

Gender, the Right Wing, and the "Body Politic"

Maynooth University Department of Geography invites you to attend a seminar by:

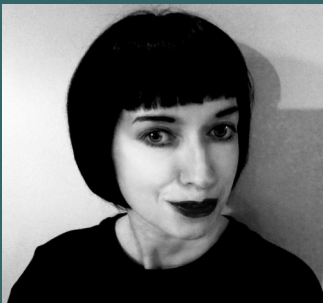
Prof. Lisa Downing

Department of Modern Languages
University of Birmingham

Date: April 18th

Time: 3.00pm —5.00pm

NOTE—Location: **Class Hall J, Arts Building**



The post-Brexit, post-Trump climate in the EU has seen a series of challenges from the Right Wing of politics to the liberal consensus of recent years (e.g. the rise of Gert Wilders in the Netherlands and the increased support for Alternativ für Deutschland in the 2017 German election). This lecture will offer a comparative focus on two recent political challengers from the Right who are female: Marine Le Pen, the leader of the Front national in France, and Anne Marie Waters, the Irish-born, Islam-critical candidate who stood for the UKIP leadership

in the UK in 2017, and has since set up her own fledging party "For Britain". It will focus on media coverage of, and self-representation by, these two figures. Using a jointly feminist and Foucauldian framework, I will show how the discourse of the "Right" and "Left" wings has, historically, been gendered, on the basis of assumptions that women are "naturally" more inclined towards consensus-building, collectivity, and compassion (and therefore Left-wing politics), by dint of their biological function as child-bearers and traditional gender role as care-givers. Right-leaning women have been treated as anomalies or categorical errors, both by feminist political analysts and the mainstream media. The existence of second-wave feminist Andrea Dworkin's book-length work on *Right Wing Women* (1983) and the more recent edited collection of the same name by Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power (2013) suggests the extent to which such figures have been seen as problems in need of explanation for feminists. Mainstream coverage of Right-wing women on the other hand often seeks to understand their politics by measuring the distance between their femininity and corporeality on the one hand, and their ideas on the other (so a woman who leads by appealing to the archetype of "mother of the nation" is legible, while other styles of female political leadership are not). By reading recent accounts and representations of and by Le Pen and Waters in terms of their focus on normative and abnormal versions of femininity and leadership, we will see how the imaginary construct of the "Body Politic" in the 21st century remains both strikingly and normatively gendered. The material in this lecture is drawn from the work being carried out for my current major project: a book on "Selfish Women".

Department of Geography Seminar Series

All are welcome

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