

THE RIVER
GROWING
FLOWING
DOWN TO
THE SEA
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THE END OF PATRIARCHY

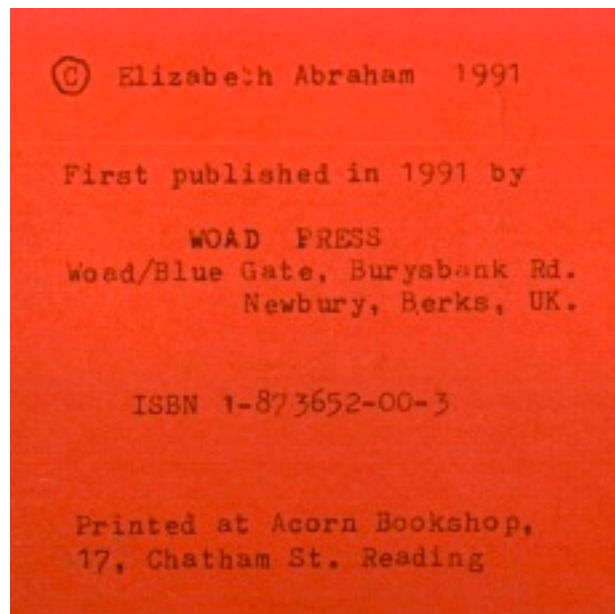
ELIZABETH ABRAHAM

The River Growing Flowing to The Sea, by Elizabeth Abraham (Woad Press, 1991)

# THE RIVER Growing Flowing to THE SEA The End of Patriarchy

By Elizabeth Abraham

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Reading the paper by a smoky fire, Blue Gate, 1990

Blue Gate 18/7/90

Dear Michelle,

All my sympathies.

This is [the] pamphlet [for?] the Consumer Society I've been struggling to write (against the problems of camp life) for over a year - I've just had a few copies printed while looking for a publisher (Distributor)

So I'd be very glad of your opinion some time & hoping your path is being made smooth

(The River is Feminism)

With every good wish in this excessively hectic time

Elizabeth

"Places like Greenham Common are important in this perspective because these are places where the hidden alternative culture of women has been made visible to all the world: not just as a tribal phenomenon among the tribes, but as a head on challenge to the most complete and absolute of all male structures: the war machine.

'There have always been wars and there always will be'. This statement is not just incidental to the patriarchal mode. It is a structural truth."

Elizabeth Abraham  
The River Growing Flowing Down to the Sea (1991)

# Introduction

You may find this pamphlet a little bare and theoretical.

But in the world at large examples are everywhere.

The problem is that without the skeleton of structure to hang these examples on one cannot take them in. One cannot believe things are that bad. Surely all these examples are just incidental failures in a growing success story?

Whereas the truth is that the whole endeavour of the Society of Employment / Affluent Society / Consumer Society is rotten, and it is finished:

The goods and services of capitalist conglomerates are naturally poor; it is the successful business of integrity that is remarkable, and warrants magazine articles (eg. Laura Ashley, or The Body Shop).

Similarly with the unpolluted food, the product of grace and economy, the humanly desirable and civilising property development. ....

The police are naturally corrupt because to keep order in a society without internal cohesion they have to use powers a free and just society could not tolerate. It is the honest copper that's a newsworthy surprise (eg. John Stalker)

And the bottom line: This society is destroying the planet (and that means us), not just incidentally but of its unfolding nature.

# The End of Patriarchy

By Patriarchy I mean the whole structure of POWER and CONTROL by which our world is MANAGED:

as an external organisation rather than as an internalised organism of living beings (living cells). This is the feminist (organic) mode.

Organisations, each of its nature being a hierarchical power structure, speak to organisations, in a descending or an ascending hierarchy; i.e. they are either authoritarian: power from above, or 'democratic': power from below - in which case people 'participate<sup>1</sup> in the 'decision making process'.

But there are always 'decision makers' and 'leaders' at 'the top'; committee structures of weariness and boredom (go to any local council meeting); and an 'administrative machinery' in between, that is in fact people, constrained and automated.

The key to organisational effectiveness lies in having on the one hand the right machinery, and on the other the right integration of people into it: there are always problems of 'apathy' to some degree.

In this mode individual freedom always has to be balanced against the needs of the collective.

Organisms have a very different way of being.

They are each autonomous: not in the sense that they don't need each other, but in the sense that they each 'do their own thing', and this is built into their nature.

They follow the pressures of their own instincts, emotions, intelligence and understanding. These and not any imposed machinery relate them to the order of the world and one another.

The bees in the hive do not have to be ordered around, nor do the leaves on the tree.

The key then to the effective ordering of the whole lies in the right ordering of the personal faculties within the individual cells / beings / people.

So the natural development of the individual cell / person becomes of supreme importance to the whole. Far from the individual and the collective, freedom and order, being opposites that have to be reconciled as in the organisational mode, they go together.

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For the freer these cells / organisms / people, the more developed and actualised will be their instincts, emotions, intelligence and understanding: we all know how animals in captivity lose their primal beauty and capability.

The freer therefore, the better will they be able to relate to and empathise with other organisms, other people, the world at large.

The freer the parts the more effective the whole organism will be.

That has been the experience of all the brief periods of 'FREEDOM' in the history of civilisation.

But that term is only relative. We have seen in history only hints and glimpses of FREEDOM. Different societies have opened doors of opportunity in different directions, perhaps briefly. But then those freedoms have been remembered, passed on, and they have become part of the human heritage, on the opening way to completion: into a FREEDOM we don't even know enough to dream about.

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At the present time a new view is opening. As the predicament of WOMAN becomes visible, as women express their true being (freedom of expression being the centre of true freedom), it becomes apparent how very relative that 'Freedom' of the past had always been, for in it there was always a corrupting oppression of one half of humanity: thus a failure to liberate one half of the whole human experience. So there was always an inevitable pressure for those 'Free Societies' to lapse back into oppression and tyranny. For they have all, since the dawn of civilisation (the life of cities), been patriarchal (e.g. they go to war with macho ardour 'to defend their freedom', and lose it in the process).

For whatever reason, once society has gone outside the circle of hearth and home, men have taken over and patriarchal culture has steered the course of history. Her-story has always been the hidden side.

Places like Greenham Common are important in this perspective because these are places where the hidden alternative culture of women has been made visible to all the world: not just as a tribal phenomenon among the tribes, but as a head on challenge to the most complete and absolute of all male structures: the war machine.

'There have always been wars and there always will be'. This statement is not just incidental to the patriarchal mode. It is a structural truth.

For within all organisational structures some have to give orders, some to take orders; some to command, some to obey. Therefore there must inevitably and not just incidentally be power structures to determine the structure: struggles between individuals who feel themselves constrained and thwarted; between groups; between blocs.



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So we have bigger and bigger organisations, with bigger and better harnessing of Nature to their power needs; with bigger and better power struggles and bigger and better weapons for bigger and better wars. 'It's inevitable'.

And always Power, when it becomes too gross, has been challenged with Power, i.e. it is always Patriarchy that has challenged Patriarchy.

'You can't disinvent the weapons of modern war' etc. etc. etc. No, not till you disinvent the patriarchal mode: organising, controlling and conquering Nature, human nature, human kind; and assert instead the feminist mode, where life is lived from our inner centres, and so is a network, a living organism responding to all its parts.

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This is not to say that, men having failed, women must take over.

If WOMAN had taken supremacy over MAN, and had maintained this supremacy over many thousands of years of social evolution,

using men as a comfortable cushion against the intolerabilities of her lopsided progression, thus being able to do what MAN has done: carry this style to the point of madness (inability to live in the real world), the schizophrenia of the human race, the point of no return for all humanity. ....

We can't imagine it, it didn't happen and let men take heart: it never will. Because humankind does learn, we are going to redress the balance: NOT set the pendulum swinging from one disastrous extreme towards the other, but rather create at last the harmonious whole in between where each sex makes their complete contribution, and the garden of the whole person (and the whole world) can blossom.

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So if you find those terms Patriarchal and Feminist too polemical, we could use the familiar words INDUSTRIAL and ECONOMIC instead, INDUSTRIAL Society, justified by ECONOMICS, being the particular form Patriarchy has taken in its ultimate and present day expression.



# Economics

This now domineering concept of ECONOMICS derived originally from the woman's sphere par excellence: 'the management of the household', from the Greek, oikos: house + nemien: to manage the household ECONOMY.

Whatever men may claim, the values of 'home', at the heart of the household, are made by women: the womb, the inner centre, inner

values; where people feel 'at home' and the personal values of nature and nurture are primary. This element of 'home' at the heart of things is therefore always feminist, and men are happy for this to be so - indeed it is what they crave for.

It is the mistress of the house who sets the household scene.

The definition of this word Mistress is so revealing that I must give it in full.\*

Firstly

1/ (a) A woman in a position of power and authority.

(b) A female head of a household.

And then:

2/ A woman who has achieved mastery (sic) of a subject or skill.

3/ Something personified as female that rules or directs

Then, asserting the Male even over the word that asserts the female:

4/ A woman with whom a man has a continuing sexual relationship outside marriage.

5/ (Chiefly British) a school mistress

Finally, now archaic:

6/ A sweetheart.

And then summing up the whole of herstory.

7/ Used archaically as a title preceding the name of a woman and now superseded by Mrs, Miss and M/s.

No wonder that, given the impossibility of reclaiming a title so lost to its original intent, feminists have in seeming despair taken to the purely negative tide M/s,

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neither Mrs or Miss and unpronounceable ..... as tho' awaiting a new name and tide, perhaps in a society where titles are at last unnecessary?

For the emptying of this title, from its original 'power and authority', 'ruling and directing', is the rise of ECONOMIC theory and practise, concerned with managing everything except the household.

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And so we come to:

**Economia:**

The art, practised largely by women, of managing life with economy ('the thrifty and efficient use of material resources.')

'How can she be such an effective organiser, when she has been fully occupied in bringing up a family?'

How can she not be?

So ECONOMIA, even when translated from the home into the wider household of society as a whole, where men claimed control, could not but retain a strong feminist element, being still concerned with the inner, personal values that are measured in 'value judgments' externalised in CULTURE and civilisation: goodness, beauty and truth: harmony, happiness and enlightenment: the values of home, the inner centre transferred to the wider family of community, country, all humankind; a world where every single person can be at ease and at home: the POSSIBILITY of a feminist world.

Of course men went out, to fight, to hunt... made the external world their male preserve, and brought those male values back ..... but into a society still modelled on the home: the household where value judgements ruled, rather than the value of money (ECONOMICS).

'Values'? What values? Ah well, that was always a realm of contention.

The external world was opened out, by explorers, discoverers, 'scientists' ..... and traders.

But traders do not have to be exploiters. A just prices gives equal profit to both sides, so they are doing one another a service, i.e. promoting Values, not just money profit; and thus maintaining the obligation of every single person to serve (how quaint and outmoded in the ECONOMIC model of Society): to realise that they are a contributing part in a whole organism wider than their scope in life: ultimately that they are part of Gaia, the living web of the living world.

By the 18th century a booming merchant class was conquering, trading and looting abroad. They were using their loot to control the household ECONOMIA at

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home. This was the 'Domestic System' and it asserted the values not of the household but of the COUNTING house, an exclusively male preserve.

In the COUNTING house the fruits of work were no longer just the fruits of living, that can be measured directly in the creation of an abundant, beautiful and tranquil life, where people are at one with nature and one another; and in the satisfaction and ease of a job well done, where people are at ease with themselves.

These fruits had to be measured in quantities of money and goods. So the primary values became secondary. And the more people in their control of work were alienated from their primary matrix in Nature and personal relationship, losing that primary satisfaction, the more good and reasonable it has seemed to work for the reward of money instead, and to make money and goods a justification and an alibi for that alienation.

For this was not just a question of moving from a 'subsistence economy' to a 'market economy' because there was now a 'surplus' available for trading (as the economic text books tell you).

Real markets are friendly, humane and communitarian places, where human motives interact. The ruthless calculations of advantage are not done in the marketplace at all, but hidden in the very different environment of the carpeted office block. Real markets retain still the atmosphere of the personal way of life; they are more a haven for artists and tourists than for ECONOMIC man.

It is rather a question of moving from human values, the values of ease and of the home, to the values of the COUNTING house.

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There is no way you can translate into money terms the cooperative transactions of home, family and community, whether or not home

('where the heart is'), family and community are based on blood ties or on other bases of familiarity: there are families by adoption and by choice, and ultimately there is the human family.

Suppose you grow your own vegetables. To find if this is 'ECONOMIC', the cost of land, labour and materials has to be set against the 'market value' of the product.

But suppose the labour is to you rest and refreshment, the input is mostly organic waste and the land is your own garden, that would never be available for the agricultural industry, being as much your amenity or pleasure and recreation as for food. How do you assess this in 'ECONOMIC' balance?

In other words, this is an essential part of your chosen way of life. You may seek to enrich your self within it, but to sacrifice your ease and development and delight - the wealth/well-th you measure in your own well being, for a style of

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wealth/wellth dictated by someone else, is not for you development and progress but permanent impoverishment.

The point is that 'ECONOMIC' measurements are marginal insofar as you live a life of natural fulfilment. For centuries people struggled to have their own independent homesteads beyond slavery and serfdom, and they called this FREEDOM. Till this ideal was overwhelmed in profiteering by the powerful few in the industrial revolution, and we hardly know any longer what FREEDOM means.

But to grow your own food and live in your own homestead is not far removed from the possibilities of our modern riches, and from the CULTURE and way of life that many people seek today.