified by the amorous advances, rejects

them violently, and the awakened dreamer is ashamed. The routine enacts over and over again the male anxiety about being homosexual, much less being a woman, and the violent reaction the anxiety arouses. With this threat of violence in mind, Donald's sister had given him her own pepper spray. The pepper spray, though, wouldn't be much good against a steel pipe.

Women who read a crossdresser are not violent, but frightened and indignant. Who is this guy? What's he up to? Deirdre knew from being a woman on trains late at night in Holland or walking by Dutch cafés in the summertime or living later in the less demonstrative but more dangerous environment of America that women have daily experiences of men in fact being up to something, often something sexual, often enough something dangerous. At first it was flattering, the knocking on windows of the *elcagé* as she went by, the propositions to come into the jazz club and have a drink. Then it was tedious or frightening. Women experience dangerous men all day long and are on the alert. The alertness is not male bashing, merely prudence in the company of people with greater upper-body strength and the inclination to use it, intoxicated by lethal fantasies about What She Really Wants. Women who read a gender crosser are putting her in this category of dangerous men. To be read by women is utterly demoralizing. After all, the gender crosser is trying to join the women, to pass as one, and instead they are treating her like a man, maybe nuts, probably dangerous, definitely another one of those bloody *men*.

On all counts it is better for a gender crosser to pass rapidly to the other side, and making the crossing rapid ought to be the purpose of medical intervention, such as facial surgery, and social intervention, such as counseling on gender clues. Women acquainted with a gender crosser sometimes think of her interest in facial surgery as vanity. Natural-born women have no problem passing as women. "You're silly to want operations," says a woman out of a face with pointed chin, no browsidges, high cheekbones. Deirdre's mother declared that getting electrolysis, which she regarded as merely temporary, was "vain." But a nose job or a facelift or electrolysis that will make a gender crosser passable will also make her less likely to be scorned or raped or killed—at any rate at no more than the shocking rates for genetic women. Deirdre knew a not very passable gender crosser in tolerant Holland who had been raped three times. It is merely prudent to pass.

Some radical feminists object to gender crossing. They complain of the gender crosser that she (when they have the ruth to call her "she") is

adopting oppressive stereotypes about women and therefore contributing to society's discrimination. The gender crosser, they claim, is pulling women back to the 1950s, white gloves and pillbox hats, lovely garden parties, and a *Leave It to Beaver* vision of a woman's life.

There is little truth in the stereotype argument. The crossphobe who uses it ordinarily doesn't know any gender crossers. A gender crosser with a job or career outside the home tries to keep it and does not in practice dissolve into a 1950s heaven of full-time cookie baking and teatime gossip. Far from becoming passive and stereotypically feminine, the gender crossers Deirdre knew often retained much of their masculine sides. The crossphobes mix up gender crossers with drag queens or female impersonators, whose shtick is indeed a parody of women—sometimes demeaning and stereotypical, though often enough loving and amusing. In 1958 the sociologist Harold Garfinkel described a gender crosser named Agnes. Latter-day crossphobes attack Agnes as "displaying rigidly traditional ideas of what a woman is" or having "stereotypical views of femininity" or "constructing an extremely narrow and constricted view of womanhood." Agnes was nineteen, a typist, at the height of the feminine mystique. But no allowances: "I don't support you in your effort to have an operation, because you have stereotypical views of what it means to be a woman." Unlike all the other nineteen-year-old typists in 1958, (Agnes had the operation, and was fine, because Garfinkel and a psychiatrist named Stoller did support her.)

A gender crosser trying to be a woman must reproduce enough of the characteristic gestures to escape being read, and often—especially in voice—this is difficult. It becomes second nature, and a comfort to oneself even when alone. But if you fail you are classed with people stereotyping women. Or murdered. The crossphobe radical feminists are allies in hatred with the gay-bashing murderers of Matthew Shepard.

The complaint about stereotyping will be delivered by a genetic woman whose every gesture and syllable is stereotypically feminine. At seminars in which Deirdre was attacked for stereotyping she would reply with the same stereotypically feminine gestures or turns of phrase just used by the crossphobe—who had been practicing them since she was a little girl. This was Garfinkel's point, that gender is something "done," a performance, not an essence springing from genitals or chromosomes. Deirdre would say, "Of course I [putting her hand to her chest in the feminine way of referring to oneself, just used by the crossphobe] would never [doing a deprecating double flap

with her hands in the style of American middle-class women] want to damage women by *stereotyping* [raising her voice in the falsetto of emphasis stereotypical of women, for instance the crossphobe attacking the genuineness of gender crossers]."

■ The passing worked better, slowly, each month, if she dressed carefully and worked at it. Each little acceptance delighted her. The signal was being called "mevrouw" in Holland, "ma'am" in America, "madame" in France, "madam" in England. **Yes: call me madam.**

She is getting up to leave a Dutch tram at Oostzeedijk, intent on how to make the transfer to the subway. **Let's see: across there and down. Remember to watch for the bicycles.** The tram has almost stopped and she is pressing the exit button when she hears finally through her English thoughts and the haze of a foreign tongue, "*Mevrouw! Mevrouw!*" **It's me they're calling,** she thinks. **Oh, I've left a package.** She smiles in thanks and snatches up the package, slipping out the door as it closes, still smiling. They see her as "ma'am."

At the grocery store she is accosted by a woman giving out samples of a Dutch delicacy. It doesn't look very good. The woman babbles at Dee in Dutch, and Dee catches only the blessed "mevrouw." She smiles and shakes her head no thank you and pushes the cart toward the canned goods.

In May in Paris with an economist friend, Nancy, who is visiting there for a year, she walks out of a hat store, wearing the lovely lace floppy number just purchased. An elegant Frenchman goes by and says with a smile, "Un beau chapeau, madame!" Deirdre's French is poor, and she is still wondering if he could have said what she thought he had said when he politely repeats it in English over his shoulder as he walks on, "A beautiful hat, madame!" She would say when telling the story, "I could have kissed him. If he had proposed, I would have married him on the spot. Even though he was shorter!"

A month later she wears the hat (which can be worn only in Paris or at special events) to a daylong concert of classical music in the park in Rotterdam. Sitting at luncheon on the grass with some members of her women's group, she feels particularly lovely. A Dutchman passes by and makes in Dutch the same remark the Frenchman had made, "A beautiful hat, mevrouw!"

The women's group meets at a restaurant in Rotterdam. It is a year since she abandoned the male role. The waiter asks the "dames" (DAH-mez) what they want, including Deirdre without notice or comment. **One of the dames. Yes.**

The bad stories, not being accepted in the tribe of women, come down to "sir." Standing in a line at an airport in Philadelphia, before Holland and before much practice, though dressed modestly and appropriately, Dee is ordered into the correct line by a woman member of staff with a pointed "sir." Dee is weepy with vexation. *Do I look like someone who wants to be called "sir"?* *What a crummy thing to do.* As she is shopping for gloves at Harrods in London, after a triumph as Dee the professor, speaking to journalists and members of Parliament about bourgeois virtue, the clerk calls her "sir." Many months later it happens again in Harrods, although this time—and maybe the first time too—she thinks the clerk is reacting unconsciously to her voice, which is still male. The clerk probably doesn't know what she said and says it hundreds of times a day.

In the cold spring of 1996 a trip to The Hague with Joel Mokyr, one of the Chicago rescuers, is mixed. Joel is princely, buying her a flower at dinner, her first flowers from a man. She cries. They visit Joel's brother, named Mok, a high court judge, who is genial and is interested to hear that this is the daughter of the authority on the American Supreme Court whose book sits on the coffee table. But the day is mixed because Dee is read as a man all day long, perhaps because Joel is shorter or Dee's makeup is an experiment. She arrives late at Rotterdam Central Station and decides in her unhappiness to take an expensive cab instead of waiting in the cold for the tram. When he sets her down the cab driver calls her "sir." She cries and rages and throws his fare in his face, then goes in and weeps and weeps. *Will I ever just be?*

And then many months later, in the late fall of her Dutch year, she is chased by little boys in the dark at a tram stop close to Erasmus. Terror, even in law-abiding Holland. They want her money. She is afraid to hurt them but afraid they will hurt her. Later she learns that such boys are routinely armed with knives. She speaks in English to one: "Go away." The boy shouts, astonished, to his confederates, "Zij is een man!" "She's a man!" Real trouble, but they give up as she crosses the highway and gestures threateningly toward the one boy who follows. Perhaps they say to themselves, Uh-oh, this isn't a defenseless woman. "The streets belong to men," a Dutch girlfriend said. It had not occurred to Deirdre that at some age even little boys start to own them.

But the exceptions, "sir" or "meneer," become rarer and rarer. She has almost crossed to the other side.

PART THREE



DEIRDRE

meal. It was funny to talk to the two other women about men and women and crossing. The three of them giggled when the people at the next table caught the drift of their peculiar conversation. The Iowa City woman said, "Just you wait until you get home. I'm going to introduce you to some other women in town." She meant the businewswomen outside the circle of the University of Iowa. Deirdre was pleased by the prospect. *It would be like the Damesnetwork,* she thought. *Yes. Just another DAH-meh.*

One afternoon in the spring she felt ill, so she turned off the lights in her office and stretched out to nap uneasily on the extra desk. Since her daughter had stopped bringing home cold viruses from school sixteen months before Deirdre had not been sick, not at all, except the self-imposed sickness from operations. This was the first time sick as Deirdre. *Isn't that lonely: first time as a woman.* She canceled her class—she did not have to put on a brave front and appear in front of the class groggy and close to vomiting, as Donald would have. Trees asked one of the secretaries to drive her home. The secretary was a policeman's wife, and she and Deirdre talked about how hard that was. She was shy about her English, but they got on. The next day Deirdre brought flowers in thanks, as one does in Holland. Trees called after she got home, concerned that Deirdre had support. Eurgia was there downstairs, helpful and loving.

Women help each other, Deirdre found. In the dedication to Deirdre's book about her transition she wrote the first names and last initials of women who had gone some distance to welcome her—a luncheon here, a gift there, a comforting letter sent, introductions made, defenses drawn up, all the things that few men would think to do (Aryo, Gary, Joel, David, Richard, Stephen: a short list, and Donald would not have been on it). She was stunned when she counted out the names

gathered from her memory and from old appointment books (ever the empirical and quantifying lady): 258 acts of grace. The list would have been impossible for a man. Female-to-male gender crossers must face the unhappy fact that American men don't help each other. The theory of American maleness is that your special woman takes care of you when you're sick, but aside from that you are supposed to do everything alone. Help among men is shameful, because it shows incompetence. Among women help is the point, because it shows love, "love" in its full sense: care, sympathy, providing for need.

Gifts, it seemed to Deirdre, are similar. A theologian friend wrote of a sequence from exchange through "gift exchange" to grace. Women are always giving graceful gifts. In Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride* the heroine Roz is moved to give even to the dangerous Zenia: "She would like to give Zenia something, just a little something, to make up to her for God's neglect." It is never the purpose of a woman's gift, as it is ordinarily with men, to establish how big and powerful you are. Thus men give diamonds. The diamond monopoly De Beers insinuates in ads that a man should spend two months' salary on the engagement ring—or else his penis will fall off. Waiters in the United States prefer male customers because the men give bigger tips, for the same reason. The woman would actually have to care. When Deirdre gave an expensive scarf and a few extra trinkets to her economist friend Janet in Toronto, Janet sent a card of thanks, and thanks especially for the funny little keychain with tiny wooden shoes. She liked the scarf, but women are on the watch for tokens of love. When Deirdre gave her secretary Deb a vase from Iowa Artisans Gallery, Deb loved it, but she loved especially the big-key calculator from *Reason* magazine that she had jokingly coveted when it came into the office the week before. A token.

Deirdre had to learn the women's culture of gifts. Marty Olney taught her how to remember birthdays. Surprise, dearie: write them down, and care. Henceforth she was on the alert for birthdays, noting them down when they arose in conversation, and was delighted when she could surprise Carol Fethke with a birthday card. She got a long Dutch birthday calendar and hung it on the wall facing the downstairs toilet, the traditional location. The joke among women in Holland is that men forget birthdays because they don't face the calendar when they relieve themselves. Though they *could* turn around once in a while.

The Ketting sisters taught her how to give and receive favors without the thank-you-thank-you that American women use. "Oh, *thank*

you: how *wonderful!* Thank you. It's *just* what I wanted! *Thank you!* Thank you!" Thank-you-thank-you is read in Europe as establishing indebtedness, or perhaps as canceling the debt. In the eyes of European women it is vulgar to draw attention in this way to the debt aspect of a gift. It is grace, not the guys' gift exchange. Deirdre would explain that American women were not actually doing such a thing—like European women they viewed gifts as unrequited acts of love—but Trees and Marianne did not believe her, and thereafter they would joke about the thank-you-thank-you.

All this started to affect Deirdre's view of economics. People have two ways, exchange and identity. Men can grasp only exchange. In his one letter Deirdre's son declared that love is an exchange and that he wasn't getting enough value in exchange from her to continue. Male anthropologists and economists have found gift giving mysterious and have interpreted it as a kind of exchange, as among men it is. Failing to pay back a gift is shameful.

Among women the gift makes connections, expressing love and solidarity: a meal, a keychain, a life. It feels like a conversational move that says, Yes, I love you. Trees gave Deirdre her lipstick holder right out of her purse, Trees's sister Marianne gave Deirdre the dress for Deirdre's inaugural address right out of her closet. Gail gave her a scarf right out of her drawer in San Francisco. Barbara gave her a hat right off her hat rack in Gothenburg, just a little something to make up for God's neglect. Virginia sent Deirdre her own copy of a book on style for the professional woman. Saskia gave Deirdre earnest advice on hair curlers and showed her where to buy them, and in a square in Leiden she demonstrated how to put them in, as the manuscript they were doing business about began to scatter in the Dutch wind. Such giving was partly tuition in being a woman, and in a man it would have served to establish who was the expert and who the mere student, creating a debt of equal value that would have to be paid off. Among women, it seemed to Deirdre, it's nothing of the sort. Just before she left from a brief, intense visit to her college roommate in Stockton, California, his wife Judy, whom until that time Donald/Deirdre had known only slightly, gave Deirdre, literally, her hair—two hairpieces Judy had had made from her cropped tresses long before when she and Derek were in the Peace Corps in Korea. "I don't use them at all. You have them," she said at the door, thrusting them into Deirdre's hands. Deirdre felt like crying, and thinking of it later, she did.

Women's lives, Deirdre noticed, are collections of gifts: men's, of trophies. When she stayed with David and Hélène on a trip back to Iowa

City she admired Héleine's collection of pigs, two hundred or so little cloth and clay and wooden pigs of all sorts in displays around the house.

"You know who gave you each one, don't you?" said Deirdre.

David looked disbelieving. "Oh, I don't think she does."

Héleine cocked her head at him. "Of course I do," and ran along a row of varnished pigs on the mantle, naming each giver and the occasion. David was impressed.

"All two hundred?"

"Of course." Héleine was surrounded not by model pigs but by tokens of love. Deirdre wore the ring given by her graduate students when she left for Holland. It was beautiful and expensive and attracted compliments, but that was not the point. Every time she saw it she saw their love, and she was likely to get weepy.

Some women find it incredible that men do not grasp what gifts are about in women's lives. But Deirdre knew, because Donald hadn't. She remembered the last time Donald gave his wife flowers. He had to be out of town for a few days and felt guilty, so he arranged, bright boy, to have a florist deliver enormous bunches of flowers to her office for three days running. His wife was annoyed by it, this industrial and commercial approach to gift giving, which showed Donald as rich and powerful, diamond-style, but said nothing about his feelings toward her. Donald was stupidly puzzled at her annoyance.

Deirdre later could only sigh, "Men!"

April 1996: I still, in the fifth month of full time, do not quite have the gift culture down. It's coming. I see absurd joke gifts for Trees on my travels. She has a wall of funny schlock in her office to which she steadily adds, so I help and show her my affection. I was full of thought for Trees's funny project in a souvenir shop in Oxford or an airport stall in San Francisco. I tried and tried to get flowers to my Australian friend Kate Cummings on her sixty-first birthday, but I'm not Dutch and businesslike with flowers and therefore failed and had to send them late, covering up in a male way by claiming it was an after-birthday gift. But I succeeded better for her when in the Philadelphia airport I spotted the card about men turning into women and instantly thought of her and bought it with a smile of affection. There's nothing like it, this blessedness of giving.

Deirdre learned the blessedness. Home in her Iowa year she gave Louise a shooting stick for Louise's brother right out of her closet, to make up for God's neglect.

In May Deirdre was to give an oration, an *oratie* (oh-RRAT-zee), to the assembled professors of Erasmus in the great hall. In British English the occasion would be called an "inaugural address," but because America does not have the powerful professorships characteristic of European academic life, at home there is nothing to inaugurate. Her Dutch occasion was a trifle artificial, since her chair was then only a visiting one, a folding chair, but Deirdre agreed with Arjo's and the rector's suggestion for an *oratie*, and she wrote her speech on the crisis she discerned in modern economics.

Her mother decided to come over for the week. Deirdre knew she was expressing the family's support, and also checking to see if her new daughter was safe and respected. On that score and others the *oratie* was a success. The speech as delivered was terrible. Deirdre had forgotten her Harvard Ph.D. gown at her flat and in her borrowed gown she was flustered by the poor lighting and inadequate microphones of the great hall. She tried to read from the prepared text, a bad idea because she always stuttered more that way. But she was hardened to performances' sometimes working and sometimes not. Nothing could spoil the warmth of the celebration, with Arjo and Marjke and their children in attendance, and Deirdre's students and colleagues clapping as the berobed body of the professoriate. Deirdre at

