

Lessons from Feminist Foremothers: the Imagining of the Post-Patriarch

This article explores the imaginings of the post-patriarch through the lens of both liberal and radical feminism and the extent to which these differing strands of feminism can challenge the ontological masculine standard of the liberal citizen. From this discussion, central ideas from feminist theorists, including Germaine Greer and Catharine MacKinnon, conceptualise the patriarchal state, how oppression is embedded within the structure and the extent to which contemporary forms of resistance, such as the #MeToo movement, can challenge this understanding. This article ultimately concludes that the state as an apparatus of inequality is redeemably masculinist in the sense that when the root cause of inequality is addressed and overturned only then will women and men engage in reciprocal relationships. This indeed is the imagining of the post-patriarch.

Keywords: Feminist theory, liberal feminism, radical feminism, post-patriarch, citizen, imaginative politics

Introduction

The state as a structural institution is embedded within the masculine gaze and as such can be argued to operate as an underlying barrier in achieving equality between men and women (Eisenstein, 1981, p.225). This article seeks to explore how different types of feminism, namely liberal and radical feminism, either, in the former's case, observe the state as '...the only legitimate authority for enforcing...women's rights' (Jagger, 1983, p.200), and thus an instrument for change, or conversely for the latter, view the state from a more radical stance in stressing that '[m]ale power is systematic' (Mackinnon, 1989, p.170), in that the liberal democratic structure operates as a barrier in itself to gender equality as masculinist structures of thought which shape society are engrained in its very foundations. This assessment will be achieved through further analysis of the blurred lines of the personal as the political to highlight the '... 'deep gendering' of the very concept of the social' (Marshall and Witz, 2004, p.21). This discussion will not only stress that the masculine gaze shapes the state, but that the 'masculine' is the ontological and epistemological personification of the state, as this thought structure itself moulds individuals in deeply masculinist ways. Consequently, the patriarchy implicates the 'appropriate' forms of political

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subject hood through the expression of the ideal 'liberal citizen' which arguably strips subjects from expressive feminised discourses.

The extent to which these forms of feminism agree on the ultimate objectives of the movement as a whole, including equality between men and women and the right to sexual freedoms and bodily autonomy, as opposed to the diverse individual approaches taken to reach these ends, will highlight whether proposed remedies from both strands can challenge the masculinist state in order to assess whether the state can operate as an impartial entity. From this discussion, a final assessment will be undertaken to conceptualise what the post-patriarch will prevail as, with mention to current discussion on gender quotas and social movements in the claiming back of femininity and women's social and political power. This article will ultimately stress that the state is redeemably masculinist when deconstructed with a radical feminist lens such that the very structure of the 'state' as an institution is challenged and reimagined.

'Masculinist' and 'Patriarchal' Dimensions of the State

Before discussing the different strands of feminism in relation to the personal as the political, it is essential to characterise what 'masculinist' or 'patriarchal' means in relation to the state as a political entity. For this article, the masculinist state will encompass Western liberal democracy and thus is central to the structural oppression that is the shared lived experience of women and feminised subjects. In its most basic conception within the liberal and radical feminist lens, the patriarchy relates to the relationships of power between men and women, whereby males dominate and exploit this relation for their own means (Beechey, 1979, p.66). However, when the patriarchy is examined more closely it encompasses a wider range of oppression as it is engrained in the very institutional structure and its onto-epistemological underpinnings which governs individuals. The oppression is subsequently concealed by measures implemented by the state in modes which make it difficult for the oppressed to recognise this constant systematic power struggle and forms of gendered exclusion (Eisenstein, 1981, p.223). Subsequently, the '...patriarchy in its modern fraternal form underpins the social contract...' (Gatens, 1991, pp.108-109), and as such polemics like Carole Pateman's *The Sexual Contract* highlight the detrimental outcomes the association of masculine identity as underpinning citizenship has. The feminised subject is therefore excluded from citizenship as the divide between the public and private spheres of society '...privileges 'hegemonic masculinity' through 'active participation' in the public sphere whilst simultaneously not acknowledging the coadjutant link between the two realms that make up a functioning society (Beasley & Bacchi, 2000, p.340). This characterisation of the patriarchy highlights that the rules devised by the state to govern its citizens and the masculinist attitudes in defining social and political relationships in society '...are not two forms of power but dimensions of the complex, multifaceted structure of domination...' (Pateman, 1988, p.12). Thus, it is evident that structural oppression develops out of entrenched values and assumptions of the state which transpire as the '...everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society' (Young, 2011, p.41).

Both liberal and radical feminisms concur that the state is masculinist. As such the next stage in this article is to assess whether this trait is irredeemable through the examination of the argument and theorisation from both traditions that the personal is the political.

Perspectives of the Masculinist State

In order to assess whether the state is irredeemably masculinist it is necessary to evaluate the extent to which the state structure identifies and addresses the oppression of women in both the abstract and the historical-political sense. To put this more succinctly, 'the personal is political' and arguably the intersection of the private and public spheres of society are still accentuated to dismiss women as '...autonomous liberal subject[s]' (Rogan and Budgeon, 2018, p.15), which can be observed in relation to issues of bodily autonomy, the rise in domestic violence (Summers, 2004, p.45) and the constant segregation of certain industries on the basis of gender stereotypes (like child-care services mainly being occupied by women) (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018, p.2). Thus, it can be argued that the universality of liberal concepts such as 'equality' and 'freedom' actually '...homogen[ises] difference and institute[s] male authority...' (Simon-Ingram, 1991, p.134) rather than addressing the root cause of structural oppression which lies within the state. The right to bodily autonomy and access to freedom of choice with regard to reproductive rights is one of many issues which overlaps the private and public realms and in turn a woman's access to freedom of agency and democratic participation (Lister, 2003, pp.156-126).

MacKinnon could not make it any more clear-cut when she highlights that the state is unable to revolutionise the structural oppression experienced by women as it is founded within trusted liberal principles of individuality and '...the assumption that conditions that pertain among men on the basis of gender apply to women as well...' (MacKinnon, 1989, p.163). However, these conditions are applied to feminised subjects differentially in the construction of the autonomous liberal subject as the value given to formal work is starkly contrasted to the diminished regard for domestic labour in the private sphere. On this basis it is arguable that women are continually marginalised from exercising their citizenship as the ontological standard of the state as masculine invisibilises the private sphere and deems domestic labour insignificant (Beasley & Bacchi, 2000, p.339). Thus, the following discussion will commence to address the personal as the political from liberal and radical strands of feminism in characterising whether the state acts as the instrumental barrier in achieving political equality between men and women as autonomous citizens.

Liberal Feminism

It is essential to characterise liberal feminism briefly before commencing the discussion as to whether the state is irredeemably masculine because although its objectives are arguably the same as radical feminism, the means in which oppression is identified and subsequently addressed are substantially different. Liberal feminism maintains at its core that it is not the state structure which creates limitations towards equality between men and women, rather it is a dominant group in society which is able to implement legislation and enforce

normalities of interactions and thus it is the group which acts as the vehicle of oppression which has the power to influence the structure (Zajieck and Calasanti, 1998, p.506). Accordingly, liberal feminists consider that equality can be reached through avenues which challenge the legal characteristics of the state rather than the core framework by means of reforming legislation, addressing matters in the structure of the court system and through lobbying for equal access to opportunity (Naschesu, 2008, p.31). Liberal feminism's ultimate objective therefore is to address the public sphere in demanding equal access and liberal rights afforded to men.

This approach is limited in addressing whether the state is irredeemably masculine as liberal feminists consider that '...the state's role ought to be limited to the public sphere...' (Garner et al., 2012, pp.134 and 136). Thus if the structure of the state is to be untouched in achieving equality in the private and public realm it is arguable that full equality and bodily autonomy can never transpire as the growth in conservative factions of parties reflect traditional views and thus a misogynistic culture is formulated in the expression of equality in the masculine eyes of the law (Biggs, 2012, p.74), which does not account for the shared personal struggle of women (Eisenstein, 1981, p.221). Rottenberg highlights the liberal feminist incongruity when she questions the causative factors in women's inequality if the assumption of liberal feminists is that '...women's opportunities and progress are no longer obstructed by...exclusionary institutions' (Rottenberg, 2014, p.424). Furthermore, the assumption of a female subject is problematic in itself as this classification excludes features of race, class and age and therefore can operate as a shortcoming in assessing the impact of the masculine state on the feminised subjects lived experiences. Subsequently, liberal feminists consider the public sphere as separate from the realm of state intervention and that equality can be achieved for both sexes through legislative reform, and thus the state is not irredeemably masculine in the sense that liberal feminism can work within the framework of the state and even complement this structure in combating women's oppression.

Radical Feminism

In stark contrast to the liberal feminist stance in the ability of legal reformation to combat inequality, radical feminists consider that the state is not only formed by men as the oppressors and participants in the patriarchy, but that the state is the '...patriarchal power structure...[and is thus] itself inherently gendered' (Zajieck and Calasanti, 1998, pp.506-507). Consequently, radical feminists consider the personal sphere, including the right to sexual freedoms and bodily autonomy, as part of the wider relationship to politics and thus encompassed in the political arena of human experience (Nachesu, 2008, p.30). The preliminary objective of radical feminists is to distinguish where the patriarchal roots are in society, and subsequently this amalgamates the structural oppression experienced in the public realm of the state with the power imbalance of relationships in the private sphere. The very basis of women's existence is founded within the structure of the state and thus liberal feminist ideology does not confront entrenched patriarchal power (Garner et al., 2012, p.136). Consequently, as Hartmann states with regard to radical feminism, '[w]omen's discontent... [is] a response to a social structure in which women are

systematically dominated, exploited, and oppressed' (Hartmann, 1981, p.191). When assessing the issue of bodily autonomy, it becomes paramount that '...women's reproductive... roles and responsibilities often serve to limit women's development as full human persons' (Tong, 1998, p.47).

This parallel between the role of motherhood and full citizen participation in the state is current even in 2018 with the Australian Human Rights Commission stressing impediments to equality in the realm of career aspiration with '...women spend[ing] three times as much time taking care of children each day, compared to men' (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018). It is evident that the basic organisation of Australian society is still encompassing an underlying patriarchal assumption of sexual difference whereby women cannot access the same opportunities as men in furthering their career aspirations whilst simultaneously maintaining the role of the caretaker (Pateman, 1988, p.6). Thus MacKinnon's notion that '[t]he law sees and treats women the way men see and treat women' (1983, p.644) will continuously be applicable in assessing that the state is irredeemably masculinist unless the structure itself is dramatically revolutionised from its very roots. It is evident therefore that in order to overthrow the masculinist state, a shifting of the realm of the political and the voice of the feminised subject to overcome the masculinist framing of political subjectivity and behaviour needs to transpire.

Redeemability of the Masculinist State

As liberal feminists have confidence in the reformation of laws and the promotion of equal opportunity measures to combat inequality between men and women it is essential to evaluate proposed remedies which challenge the patriarchy and to what extent these proposals will highlight a redeemably masculinist state. It should be stressed that liberal feminists emphasise '... equality of opportunity between men and women [diverging from the radical stance of] equality between men and women...' (Eisenstein, 1981, p.108) Thus, liberal feminists arguably consider that as anti-discrimination policies have been introduced, in principle, women should be able to participate in society as equals to their male counterparts (Tong, 1998, p.33). However, this approach does not account for the actual terms endorsed by the state such as 'power', 'freedom' and 'justice' generally '...involve[ing] the exclusion of traits associated with women' (Gatens, 1991, p.62), and this goes beyond the initial shock value of acknowledging this restriction to actually contemplating that as women are oppressed in the very language of the state this becomes embodied in the woman herself creating a cycle of internalised misogyny (Gatens, 1991, p.113).

The liberal feminist approach can therefore be detrimental as it creates an opportunity where women become the incarnation of masculinist ideals in the sense that the ontological target of making it in the world is to 'act like a man' (Marshall and Witz, 2004, p.21). This itself could be argued as '...a modality of governmentality in the Foucauldian sense of regulating the 'conduct of conduct'' (Rottenberg, 2014, p.420), as this form of behaviour becomes naturalised in the female subject whereby their own actions are governed by the actions of those around her acting under the influence of neo-liberal state apparatuses which

determine appropriate behaviour. Consequently, the framework of the state as a space for individual autonomy and equality is challenged so considerably that it is not a structure which can uphold the original ideal of '...equality of opportunity...' (Eisenstein, 1981, p.108), as men are already advanced from the very base conditions of the state (Young, 2011, p.39). Consequently, it is arguable that liberal feminism is too restricted in its means to address the underlying causative features of the irredeemably masculinist state, and therefore, the state from this stance would remain patriarchal and women occupying the state would themselves become subjects of the patriarchy.

Contrasted to this position it is arguable that radical feminism has a greater capability in addressing whether the state is irredeemably masculinist by the promotion of an overthrow of the known state of liberal democracy into a condition of anarchy whereby individual freedoms and equality can be expressed forthrightly and without preconceived limitations. Radical feminism recognises that liberal feminism does not have the capabilities in this modern era to account for the innate gender exclusionary practices of the state and thus the only realistic action in addressing these engrained motives is '...an overhaul of the patriarchal or masculine foundations of modern society' (Rottenberg, 2014, p.432). Radical feminists therefore acknowledge that a woman's place in the modern state is characterised and shaped by the '... patriarchal politics of knowledge production...' (Naschescu, 2008, p.33). It is arguable that not only is the state embedded within patriarchal structures, but that the underlying politics of knowledge, the expression of resistances in response to and the very knowing of the patriarchal state is conditioned by masculinist discourses. This cycle can only be overcome when the very structure itself is addressed as the root cause to inequality and the political becomes feminised. This understanding of the state as structured by the masculinist gaze is highlighted by Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* where she states '...all systems of oppression will continue to function simply by virtue of their logical and emotional mandate in the primary human institution' (Millet, 2016, p.21).

To combat this the modern masculinist supposedly 'liberal' democratic structure must be overthrown by a sexual revolution into a state of anarchy whereby the woman will be defined in her own terms for '...the basis of new relationships between men and women and as a model for a new political future' (Hemmings, 2014, p.44). At its very core the revolution of the state recognises that legislation which imposes anti-discrimination and equal opportunity policies does not effectively combat engrained misogyny. The sexual revolution will release women from the shackles of the paternal state and lead to a condition of what anarchist feminist Emma Goldman termed as '...the liberation of the human mind...and body' (Goldman, 1969, p.62). This total reformation of the institution of the state will allow individuals to flourish according to their '...individual desires, tastes, and inclinations' (Goldman, 1969, p.62) in a framework which allows for self-discovery and equality expressed through non-exploitative relationships between men and women.

The context which is needed to formulate the sexual revolution is now as it is recognised by many that masculinity is a stance or rather a lens to observe the

world from, rather than a legitimate truth claim, and thus it can be challenged (MacKinnon, 1983, p.658). As such, new expressive forms of political subjectivities engrained in the lived reality of feminised women will be shared to unite feminised resistances in challenging the masculine politics of knowledge. It is arguable that radical feminism has the tools and context to make equality and freedom from structural oppression not just a fanciful thought but a reality for future women in society and thus the state is redeemably masculinist from this stance.

This challenge to the liberal state structure from feminised resistances can be observed currently in Latin America as feminised subjects unite to express their citizenship in ways which simultaneously ‘...disrupt the power of capital... [and] reconnect people and communities...’ (Motta, 2017, p.5). It is from the exercise of strategies presented by feminists (as observed in Latin America) that global practices of feminised resistances can unite to overcome the masculine standard of the state and gendered exclusions.

The Post-patriarchal State

The future of the post-patriarchal state-society needs to be considered briefly with regard to specific measures in targeting structural oppression with reference to both the liberal stance of equal opportunity exercised through gender quotas and the radical perspective of equality through the claiming back of the woman’s own body and femininity through social movements (Eisenstein, 1981, p.108). Anne Summers noted in 2004 in *The End of Equality* that most individuals considered equality between men and women as ‘...a revolution that was unstoppable and irreversible’ (Summers, 2004, p.43). However, when Summers looked at the statistics with regard to the rise of women entering parliament in conjunction with the lack of advancement in the protection of women’s rights in wider society she was shocked at the perceived ‘end of equality’ (Summers, 2004, p.45).

There has been recent debate surrounding the introduction of ‘gender quotas’ in the media with regard to female Australian Liberal parliamentarians to address the issue Summers noted. This is a pragmatic approach in addressing concerns of gender diversity in the workforce with media commentary stressing that the method defies liberal logic with regard to procedural fairness, candidate quality and stigmatisation surrounding women who reach the job based on quotas rather than merit (Spender, 2015, pp.101-103). The extent to which gender quotas would endorse the perceived equality feminists wish to achieve in Parliament is questionable with individuals such as the conservative Miranda Devine expressing in an article in the *Sunday Telegraph* that in order for the Liberal Party to accomplish equal outcomes for men and women ‘...they will either have to force mothers to make different choices or promote from a smaller pool of childless women’ (Devine, 2018, p.21). This ludicrous rhetoric is still being espoused by Australian women and highlights the internalisation of the division between the public and private spheres of society as still a dictating feature when striving for equality. Gender quotas are a measure which could be utilised in achieving equal opportunity through restructuring appointments to positions.

However, quotas do not account for the potential of women in the post-patriarch as this is merely fixing external structures to account for women rather than to challenge engrained exclusionary discourses which is arguably juxtaposed to the liberal feminist rhetoric of equality of opportunity (Eisenstein, 1981, p.108). Gender quotas also demonstrate how inclusion into, whilst not challenging the underlying structures, can mean that there are women in the state but that these women 'embody hegemonic masculinity' and produce the patriarchy themselves, resulting in the reproduction of the masculinist standard.

A more radical approach has been conducted with the #MeToo movement, which has come to stand for a multitude of interlocutory matters for women including addressing rising rates of sexual and domestic violence, tackling structural oppression and calling-out the perpetrators of these acts (Gilbert, 2018, pp.22-23). As Germaine Greer noted nineteen years ago, '[i]t is through her body that oppression works, rectifying her, sexualizing her, [and] victimizing her' (Greer, 1999, p.106), and thus central to this movement could arguably be framed as the claiming back of femininity, the claiming back of the woman's bodily autonomy and the claiming back of feminism as an identity which has been '...distorted by a patriarchal politics...' (Naschescu, 2008, pp.32-33). Sandra Gilbert put this most eloquently when she proposed that '...now another wave of feminism will rise like a tsunami' (Gilbert, 2018, p.23). Arguably, it is movements like this that come to characterise the future of emerging feminists who can unite with their foremothers in the fight for boundless equality and thus the re-imagining of the state.

The post-patriarch is a conception which is still at the stage of imaginings. However, the proposed radical reformations of the framework of the state could lead to a redeemably masculinist structure which encompasses notions of limitless equality, respect and balanced relationships between men and women which involves overcoming hierarchal binaries between the public and private realms in addition to the feminine and the masculine. A total re-founding of political subjectivity and the feminisation of the political terrain is necessary to produce the post-patriarchal state.

Conclusion

It can be observed throughout this article that if the state is irredeemably masculinist it depends upon which strand of feminism is utilised to address this and to what extent one is willing to challenge the understanding of the 'state' as a structure. Liberal feminists address discrimination and inequality through reforming national laws, promoting equal opportunity policies and education. Contrasted to this approach, radical feminism does not consider liberal feminism to be capable of challenging engrained notions of masculinity in the state structure itself and consequently promotes the overthrow of political authority and total liberation through anarchy in creating a state of equality between men and women.

This article addressed the definition of masculinist attitude and the patriarchy, the impact of personal concerns of women amalgamating into the

public sphere, the extent to which both strands of feminism challenge the patriarchal state, imagining the post-patriarch and the ultimate discussion as to whether the state is irredeemably masculinist. It is evident that the state is masculinist in that 'masculine' perception is the epistemological-ontological personification of the state. However, although liberal feminism arguably does not direct efforts towards the root cause of this inequality, radical feminism is an approach which could address these concerns and create a safe feminised space where individuals are equal and feminised subjects can exercise their full citizenship in an inclusionary environment, thus making the state redeemably masculinist.

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