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5. Gender, metaphor and the state

Liberalism has always been centrally concerned with the state and its proper role. Over the last 300 years liberalism has been associated with two main ideas of the state—firstly the minimal state, the main purpose of which is to uphold freedom of contract, and secondly the ethical or welfare state. These ideas developed sequentially in the course of the evolution of liberalism although the first, the fear of what the state might do rather than the fear of what it might neglect, was never fully extinguished and may now again be in the ascendant. While the concept of the minimal state predated the achievement by women of political influence, the struggle for the welfare state was one aspect of the struggle by women for political rights.

A number of gendered metaphors have clustered around these contrasting ideas of the state. The gender of the minimal state has almost always been masculine while the welfare state has been more likely to be seen as female. What is surprising is that the ‘feminised’ version of the state should be under attack at a time when women supposedly have more access to political power than ever before. If the contest over the welfare state has a significant gender dimension, it is not a contest which women are really winning.

The welfare state is portrayed by its neo-liberal critics as undermining the masculine values of independence, self-reliance and competitiveness. Whereas women’s suffrage was opposed on the grounds of its effect on women’s femininity, today the welfare state, which in part flowed from women’s citizenship, is opposed on the grounds of its effects on masculinity. The ‘maternal state’ is a barrier to competitiveness both at home and abroad: the ‘competition state’ must replace the welfare state.

My focus here is on the gendered metaphors associated with central liberal ideas of the state. I will not be dealing with late-19th-century imperial ideas, rich though they were in gendered imagery. Female personifications of the imperial state, as in the figure of Britannia, provided an important emotional focus for patriotic loyalty—‘Mother of the Free’. When it was necessary to mobilise citizen soldiers it was recognised that citizens would not willingly die for an abstraction such as the social contract state of early liberalism—the state needed embodiment.

Liberal theory and sex change in the state

The social contract state, restricted to performing its contractual obligations of the protection of pre-existing rights, was first described as the ‘night-watchman state’ in a famous speech made by German socialist Ferdinand Lassalle in Berlin in 1862. Lassalle claimed in the speech that:

the bourgeoisie conceive the ethical purpose of the state as consisting solely and exclusively in the protection of the personal freedom and property of the individual.

This is a night-watchman concept, gentlemen, a night-watchman concept because it can conceive of the state only in the form of a night watchman whose functions consist solely in preventing robbery and burglary.

The metaphor of the night watchman quickly caught on, although it should be noted that at the time Lassalle used it ‘night watchman’ actually meant a constable of the watch or policeman. This older meaning was still captured by W. R. Sorley when reflecting on the importance of metaphoric embodiment of the state during World War I. Sorley suggested that the ‘representative in blue who kept the fingers of the have-nots out of the pockets of the haves’ was at least a more solid image than the attenuated notion of the state of classical liberalism. By the late 19th century, the night-watchman state was coming under sustained criticism from within the liberal tradition. In this essay, as elsewhere in this book, I use the term ‘social liberalism’ for this new development within liberalism which

took its inspiration from T. H. Green and which was to provide the philosophical foundations for the welfare state.

Social liberalism differed from earlier rights-based and utilitarian forms of liberalism in its idealist conception of the state. Green's critique of contract was to lay the basis for a quite different metaphoric construction of the state within liberalism. Here, for example, is D. G. Ritchie's version of Green : 'The State has not the mere policeman's business of stepping in to arrest the wrongdoer, not the sole function of ruthlessly enforcing the fulfilment of contracts ... but the duty of providing such an environment for individual men and women as to give *all*, as far as possible, an equal chance of realising what is best in their intellectual and moral natures'. For Beatrice Webb, looking back at this period from after World War II, this metaphoric shift was also vital to understanding the foundation of the welfare state. The need for state provision for future generations led to recognition of a new form of state—the 'housekeeping state' as distinct from the 'police state'.

The social-liberal belief in the positive duty of the state to provide a nurturing environment for individuals to develop to their fullest potential meant adding 'female' functions to the more clearly masculine protector role. There was an associated paradigm shift in the way the relationship between state and citizens was depicted. Rather than being construed in terms of contract, this was now construed as a more substantive relationship with greater affinity to the mother-child relationship.

One social liberal, the idealist Henry Jones who we have encountered on his highly successful lecture tour of Australia, provided a particularly vivid example of the mother-child metaphor while lecturing on the obligations of citizenship during World War I. He said to the young men of Merthyr, the Welsh mining village: 'I implore of you my lads to stand by your country. It has been more generous to you than your father or mother, for your fathers and mothers have been nursed on its knees and suckled on its breast'.

Despite the somewhat suspect enlistment purpose that Jones is here putting it to, the social-liberal state was understood by him to have a moral or ethical nature of the kind previously associated with the private sphere. It had a substantive nature, that could rightly engage the affective loyalties of citizens. It was not just a contractually engaged enforcer of other contracts.

Not only did the social liberals believe that the state should take on nurturing roles previously identified with women, they also believed that the state had a duty to ensure that women received equal developmental opportunities. As we have seen in other chapters, equal opportunity for women was a major theme within broader social-liberal discourse concerning equal rights of citizens to self-development. This theme was present not only within the philosophical writing but in the practical activity of Green and his followers.

For the social liberals the introduction of the ethical duty of care into the public sphere was the converse of their concern to extend values associated with the public sphere, such as autonomy and equality, into the private sphere. Social liberalism rested on a critique of the dualisms found in classical liberalism, including the disjunction between the family and the broader political community. In his textbook, *Liberalism*, L. T. Hobhouse pointed out that liberalism was concerned with the individual, the family and the state and that intervention in the family was needed to secure 'domestic liberty', for example, the full personal protection of the wife against the husband and the protection of children.

As we have seen in Chapter 4, the rights of citizenship and the claims that could be made upon the state were validated in terms of the service provided by citizens to the community. The social-liberal conception of service was gender-neutral, so that the unpaid work of women constituted an equal moral claim to any of the claims previously advanced on behalf of male citizens, including military service or property ownership.

Self-reliant citizens

In the last twenty-five years we have witnessed a revival of the concept of the minimal state together with the notion of 'self-reliant' citizens. Although the metaphor of the night watchman originated in the 19th century as a criticism of classical liberal ideas of the state, it has been appropriated and endorsed by the late American minimal state philosopher, Robert Nozick. The functions of Nozick's night-watchman state are largely restricted to the protection of existing property rights construed as exclusive rights and entitlement. The strangely archaic (but influential) contractarian model of the state provided by Nozick must be understood in the context of the Lockean liberalism which was an essential part of the founding ideology of the United States. Despite the influence of social liberalism via figures such as John Dewey and Jane Addams, minimal state theories continued to have greater centrality in the American political tradition than elsewhere.

The use of masculine metaphors for the minimal state, as in the work of Robert Nozick, coincides with the belief that the minimal state fosters the 'masculine' virtue of self-reliance in its citizens. The image of the citizen is as an essentially self-contained individual rather than the social-liberal/feminist view of the individual caught up in a web of interdependence within the community. Separation is privileged over connection, at least in the public realm. While the night watchman provides basic protection for otherwise self-reliant citizens against force or fraud, he does not intervene in market contracts in the public interest or the interest of vulnerable citizens.

The minimal state with its self-reliant citizens is a wholly male construct. In fact, as Robert Goodin has pointed out, the boundary of the 'self' contained within the concept of 'self-reliance' is drawn outside the family concealing, on the one hand, the dependence of women (and the vulnerable family members for whom they care) on a male breadwinner and, on the other hand, the reliance of the male breadwinner on the caring work performed by female family members. The terms self-reliance and independence conceal relations of dependency and interdependency within the family. The conflation of the individual and

the family serves as a vanishing trick whereby women and their non-market work disappear behind supposedly self-reliant market men.

Wives and mothers have not been expected to be 'self-reliant' and, therefore, do not really share in the characteristics required of citizens of the minimal state. For women to marry and become economically dependent on male breadwinners is seen as exemplifying the kind of contractual relationship entered into by free individuals.

There is one major exception to the complacency with which minimal state or market liberals regard the lack of self-reliance of wives and mothers. The exception consists in those cases where there is no male breadwinner and women 'marry the state' (see below). That is, while market liberals see the economic dependence of wives as either the valid accompaniment of free contractual relationships, or as an embodiment of traditional values, they have fundamental objections to women seeking alternative support from the state.

Minimal state advocates have suggested that those who are not 'self-reliant' should be denied the vote. As we have seen in earlier chapters, those in receipt of 'indoor relief' were customarily disenfranchised, and A. V. Dicey wanted this extended to those whose children received free school dinners. Even in Australia, a pioneer of universal suffrage, there were provisions until the 1920s in the Electoral Acts of NSW and Victoria restricting the franchise of those resident in benevolent institutions. More recently, Friedrich von Hayek has proposed denying the vote to all government employees, pensioners, or those in receipt of other support from government. There is a clear perception of the danger that those who are not 'self-reliant' will use the ballot box to enlarge the functions of the state, or at least to prevent retrenchment. While contemporary minimal state theorists do not make it explicit that women should be excluded from the vote, women do not fit easily into the profile of 'self-reliant' citizens. They would constitute the majority of those excluded by Hayek from the vote by reason of dependence on state benefits, and also a

high proportion of those excluded as government employees.

The unspoken assumption of much current market liberal discourse is that the way to restore self-reliance and reduce debilitating dependence on the state is to increase levels of dependency within families. Indeed one of the most significant ways in which contemporary market liberal discourse differs from classical versions is the new emphasis on the need to ‘strengthen the family’. There is an apparent intention to push back the growth, fostered by social liberalism, of individual rights of family members. While market liberals acclaim economic individualism, they are often sharply critical of ‘domestic individualism’—that is, the pursuit by women of careers. Sometimes this is explicitly stated in terms of the detrimental effects of equal employment opportunity on the availability of women to serve other family members (and the consequent growth in community services).

In the late 19th century social liberals argued that full development of the individual required engagement in social concerns beyond the household and the strengthening of the bonds of community. Today market liberalism is seeking once again to ‘strengthen the family’ as an alternative to the broader social participation of female citizens.

The regulatory ‘nanny state’

From the beginning, development of social regulation was seen by its critics as undermining the masculine principles of self-reliance. This was true from the very early days of interventionist legislation. In 1873 Sir William Harcourt was denouncing state interference as ‘grandmaternal government’—or ‘grandmotherly government’ as T. H. Green later recalled the term. Others saw such intervention as a betrayal of liberal principles and a return to pre-liberal ‘paternalism’.

Despite the anachronistic usage of the term ‘paternalism’, most commonly in the United Kingdom, the struggle for women’s suffrage strengthened the association between women

and interventionist policies. During the debate over the Women's Franchise Bill, 1887, the New Zealand Prime Minister, Robert Stout, stated:

I believe that there is only one danger in passing this Bill ... That danger is, that if we have women voters and women representatives, they would strive to extend the functions of the State. That is, I believe, the only good argument against woman franchise, and it is the strongest argument.

In fact, as a prohibitionist and opponent of sweated labour, Sir Robert Stout approved of the kind of extension of state functions he thought women would seek. He cited temperance legislation, social legislation, regulation of the hours of work, and protection of native industries as areas in which women would vote 'in the proper direction'. Looking back, Pember Reeves commented that Stout's belief that women's suffrage would lead to an extension of state functions was a 'shrewd prediction'. Stout had been converted to women's suffrage by reading Mill's essay *On the Subjection of Women*, lent to him by H. S. Chapman, the pioneer of the secret ballot in Victoria. After reading it, he had introduced a suffrage bill in 1878, the first in the world directed to giving women the right to stand for parliament as well as to vote.

Opponents of women's suffrage in New Zealand took a more jaundiced view of women's advocacy of social reform. One wrote: 'Certainly, one finds the ladies generally siding against glaring injustice, which is of course so much to the good—but then emotion in legislation is very much to be deprecated, and especially so where economic principles are in question'. The idea that women's emotionalism and attention to human consequences of market competition unfits them for legislative roles is a hardy evergreen—epitomised in the attitude towards the Australian women senators holding the balance of power during negotiations over the federal Budget in 1993.

Supporters of the minimal state have been critical of all aspects of the welfare state—including regulation, redistribution and the non-market provision of services. One of the most emotionally charged terms of opprobrium for social regulation in recent years, both in the United Kingdom and in the Murdoch press in Australia, has been the ‘nanny state’. As one commentator said of Thatcherism: ‘The disdain for the “nanny state” conveyed the view that people should be “real men” and take care of themselves. It constructed a set of dichotomies: welfare state, socialism, femininity, dependence and indulgence versus the market, *laissez-faire* values, masculinity, independence and austerity’. The nanny state is accused of being overly protective, requiring for example the wearing of seatbelts or cycle helmets or prohibiting the promotion of harmful substances such as tobacco. This protection of citizens or consumers by the state is said to be at the expense of individual autonomy and the right to judge one’s own best interests (freedom to choose). Citizens are ‘mollycoddled’ by the state and hence unable to develop the rugged individualism and risk-taking required by market liberalism.

The nanny state is clearly placing the duty of care above individual rights to choose dangerous behaviour or products. One defence of such state intervention does so with a flourish of mixed metaphors ‘Permissible Paternalism: In Defense of the Nanny State’. As noted above, British political theorists continue to use the term ‘paternalism’ to describe social regulation, even though the pressure for such regulation often comes from female-dominated consumer movements or from risk-averse ‘feminine’ values. It is interesting to note in this connection that women not only head non-government consumer organisations but also frequently hold consumer portfolios within government, and hence have direct responsibility for regulation.

Some writers do link the nanny state directly to the increased power of women. French academic and government adviser, Yves Roucaute, believes that ‘nannying’ laws restricting consumption and advertising of alcohol and tobacco, and requiring wearing of seatbelts and crash helmets are evidence of the triumph of a new matriarchy. According to

Roucaute, French women have castrated men and imposed a regime of ‘colossal political-social mothering’. Similarly an Australian journalist, Chris Uhlmann, has explained the intrusion of the state into the lives of citizens (‘from dictating social behaviour to enforcing helmet laws’) in terms of ‘in-your-face, do-as-I-say-or-else maternalism’.

A prominent Australian newspaper columnist, P. P. McGuinness, also blames women for the nanny state but uses the term idiosyncratically to mean the public provision of childcare. He is critical of ‘the belief that all women should have access to childcare facilities at public expense, wholly or partly, and that the state has the duty to act as an all-purpose Nanny, available on demand’. Here the term ‘nanny state’ is not being used in the usual sense of overprotection but more to mean the public provision of caring—another aspect of female identification of the welfare state discussed below.

Maternal principles of distribution

A major issue for market liberals, apart from nanny state regulation, has been to contest policies of redistribution. As we have seen, social liberals were promoting redistribution in the form of land taxes, wealth and income taxes from the 1880s. They were particularly concerned that ‘unearned increment’, profits deriving from social causes such as population growth and public provision of infrastructure, should be captured for social purposes. They were concerned not only by the effects of great economic inequality on the poor, but also on the rich. The answer lay in ‘taxing for justice’, through a higher rate of tax for property income as well as a progressive income tax. The proceeds were to provide public health and public education as well as pensions and other forms of welfare. The redistribution was partly a life-cycle one, transferring revenue to those in vulnerable stages of the lifecycle such as children, the elderly and widows, but it was also intended to address the gap between rich and poor and to fund equality of opportunity.

Market liberals always contested the idea of taxing for justice, arguing that it infringed

property rights, destroyed incentives, redistributed from the deserving to the undeserving and created inefficiencies. It was suspected women would favour redistribution to support the vulnerable and indeed crossnationally the initiation of the welfare state was associated with maternalist politics. Women were viewed, and often viewed themselves, as naturally inclined to subvert market principles of distribution through the public application of maternal standards of compassion and care. This theme had an honoured place in first-wave feminist thought and coincided with the kind of moral critique of political economy put forward by John Ruskin—‘the only wealth is life.’ It reappeared in second-wave feminism when, as a spokeswoman for the American National Women’s Political Caucus put it, women recognised that their private values were ‘good enough to be their public values’.

Herbert Spencer, as a proponent of the minimal state and of the survival of the fittest, opposed women’s suffrage on the grounds that an absolute opposition must be maintained between the regime of the state and that of the family. He believed that these two institutions were governed by diametrically opposed principles: mothers distributed care on the basis of incapacity, not desert, in direct contradiction to essential principles of the market. A hundred years after Spencer, Robert Nozick was carrying this argument still further, objecting to the needs principle even within the realm of the family, let alone in the state.

Sometimes even social liberals were ambivalent about maternal influence on the state. W. J. Brown, for example, whom we saw in Chapter 3 advocating industrial and other forms of regulation to ensure full and free development of each citizen, expressed fears of maternalism. He distinguished government maternalism, which he associated with excessive state aid, from government paternalism, which he associated with excessive state regulation. He believed that the spirit of maternalism was to be more anxious about

the comfort of citizens than about their strength of character, and to prize security over liberty. He saw non-contributory schemes of old age pensions as representing the dangers of maternalism.

Many suffragists, on the other hand, welcomed the advent of maternal government—what NSW suffragist Rose Scott called ‘the mother-woman’s world—the wide loving heart and sheltering arms’. In a social-liberal collection published in 1900, Zona Vallance argued that the maternal principle of distribution, meaning distribution in accordance with developmental needs rather than in accordance with some abstract and impersonal conception of justice, was intrinsic to the development of the ethical state. Ethical progress required the ‘maternalising’ of public life. Mrs Despard, leader of the Women’s Freedom League in Britain, suggested that the principle governing the well-ordered family—that the greatest tenderness be shown to the young, the weak and the ailing—would also be the principle governing the state when ‘men and women work together in harmony’.

The argument concerning the need for female participation to humanise the state was elaborated by Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf (the first woman to be awarded a Nobel Prize) in her address to the 1911 Congress of the International Women’s Suffrage Alliance. Speaking to the theme ‘The Home and the State’, Lagerlöf suggested that woman’s contribution to civilisation had been the creation of the home as a shelter for compassion and love. The man-made state, on the other hand, with its crime, misery and the menace of war, had been made without the co-operation of women. Until men and women joined hands to build the state it could not succeed. In other words, men were incapable of developing the ethical state on their own.

Many suffragists had come to the conclusion that without political rights women would not be taken seriously by politicians and their concerns would be ignored. With political rights they would be able to ensure the state directed its attention to the social evils which could only be remedied by state action. The discourse of the purifying influence of

women was common to the suffragist generation. Far away in Alberta, Nellie McClung was elected to the legislature in 1921, the same year as Edith Cowan in Western Australia. Like Cowan, McClung believed that 'just as the mother's influence as well as the father's is needed in the bringing up of children and in the affairs of the home, so are they needed in the larger home, the state'.

Suffragists seized on evidence that where women had gained political rights, improvements in the welfare of the vulnerable, such as old age pensions or the raising of the age of consent, did indeed take place. Maude Royden deployed a flourish of statistics showing that, at the beginning of World War I, New Zealand, Norway and Australia had the lowest infant death rate of countries surveyed by the Registrar-General. Other suffrage advocates pointed to the raft of child protection acts passed in the wake of the achievement of women's suffrage in the Australian States.

The public organisation of caring

Apart from regulatory and distributional questions, women were also politically engaged in another form of feminisation of the state—the extension of its functions into the public organisation of caring. Women active in voluntary social work at the beginning of the century pressed for the state to co-ordinate and support these services, including kindergartens and provision of playgrounds, child welfare, health services and hygiene as well as social work of all kinds. In other words, women played a significant role in the gradual assumption by the state of non-market caring work. A particularly fine illustration of this has been provided by Leila Simonen in her account of the creation of the municipal homemaker service in Finland. The 'invisible' welfare state was in fits and starts during the twentieth century, supplemented by more visible community services, thanks to the work of women as political agents. A number of studies have highlighted the role of women in the evolution of the Scandinavian welfare state and the public organisation of caring.

The partial transfer of women's caring work from the home to broader arenas of politics has been termed by American historian Paula Baker the 'domestication of politics'. An illustration of this process may be seen in the work of Jane Addams, the founder of Hull House in Chicago in 1889. As we have seen in Chapter 1, this was the first American settlement house, modelled on Toynbee Hall in East London which Addams had visited the year before. Hull House undertook research that led to the first factory legislation and tenement code in Illinois and provided services for its crowded immigrant neighbourhood including kindergartens, playgrounds, public baths, libraries, art gallery and an employment bureau. As we have seen in Chapter 1, this was the first American settlement house and was modelled on Toynbee Hall in East London. Domestic images were extensively used by Jane Addams in her argument that municipal politics required female participation if services, including those relating to health and cleanliness, were to be more effectively provided:

The men of the city have been carelessly indifferent to much of this civic housekeeping, as they have always been indifferent to the details of the household ... may we not say that city housekeeping has failed partly because women, the traditional housekeepers, have not been consulted as to its multiform activities?

Addams conceded that when the main functions of the state were defence against external enemies, it was appropriate for citizenship to be restricted to those who bore arms. Once the state assumed broader social responsibilities, women's help was required:

To test the elector's fitness to deal with this situation by his ability to bear arms, is absurd ... the military conception of society is remote from the functions of the school boards, whose concern it is that children be educated, that they be supplied with kindergartens and be given a decent place to play. The very multifariousness and complexity of a city government demands the help of minds accustomed to detail and variety of work, to a sense of obligation for the health and welfare of young children, and responsibility for the cleanliness and comfort of others.

The image of 'civic housekeeping' or 'housekeeping the state' was frequently appealed to by Australasian as well as American feminists during the height of social liberalism before World War I. The depiction of state responsibilities as an extension of women's work in the home conveyed the message that women's political participation was both gender-appropriate and indispensable.

The argument that because the state had taken on female functions it needed female expertise was used by Mabel Atkinson in her contribution to *The Case for Women's Suffrage*, published in London in 1907. Such arguments were particularly targeted at prominent members of the Liberal government who were committed to welfare legislation but opponents of women's suffrage. Atkinson wrote of the new involvement of the state in areas such as compulsory education, infant health, housing reform and provision of creches. She suggested that 'in adopting these reforms the State is encroaching on the traditional sphere of women, and a Government controlled solely by men, and almost exclusively administered by them, may, when dealing with children and the peculiar problems of women's lives, make very serious blunders'.

A welfare state without women could be expected to make mistakes. Specific blunders identified by Atkinson included excessive discipline imposed on primary school children and the lack of provision of affordable training for midwives. New liberal theorist L. T. Hobhouse endorsed this line of argument, suggesting the need for women's expertise became more evident as the state took on areas such as the health of children or the regulation of women's work. He argued social legislation would be increasingly hampered until women became fully part of the representative system.

Despite the demonstrated need for women's expertise, men continued to occupy the directing roles in the expanding maternal state and to define the terms on which additional functions were assumed. As Camilla Stivers has commented, a more muscular rhetoric of professionalism and efficiency soon displaced the rhetoric of social reform tainted by its

association with feminine virtue. Stivers was describing developments in the USA but this was broadly true of developments in the English-speaking world after World War I. The war itself did much to destroy confidence in the possibility of the ethical or virtuous state.

Although women often became the deliverers of human services, they did so under the direction of male bureaucrats and ministers. This, together with the sexist assumptions of much social policy, meant that by the arrival of the 'second wave' of feminism, few feminists could discern the female lineaments of the welfare state or its relationship to the first wave of the women's movement. More recently, in the contradictory context of increased female influence over social policy as well as increased hostility to the welfare state, there has been some feminist re-evaluation of the relationship between women and the welfare state.

Rejection of the breast

The market-liberal identification of the welfare state as female has drawn on the dominant construction of gender as a 'hierarchical dualism'. That is, the identification of the welfare state as female is sufficient to mark it as inferior, indulgent and irrational compared to masculine versions of the state.

As we have seen in relation to the 'nanny state', the most overt and hostile identification of the welfare state as female is to be found in populist versions of market liberalism. The following comes from a man concerned that the meaning of manhood in Australia has been eroded by the matriarchal family and the welfare state:

A general effect on our culture can be seen with our regard of government—not so much as big brother as big mother, demanding that it be the creator of jobs and securing of our economic welfare. Other countries would think government's role is to administer the country, but this fatherly image is not perceived here, rather the giver of care and succour prevails.

A related form of abuse is one that focuses on the female attribute of the breast. This portrays the welfare state as a state with breasts. Those who look to state subsidies are told to 'get off the tit' or 'off the teat'. This metaphor has been deployed by Australian Labor politicians converted to economic rationalism, by columnists and by spokesmen for free-market think tanks. It seems to derive from the Whig critique of the state as a 'milch cow' milked by its pensioners. There are also links to the symbolism of revolutionary France, such as the famous Delacroix image of Marianne, 'Liberty Leading the People'. Such symbolism focused on the breast, both as a representation of liberty and as a promise of the 'State's protection as provider, comforter and nourisher'. Neo-liberal discourse suggests that citizens must be forcibly weaned from the breast of the state in order that male citizens can become manly again. In the process the state may transmute back into its embodiment as the policeman without breasts.

As we have seen, some minimal state liberal theorists have proposed disenfranchising those dependent on the state for income support. Others, such as the American public choice theorist James Buchanan (whose views are well represented in the Australian journal *Policy*), have suggested binding the legislature with constitutional restrictions over public expenditure or the flow of milk from the public breast.

An important Australian policy manifesto of the 'reject the breast' school was the 1991 Coalition document *Fightback!* on which the 1993 federal election was contested. This document decried the growth of dependence on government and promised to help families regain their self-reliance. As Carol Johnson has pointed out, while the public sphere was to be restored as a realm of 'hard, masculine identity', it was to be clearly demarcated from the family as the 'site of feminised values of nurturing and caring'. As part of the dematernalising of the state, there was to be less redistribution to 'support other people's families'. It was suggested that such redistribution had been at the expense of the ability of the taxpayer to provide for 'his' own family. Strong measures were to be taken to end the debilitating 'culture of dependence' on the state. On the other hand, dependence within

families was to be encouraged by an increase in the dependent spouse rebate. There was once again to be a dichotomy between public values, based on individualism, competitiveness and entrepreneurship, and private values, based on the 'responsibility' of male providers and the nurturing role of female carers.

Brides of the state

The major exception to dominant metaphoric constructions of the welfare state as female occurs in relation to single mothers. Hostility towards the social entitlements of single mothers is expressed in phrases such as 'brides of the state'—a term which has appeared throughout the English-speaking world of market liberalism, up to and including ministers of the crown in the Thatcher government. According to public choice theorists, brides of the state are engaging in illegitimate rent-seeking behaviour, encouraged by benefits superior to the returns they could obtain in the market or in more traditional forms of marriage. The image of women 'marrying the state' assumes that financial provision is a male function, whether undertaken by heads of households or by the welfare state.

American minimal state proponent, George Gilder, provides an even stronger version of this by depicting the welfare state not so much as an alternative husband but as a rival who 'cuckolds' male citizens by appropriating their provider roles. Gilder's highly sexualised account of the state was influential in the White House at the time of President Reagan. On this account the state, by usurping the provider role, robs the male of his potency within the family and also removes the restraints on the antisocial expression of male sexuality outside the family. Male potency and power within the family seemingly rely on the economic dependency of women; where there is an alternative source of economic support men are disempowered.

The images of 'brides of the state' and of the state cuckolding husbands clearly run counter to the dominant metaphoric constructions of the welfare state we have discussed, such as the nurturing mother or the mollycoddling nanny. They draw attention to the sex

of the main beneficiaries of the welfare state and suggest that this kind of state becomes the illegitimate rival of male citizens.

Conclusion

The neo-liberal upsurge of the last quarter of the twentieth century and the neo-liberal case against the welfare state have gained much of their emotional force from a subtext which is highly gendered. Whereas social liberalism conveyed the promise of more autonomy within the private sphere and more caring values in the public sphere, neo-liberalism depicts the results of social liberalism as a loss of masculinity—through ‘overprotection’ by the state in the public sphere and usurpation of male roles in the private sphere. The growth of community services and improved income support for sole parents, largely in response to the demands of women, is depicted as a burden which stands in the way of male provider roles. Male taxpayers should not have to pay for other men’s children (or parents).

The metaphoric identification of the welfare state as female helps fuel resentment on the part of those rendered insecure by rapid social change. The concept of the ethical or welfare state is depicted as incompatible with self-reliant masculinity, and indeed as emasculating. Real men have to break away from ‘mother’ and require only a referee or a policeman to ensure that the rules are observed in a world where they test themselves against other men. Real men are not entangled in the web of interdependence which is revealed by social-liberal and feminist accounts of citizenship. They belong to that simpler world of ‘man against the state’.