

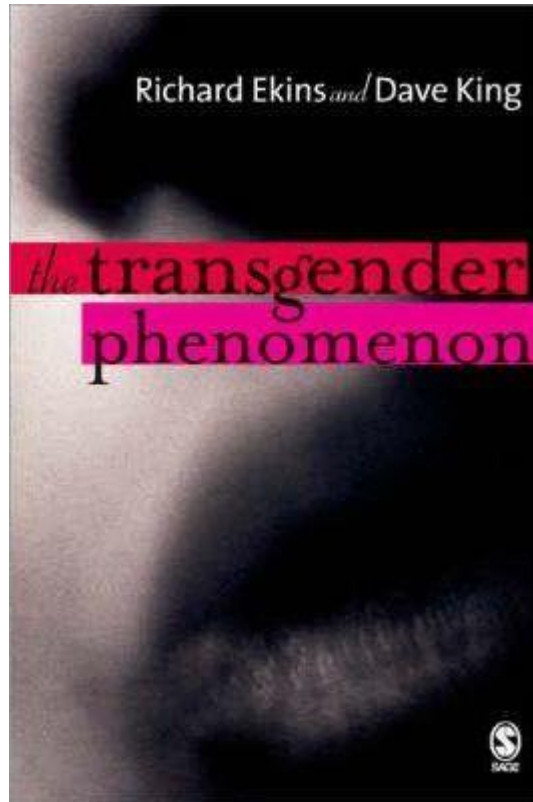
## Paula Grieg's Life under the Lens of Richard Ekins's Career Path Theory

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*I refused to hide, because as Paula I have been hidden for a lifetime.*

(Grieg 210)



### Abstract

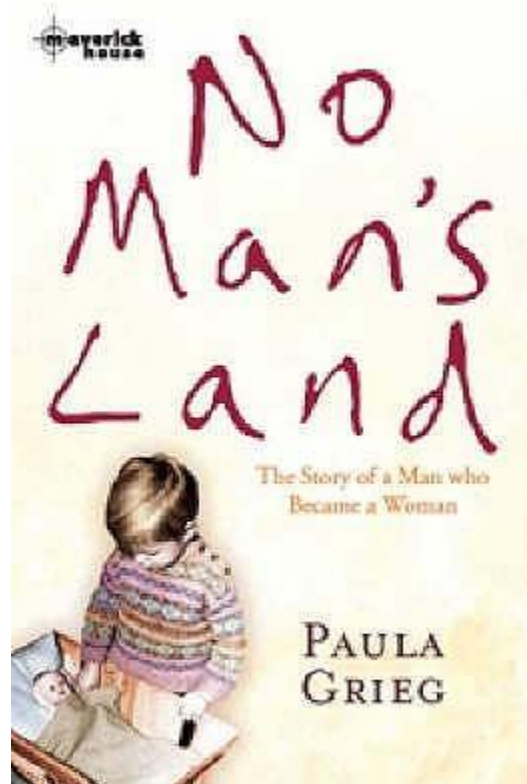
Paula Grieg, a transgender of the 1950s from Ireland has recorded her life's struggle in her autobiography *No Man's Land* (2007). She who has written her work under the pseudonym Paula Grieg, has done it so with an intention to make her book as a guide or eye-opener to those people of her similar type. This paper makes an attempt to trace the different phases of Paula Grieg using Richard Ekins's "career path theory". Richard Ekins a pioneer in the field of transgender theory

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and research, through his grounded theory approach has classified the life stages of transgenders under five phases. The grounded theory which he had arrived using the transgenders of UK stands true to the transgenders across the globe. This paper discusses the life struggle of the marginalised who die every moment to make their presence felt by the ‘host society’.

**Keywords:** Paula Grieg, “career path theory”, ‘grounded theory’, transgender, marginalised, ‘host society’

### Various Phases in a Transgender’s Life



Literature has widened its horizon towards a new genre, LGBT studies. The gender deviants who were once considered as minuscule’s have emerged to a state where they are able to record their life and make it public. All said and done, their own literature is still under scrutiny, for only a few were able to make it to this level. This paper discusses the various phases in a transgender’s life. Transgenders existence is evident from the religious texts and epics.

Their presence became unstable either after colonisation or war. Earlier they made a decent livelihood and were considered as human beings. The spread of religious principles, which insisted on anything away from the normal was considered a sin, made the ‘host society’ to ignore the transgenders. This gave rise to the use of various terms like ‘transbashing’, ‘gender fluidity’, ‘gender bender’ etc.

### **Five Phases Identified in the Career Path Theory**

Paula Grieg's life is analysed using Richard Ekins's career path theory which he formulated by undertaking a grounded theory approach to study the life style changes, stages or phases in a 'male femalers' life. Richard Ekins's career path theory was designed by questioning nearly 200 informants of the UK who were transgender. He narrowed down on the five phases as 'Beginning Femaling', 'Fantasying Femaling', 'Doing Femaling', 'Constituting Femaling', 'Consolidating Femaling', where every phase has certain features which were found common among the transgenders.

### **Paul Grieg – Paula Grieg**

Paul Grieg, (name changed) of Ireland, who lived a traumatic life post World War II, pens the apprehensions and struggles that he underwent and is still undergoing in order to live as Paula Grieg. Paula MtoF (Male to Female) was Paul for 51 years and at the age of 17 she felt and recognized the woman within her. Paula who does not want to reveal her identity, keeping in mind the well-being of her family members, has written her autobiography, *No Man's Land* (2007) under a false name. A special note like a preface in her autobiography makes this clear.

Paula Grieg is writing under a false name to protect the privacy of her family, whose lives have already been adversely affected as a result of her Gender Dysphoria. All names, places and place names are false. Any resemblance to anyone living or dead is purely coincidental. (Grieg)

### **Phase One: 'Beginning Femaling'**

Richard Ekins identifies this stage as 'primary deviance', where the individual involves in cross dressing whenever they are in isolation. During this phase a kind of mental anguish goes within because they feel they do not resemble others, who belong to the binary gender and who are in their age group. The ways they are separated both within themselves and from the others makes them stay aloof from the normal crowd. For Paula this separation of the individual from the rest of the family meant when he was all alone in his home. For him the primary deviance started at the age of 17, adolescent age. "I felt this strange sensation that I was somehow opening the door to my real identity for the very first time. Before long, a trance-like state of excitement overcame me and I felt warm liquid running down my thigh" (Grieg 41). Paul, like the youngsters of his age, did analyse the changes within at the age of 17 without isolating from the real world Paul stayed with his parents, went to job got married, had children and did all this appearing as a man i.e. sexually – biological setup but according to gender in a socially constructed one – he lead a life as a woman.

His first cross dressing act started when he was alone in his house. He enjoyed the feeling of being a woman when he wore his mother's clothes. He explains that there was a sudden urge which made him do such an act. Ekins identifies that the individuals apart from cross dressing also have an inclination towards women's clothes which they experience through "'tactile', 'visual' or 'olfactory'" (Ekins 40) senses. Paul was able to feel and enjoy his mothers clothes through 'tactile'

and ‘visual’ senses. “...I put on the soft knickers. They felt so much nicer than anything I would usually have to wear” (Grieg 40).

‘Beginning Femaling’ phase they question themselves for such a state of theirs. Though they are confused there are certain moments when they would question themselves. They are not able to openly claim that they are female at heart and mind, nor are they able to do justice to the assigned sex during birth. They are confused to even realise what is happening within them. They feel that they are doubly oppressed from within and from the outside world. Paula questions herself as ‘I could imagine being a girl, but why should I want to?’ (Grieg 41), “...something any mum’s little daughter might try and feel none the worse for it, but why me? (Grieg 40).

### **Phase Two: ‘Fantasying Femaling’**

Ekins points out that in this stage the individual would dream or imagine as if they are accepted by their loved ones. They go to the extent of dreaming that they wake up as woman on a fine morning. Paul claims that he always had dreams and he always was a girl in his dreams. His dreams he was always amidst girls and he says that he wanted to live that life, for it was his real self. In order to find solace in his dreams he points out that he never was willing to let go his womanly dreams. “If I could recall one of these dreams on wakening I would lie there trying to hold onto it and then have to let go, the feelings of contentment giving way to confusion and loneliness” (Grieg 42).

In this stage they also suppress their real self and give life to it whenever time permits them. They in fact have to lead a life of lie for they cannot openly come out as a woman. “...at this stage the fantasying female keeps separate from his everyday world, thus keeping the latter more or less ‘normal’ and enabling its development more or less boundaried from the incipient femaling world” (Ekins 42).

### **Phase Three: ‘Doing Femaling’**

Ekins records that in this stage the individual would go full-fledged as a cross dresser without being worried of the host society. This phase they accumulate their own female clothing and enjoy being dressed as a woman. They learn all the nuances of how to behave, project and showcase like a girl or woman. In this phase they go in search of literature to know about people of their similar type, for they may not be clear about their behavior. In this stage they also try to hide their male genitalia for they find pleasure in imagining themselves as a woman.

Paul becomes a full-fledged cross dresser, which even her wife Karen is aware of, of course without knowing the true reason behind this action. Paul accumulates female clothing and utilizes her official trips especially to cross dress. At one stage when she understood that she could not control her liking to be a woman, started to collect her own clothing and kept it in her private room. Whenever she was alone she came around the house dressed as a woman. She managed all her official trips to lead a life as a woman. She utilized all her outdoor stay effectively and enjoyed along with those who cross dressed like her. “When in the UK, I also arranged my trips in such a way that I would arrive as a man and a couple of hours later re-emerge as a woman, to go out...to another nearby hotel, which specifically serves the TS community” (Grieg 180).

Even when she was alone in a place where there were lots of cross dressers, in Village, Manchester, the society did its role of staring. "...all dressed up and rearing to go but it became a routine as my experience grew...while you might have to endure the occasional stares from the sight-seers, the Village tourists, ..." (Grieg 181).

They are able to zero in on what actually happens to them and within them. During this process of change they feel ashamed of their body. At this stage, they start to live their life either as women if male to female, as man if female to male. "This was the essence of confusion for me; I wanted to be treated sexually as female and yet had to use my male sex drive to accomplish it and would always feel embarrassed at the end about my male sex organs, which exposed the lie that was my inner emotions." (Grieg 175).

#### **Phase Four: 'Constituting Femaling'**

In this stage they gain confidence to identify who they are. Their experience in the earlier three phases has gained momentum in their present state of life and is ready to open up with what they really want. "By now, understanding and empathy had given way to self-preservation" (Grieg 199). As a first step they try to get a female name for themselves. Paul becomes Paula which was a tedious process for which she had to wait for more than a year. She reveals her true self to her children through a letter. "It was indeed a gut-wrenching, heartbreaking, tearful discussion, which followed. ...here I was telling them that I could only see a meaningful life for me as a woman (Grieg 198). She also reveals her true self to her family members and to her boss in her office.

This is like a stress buster for Paula for she was living a life of lie for nearly fifty years. Once she understood her real self and when she disclosed it to her loved ones, this gave her the confidence to lead a life as a woman.

Standing in the threshold they try to focus on where their destiny is. They are very much aware that the society will not welcome them with a red carpet. "I, Paula, cannot return openly to all the places I have lived, I will feel exiled and not at home. May be when and if that ban is lifted I might accept England as home. Physically I am housed, but emotionally I feel homeless," (Grieg 208). Even after giving birth to two kids, she questioned herself as why all this was ck word usage on her. She felt sorry for having been such a bad husband. She always had a thought of guilt that she had deceived her family. She felt sorry but could not stick on to the role of 'man'. "I could not continue to live a double life based on a lie; I was the lie and I needed to be the truth" (Grieg 184).

They used their work place as a kind of free space for themselves so that they can hold on to both selves – the 'social self' and the 'real self'. Now in the west, though the sex and gender deviant, do not enjoy great legal status, they are widely accepted by the common man. There is no one to see or talk on the gender deviant as they are more worried about their personal life. During 1960's Paula had a difficult time as many were unaware of such a life. Paula claims that she was not aware of the term "gender identity disorder" or "transsexuals". "I never knew this terminology before but I knew instantly that I belonged to this group of people" (Grieg 142).



### **Phase Five: ‘Consolidating Femaling’**

It is in this stage the ‘male femaler’ is fully established as a female. The individual gets a frame work to develop his ‘femaling’ self and live as a female in his normal life. The self-realization helps them to prioritize their needs and change into who they actually want to be. To change into the desired gender, Paula had to undergo few procedures. She had to undergo counseling and had to live a life in the respective gender for three years which is called as the “Real Life Test”. In this phase too, Paula had to face lot of apprehensions from the society and family. Though she had ample money to undergo her Gender Reassignment Surgery, she lacked support from her friends and family, lack of which left her depressed. She began on hormones and estrogen while she was still living with her family and found it difficult to cope with her new change caused by them, as she was behaving more like a women.

...during meetings...I made my points but where before I might have reacted angrily to statement, I now found myself on the verge of tears..... Simultaneously within weeks my body was changing, with first my nipples very sensitive... my bum started to get a little rounder...all of that of course was most welcome, but also very difficult as I had to hide those changes (Grieg 204).

Though at heart they are happy and contented on their change the host society does not allow them to live their life. Paula states that the pain of the emotional scars had wounded her more than the physical scars even after a long journey - her surgery - for people around her were more curious to know what was happening to her. People would taunt her for her voice by asking her time and over the phone people would stop and check if it was Paula or Paul.

Even after so much of struggle Paula had to be in hiding. She was able to identify and live her real life. “Finally, I was sad, because I would essentially be in hiding, not allowed to be out and open, and just me, May?? Family had asked that this be the case” (Grieg 223).

She identified herself as a woman. It is only when she fully left the no-man’s land between genders was she able to lead a happy life ‘...the testosterone-driven desire I had for women in the past is now gone, replaced by womanly desire to be loved simply as woman” (Grieg 248).

Paula was able to identify that she was successful as a woman in her workplace though she had her own apprehensions. “This was a valuable experience for me. I Paula had proven that I could succeed in a busy work environment... I could and would face my fears, whatever my gender problem. My skills were beginning to develop a few new ones as well. I was becoming a whole other person” (Grieg 233).

Thus, Ekins’s ‘career path theory’ has helped the researcher to delve into the various phases which Paula had to undergo in order to lead a life according to her hearts content. Her struggle which is studied under this lens of Ekins’s theory acts as a guidance to any new gender deviant or a person who makes a research on transgenders as how perfectly these both sync and also asserts that this change which happens within an individual is very much natural. “It is not simple choice; the choice for whatever reason is made for us. We do not choose to be born black, white, disabled,

female. male –or transsexual” (Grieg 198). These words of Paula best explain the state of transgenders across the globe.

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