

CONTROLLED.  
MEASURED.  
EXTRACTED.  
FORGOTTEN.

FELT.  
CONNECTED.  
REGENERATED.  
REMEMBERED.

FUTURE  
BUILT TO  
LAST.

# The Quiet Power.

The Hidden History  
*of Women and Civilization*

# The Quiet Power

The Hidden History of Women  
and Civilization

Virginie Gervais Glaezer

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To my mother, Béatrice who represents the silent generation of women whose strength often lived without recognition or voice.

And to my father, Gérard, who met my rebellion from a young age with patience, love, and the courage to stand beside a daughter determined to question the world around her, including him.

# INTRODUCTION

I spent most of my life trying to fit into a world I believed was never built for me.

Like many women of my generation, I was told a story. A story repeated so often it became invisible. I was told that women had no power. That for most of history we were powerless, excluded, dependent, voiceless. That only recently, over the last hundred years, women had finally begun to gain fragile access to power through voting rights, careers, leadership positions, and independence.

I was told I should be grateful for this progress. That it could disappear at any moment. That the world of power, business, politics, leadership, and authority had been built by men, for men, and that my role was to learn how to navigate it successfully.

I was told to lean in.  
To work harder.  
To adapt.  
To prove myself.  
To stop being emotional.  
To be strong, but not threatening.  
Visible, but not too visible.  
Ambitious, but still likable.

And if I struggled, if I felt exhausted, disconnected, fragmented, overwhelmed by the constant pressure to perform, I was told the problem was personal. I needed more confidence. Better boundaries. Better strategies. Better balance. The ceiling, they said, no longer existed. So if something still felt wrong, it had to be me.

But over time, a quiet realization began to emerge beneath everything I had been taught. A realization that changed not only how I saw women, but how I saw history, leadership, power, and reality itself.

I had been lied to. Not maliciously. Not necessarily consciously. But collectively. Culturally. Civilizationally.

Because the deeper truth is this: Women were never powerless. We did not suddenly gain power one hundred years ago. We did not evolve from silence into legitimacy. We did not move from absence into importance. We always had power.

What changed was that civilization gradually stopped recognizing the forms of power women historically embodied. As societies became larger, more industrialized, more centralized, and more hierarchical, power became increasingly defined through control, ownership, scale, visibility, and institutional authority. Only what could be measured, formalized, and enforced was recognized as legitimate power.

Everything else slowly disappeared from the visible map of society. Not because it stopped existing. But because it no longer fit the system's definition.

The forms of power rooted in relationships, intuition, emotional intelligence, continuity, adaptability, care, cohesion, regeneration, and long-term thinking did not vanish. They continued shaping humanity, quietly beneath the surface of institutions that no longer knew how to see them.

And because those forms became invisible, we forgot. Not only men. Women too.

We inherited a worldview that taught us to search outside ourselves for legitimacy. To seek validation from systems that were never designed to recognize the full spectrum of our power in the first place.

The more deeply I understood this, the more something inside me began to return. Not rebellion. Recognition.

I began reconnecting with parts of myself I had unconsciously learned to suppress. My natural ambition. My intuition. My way of seeing systems. My emotional intelligence. My capacity to hold complexity. My cyclical rhythms. My instinct for connection and meaning.

For the first time, I stopped experiencing these qualities as weaknesses I needed to manage in order to succeed. I realized I was never failing to fit into reality. Reality itself had been defined too narrowly. And strangely, this realization did not make me feel angry. It made me feel free.

Because if women never truly lost power, then we do not need permission to reclaim it. We do not need to become someone else in order to deserve legitimacy. We do not need to constantly prove our worth inside systems built on incomplete definitions of strength.

We were already legitimate.

We were already enough.

We already belonged.

This book emerged from that awakening.

Not as a rejection of men, nor as an idealization of women, but as an exploration of how civilizations define power, why certain forms became dominant, what was pushed into invisibility, and why humanity may now be entering a moment where the definition itself is beginning to expand again.

This is not a story about women rising for the first time. It is a story about remembering what was always there. And once I saw it clearly, I could never unsee it again. I was not trying to become power.

I was power already.

## OPENING

This book offers a bold reinterpretation of human history. In early human societies, organized around small, interdependent communities, power was not hierarchical.

It was relational. But as civilizations grew larger, increasingly shaped by war, property, institutions, and control, the definition of power began to change. Power became something that could be measured, owned, centralized and enforced. By the early twentieth century, that transformation had reached its peak.

This book invites the reader to reconsider the arc of history itself: What if the modern era is not witnessing the rise of women, but the re-emergence of a form of leadership humanity once depended on? What if women's power was never truly lost, but gradually pushed outside the systems that came to define legitimacy, authority, and success?

Again, this is not a story about blaming men or idealizing women. It is a story about power itself. How it changed shape: what became visible and invisible.

And why humanity may now be entering a moment of remembering.

**PART I**

**BEFORE POWER WAS**

**TAKEN**

## Chapter 1 — The Memory of Power

There is a difference between never having had power, and having known it so deeply that you no longer recognize its absence.

Most of history has been written as a story of progress.

Of rights earned.

Of voices rising.

Of women slowly and courageously gaining access to power they were once denied.

But what if that story is incomplete?

*"The recorded and interpreted record of the past of the human race is only a partial record, in that it omits the past of half of humankind, and it is distorted, in that it tells the story from the viewpoint of the male half of humanity only."* —

**Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986)**

What if women are not stepping into power for the first time, but returning to something they once held, and remember, even if only faintly?

This book begins with a simple, unsettling idea: Women did not begin without power.

They began within it. And like all forms of power that are lived rather than claimed, it did not announce itself. It did not require titles, systems, or permission. It existed in the rhythm of life itself, quiet, constant, and unquestioned.

To understand this, we need to step outside of the frameworks we've inherited.

Because when we speak of "*power*" today, we often mean something very specific: *control, authority, visibility, decision-making at scale.*

We picture positions. Leaders. Structures. Those who stand above.

But this is only *one version* of power. A recent one.

There is another form, older, quieter, and far less legible to the modern eye. A form of power that does not dominate, but sustains. That does not command, but

connects.

That does not rise above, but moves through.

It is the power of continuity. Of influence without ownership. Of shaping outcomes without standing at their center.

The power of holding together what would otherwise fall apart.

This form of power leaves no monuments. No official record marks its presence. No title confirms its authority. And yet, for most of human history, it was indispensable.

In early human communities, small, interdependent, and bound by the immediate demands of survival, power did not sit at the top of a structure. There was no “top.”

Life depended on relationships, on knowledge passed down, on rhythms that could not be rushed or forced.

Food had to be gathered, grown, preserved. Children had to be carried, taught, protected. Illness had to be understood and tended to. Conflict had to be absorbed and resolved before it fractured the group. Survival was not a function of domination. It was a function of cohesion. And within this cohesion, women were not peripheral.

They were central.

Not because they ruled. But because they sustained. They held knowledge of plants, of seasons, of bodies. They organized the invisible architecture of daily life.

They ensured continuity, not just of people, but of meaning.

Their influence was not episodic. It was constant. It did not begin and end with decisions. It lived in the space between them.

In such a world, power was not something to acquire. It was something you participated in.

There is a parallel here that may feel uncomfortable, but it is necessary.

When we speak about slavery, we often focus on the condition itself. The chains, the system, the injustice. But those who were enslaved were not born into a void of freedom. They came from it. They had known autonomy, identity, community, before a system was imposed that stripped those away and replaced them with something else.

Crucially, that system did not simply remove freedom. It redefined reality in a way that made that freedom harder to remember, harder to name, and eventually, harder to imagine.

The story of women, while entirely distinct in its specifics, carries a similar pattern of transformation.

There was a time when women did not need to seek power. It was something they embodied. But as systems evolved, that form of power was not translated. It was sidelined.

Not erased. But redefined out of visibility.

The shift did not happen all at once. There was no single moment when power was “taken.”

Instead, something more subtle, and more enduring, occurred: Power changed shape.

As human societies grew, moving from small, interdependent communities into larger, more complex systems, new forms of organization became necessary.

Coordination. Specialization. Defense.

And with them, a new question emerged: Who decides?

It is here that power begins to transform. Where once influence was distributed, it begins to concentrate. Where once it was embedded, it becomes assigned.

Where once it moved through relationships, it is now held in positions.

And crucially, it becomes visible.

Power that can be seen can be *measured*. Power that can be *measured* can be *compared*. Power that can be *compared* can be *pursued*.

Visibility becomes legitimacy. And what cannot be seen begins to disappear, not in reality, but in recognition.

War accelerates this transformation. As societies expand, the need to defend territory, and later to acquire it, becomes central. War introduces urgency. Hierarchy. Command. It privileges physical strength, speed of decision-making, and the ability to control others under pressure.

These are not neutral shifts. They elevate a specific kind of power, one that is directional, force-based, and centralized. And they create a justification for it. Protection. Security. Survival.

Men, by virtue of physical differences and the roles they come to occupy within these systems, increasingly step into these positions.

Not necessarily through deliberate exclusion at first, but through alignment with what the system now rewards. And over time, this alignment hardens into norm.

Leadership becomes associated with command. Authority with control. Power with dominance.

The earlier form of power, the one that sustained, connected, and adapted, does not vanish. But it no longer fits the frame.

This is the quiet turning point at the heart of this book.

Women did not simply lose power. Their form of power stopped being counted. It became background. Expected. Unseen. Unmeasured. It continued to operate, in families, in communities, in the spaces that systems depended on but did not recognize.

But because it could not be easily quantified, institutionalized, or weaponized, it was excluded from the emerging definition of power.

And definitions matter.

Because once a definition narrows, everything outside of it becomes invisible, not because it disappeared, but because it was no longer named.

By the time we reach the modern era, this redefinition is complete. Power becomes formal.

Codified in political, economic, and legal institutions. It is tied to ownership, to income, to decision-making authority at scale. It has become something you either have or do not. And in this world, women appear to be on the outside.

So when they begin to organize, to protest, to demand access, education, property rights, the vote, it looks like the beginning of something. The beginning of power. But what if it is not? What if it is the beginning of re-entry?

What if women are not asking for power, but for access to a system that replaced the one in which their power once existed?

This reframing does not diminish the importance of those struggles. It deepens them. Because it reveals that what is at stake is not only equality within a system, but the *definition of the system itself*.

If power is only recognized in its most visible, most forceful form, then gaining access to it may still leave something essential behind. Something quieter. But no less fundamental.

This book does not argue that women once ruled the world. It argues something more nuanced.

And perhaps more radical.

*That power once existed in multiple forms.* And that one of those forms, deeply embodied by women, was gradually displaced, not because it was weak, but because it could not be easily captured by emerging systems of control.

To see this clearly, we must learn to recognize a kind of power that leaves no monuments. No titles. No official records. Only traces. In the way communities held together. In the way knowledge was passed down. In the way life continued,

quietly, persistently, through generations. Because once you begin to see this form of power, something shifts.

The story of women changes. The story of *history* changes. And perhaps most importantly, the story of the future changes.

Because what if the question is not how women gain power, but whether we are ready to recognize the kind of power that was here all along?

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**Side Note:**

The assumption of male dominance in prehistory was itself a methodological bias. Recent archaeological reanalysis challenges the long-standing “Man the Hunter” paradigm that shaped anthropology for decades. A review of ethnographic records found that women participated in hunting activities in nearly 80% of the cultures examined, suggesting that many assumptions about prehistoric gender roles reflected interpretive bias more than evidence itself.

Source:

<https://theconversation.com/forget-man-the-hunter-physiological-and-archaeological-evidence-rewrites-assumptions-about-a-gendered-division-of-labor-in-prehistoric-times-214347>