

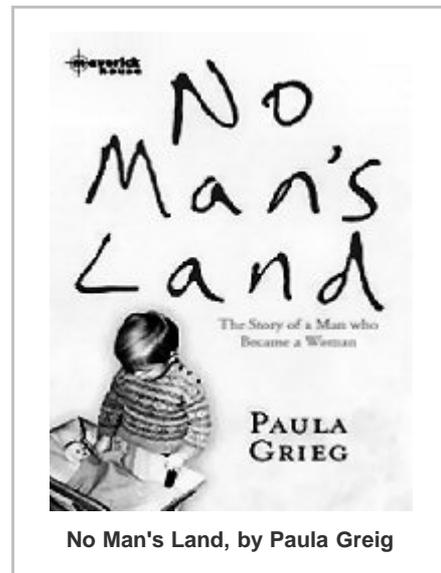
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Book Review: No Man's Land

The Story of a Man who Became a Woman

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No Man's Land: The Story of a Man who Became a Woman

by Paula Greig
Published by Trafford Publishing
I.S.B.N.-13 978 1905379286

The book is interesting in exposing both Peter's and Paula's inability to celebrate transsexuality.

This is the autobiography of a small boy, growing up in post-second World War Germany, who is uprooted as a teenager and thrust into the Irish countryside against his will by emigrating parents.

It is about a young man escaping a family life in which he often felt abused by or unconnected to his parents. In fact the whole book is about uneasy transitions of many kinds which ultimately involve a middle-class and middle-aged man's journey and struggle to become a woman.

The themes of this book are undoubtedly resistance, repression and avoidance. During the author's journey he became a rural Irish, Catholic, a husband, father, and the archetypal high-flying successful sales executive; all rather than face his deep-seated disturbed feelings about wanting to be seen and treated as female.

With three children Paula says that she regrets nothing about being the Peter that led to him becoming a father.

Along the way, however, there seem to have been oceans of undiscussed feelings which were often typically buried, rather than talked about, in both German and Irish cultures.

The battle that the writer divulges can be a lesson to us all not to build and hide imprisonments of our own making. While it is logical to believe that Peter became the man he was because he did not know he could become Paula, that largely seemed to have happened because there was little understanding of personal boundaries. If we live our lives to please other people, in order not to experience the pain of rejection, then we can never truly discover or become who we are.

Paula living post-transition in a concrete tower block in Manchester, England, left this reader with a sense of sadness and great compromise. Even though Paula seems to have made a new life for herself and found meaningful and rewarding employment the reader is left with the impression of great longing for halcyon days living the rural life by a lake in the Irish countryside.

Paula's tale is typical of many post-secondary transsexuals who lived as married men with children and then in a mid-life crisis declared that they had always felt they were female.

Peter tried very hard to be a man but felt he could not continue the rest of his life that way. The book is interesting in exposing both Peter's and Paula's inability to celebrate transsexuality.

Many people throughout the world, after undergoing transition, never take the final step of embracing totally who and what they are and end up almost apologizing for their perceived terrible affliction of sex and gender dysphoria.

Paula in intentionally disclosing and unintentionally avoiding the issue of her own transsexuality shows clearly that the physical transition for transsexuals can only be part of the journey of growth that needs to happen to sex and gender dysphoric people. The transition of the mind and personality needs to be the evolution that continues after social transition and surgery. If this never happens, the post-transition person simply becomes the long-suffering opposite sex victim of their original dysphoric self. Many later transitioning transsexuals in reading this book might see themselves and can perhaps begin to come to terms with their own avoidance of who they are.

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