The body politic

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The Body Politic: Gender, The Right Wing, and "Identity Category Violations"

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Abstract

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 article examines the gendering and embodiment of the new far right in France and the UK. It offers a comparative focus on two recent political challengers from the right who are female: Marine Le Pen (born 1968), the leader of the *Front national* in France since 2011, and Anne Marie Waters (born 1977), the Islam-critical candidate who was runner-up for the UKIP (UK Independence Party) leadership in the UK in 2017, and who has since started her own political party, "For Britain". It focuses on media coverage of, and self-representation by, these two figures. It argues that 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, both by feminist political analysts and the mainstream media. Feminist concerns over the very existence of right-wing women is suggested by books such as second-wave feminist Andrea Dworkin's *Right-Wing Women* (1983), the more recent edited collection by Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power, also called *Right Wing Women* (2013), and, in the French context, Claudie Lesselier and Fiametta Venner's *L'extrême droite et les femmes* (1997). Le Pen and Waters appear as doubly aberrant, doubly exceptional figures – firstly as (far) right-wing *women* and secondly as (far) right-wing female *leaders*. The article considers the stakes of our categorical understandings of (gendered and political) identity more broadly. Specifically, by introducing the original critical concept of "identity category violation", it analyses the ways in which the recent trend for identity politics on the left in the West, often under the banner of "intersectionality", leads to over-simplified understandings of

how categories of gendered, sexual, class, and race-based identities are assumed to determine political affiliation.

Introduction

Right-wing women in modern Western culture have been treated as anomalies or as categorical problems, both by mainstream commentators and by feminism. Mainstream coverage of right-wing women often seeks to understand their politics by measuring the distance between their femininity and corporeality on the one hand, and their politics on the other. The obsessive media focus on Margaret Thatcher's ultra-feminine hair and dress and the contrast they presented with her bellicose policies throughout the 1980s offers ample illustrations of this (See: Rose, 1988; Downing, 2014).[1] Simultaneously, feminist concerns over the very existence of right-wing women is suggested by books such as second-wave feminist Andrea Dworkin's *Right-Wing Women* (1983), the more recent edited collection by Paola Bacchetta and Margaret Power, also called *Right-Wing Women* (2013), and, in the French context, Claudie Lesselier and Fiametta Venner's *L'extrême droite et les femmes* (1997).

Right-wing women may appear as a problem or puzzle to be solved precisely because "The Right" and "The Left", broadly understood, tend to be thought of as 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. Women tend to be viewed as a class; men as individuals. This explains why exceptional women more generally – where exceptionality could signify political inappropriateness, forceful leadership, outstanding excellence, or physical

2

violence – are constituted as a problem; too "self-ful"[2] to conform to cultural rules about what women are supposed to be. It is worth noting that even feminist discourse uses the term "exceptional" (as in "exceptional woman syndrome") to connote something negative – those successful women who fail to pull other women up with them (Downing, 2014). Attempting to explain why, in the UK, the Conservative Party has had two female Prime Ministers while Labour has never had a female leader, MP Jess Phillips has argued that while C/conservative women are happy to leave the status quo intact if they get a chance to lead, left-wing women would be more likely to want to change society for the good of *all* women – which male left-wing men may not permit (Rodger, 2017).

Yet, obviously, not all right-identifying women see themselves as arch individualists or as leaders. Andrea Dworkin set out to discover why so many women in the USA of the 1980s voted for right-wing candidates when this seemed to go directly against their interests, given the often anti-woman leanings of US right-wing politics with its religious prohibitions, attempts to control reproductive freedoms, and disapproval of women in leadership roles. Surely such features should have proved unattractive to most women? Dworkin argues, however, that in a patriarchy the game of politics *tout court* is rigged against women. The left wing brings an *illusion* of sexual freedom, but only in male-dominated patriarchal terms, while the right – including the far right – may appeal to women precisely because it promises to limit the damage (sexual harm) to which women are exposed:

> As long as the sex-class system is intact, huge numbers of women will believe that the right offers them the best deal: the highest reproductive value; the best protection against sexual aggression; the best economic security as the economic dependents of men who must provide; the most reliable

> protection against battery; the most respect. (Dworkin, 1983:
> 234.)

Dworkin argues that women are attracted towards right-wing politics on the basis of

promises of protection from male harm – and specifically from the "other": the

immigrant male, the outsider. This is a smokescreen, of course, since most harm that

comes to women happens within the domestic sphere (Dworkin, 1983: 232).

Here, as in many of Dworkin's books, the world evoked as "patriarchy" is a

totalitarian condition of male ownership of women in which the stakes of feminist

liberation are high – in fact, the stakes are survival. While many would find

Dworkin's second-wave politics unpalatable or irrelevant today, it is instructive to

consider the degree to which her analysis still resonates.

This rhetoric of "protection from the other", for example, can be seen still to

feature heavily in the language and logic deployed to appeal to the voter by the right,

and particularly the far right. The recent emergence of a wave of US alt-right women

bloggers calling themselves "tradwives" suggests this. Their blogs blend a

romanticization of traditional female gender roles and behaviours – obedience in

marriage, homemaking, modest 1950s-style dress, family values – with a discourse of

white supremacy and the imperative to produce white babies (in terms that are

disturbingly reminiscent of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale,* 1985). One

"tradwife" has claimed that "traditionalism does 'what feminism is supposed to do' in

preventing women from being made into 'sexual objects' and treated 'like a whore'"

(Kelley, 2018). This suggests that the ideas noted by Dworkin (and presaged by

Atwood's creation of the authoritarian Gilead) in the 1980s persist in our present

moment. Our present moment is, of course, the post-Brexit, post-Trump climate,

which has seen a recent growth of the far right across Europe, as in America, marked,

for example, by the rise of Gert Wilders in the Netherlands, a serious challenge from the *Front national* in France in the 2017 election, and the increased support for *Alternativ für Deutschland* in the German election of the same year.

Taking these observations as background, this article will examine specifically the gendering and embodiment of the new right wing in France and the UK. It will offer a comparative focus on two recent political challengers from the right who are female: Marine Le Pen (born 1968), the leader of the *Front national* in France since 2011, and Anne Marie Waters (born 1977), the Islam-critical candidate who was runner-up for the UKIP (UK Independence Party) leadership in 2017, and who has since started her own political party, "For Britain". I shall examine how these two female leaders fit – or fail to fit – in a political tradition in which women have long been seen as helpmeets rather than leaders, and therefore who are doubly aberrant, doubly exceptional figures – firstly as (far) right-wing *women* and secondly as (far) right-wing female *leaders*. I will then consider the stakes of our categorical understandings of (gendered and political) identity more broadly. Specifically, by introducing the original critical concept of "identity category violation", I will analyse the ways in which the recent trend for identity politics on the left in the West, leads to over-simplified understandings of how categories of gendered, sexual, class, and race-based identities are assumed to determine political affiliation. The violation of legible identity categories demonstrates the need to re-examine both recently entrenched ideas of personal identity politics and the long-standing associations of the "Left"-"Right" model in the 21st century.

The Body Politic and Right-Wing French Female Activists

Politics has always been gendered and embodied in a number of ways. The medieval metaphor of the "body politic", or in French *le corps-état*, comprises the population of a particular country considered as a single entity, or as the organs of a single body. This idea is found in the work of French poet and court writer Christine de Pizan, particularly in *Le Livre du corps de policie* (1407). Representations of the continent or the nation state as a specifically sexed and gendered body also have a long history. The continent of Europe has as its embodiment Europa, a raped female body. France, of course, has Marianne, personification of justice and freedom and is also often symbolised, especially for Nationalists (about which more later), by Jeanne d'Arc. And Great Britain has Britannia, a female warrior holding aloft a trident and a shield. The personified figures of France and Britain, then, are women, but they are exceptional women: warrior figures. Yet, often the personifications of nations are also metaphorically evoked as mothers, both drawing on the notion of one's homeland as a "motherland"/ *terre maternelle* and appealing to the collective male instinct to protect the same. (The rhetoric of "keeping those others off our land" goes hand-in-hand with "keeping those others from violating 'our women'", as a feature of the xenophobic ideology of many far-right parties.) The extended metaphor of the-land-as-a-woman and woman-as-the-land is picked up in Dworkin's analysis in *Right-Wing Women*. She writes of the so-called "farming model" by which men control women, whereby "women as a class [are] planted with male seed and harvested; women [are] used for the fruit they bear, like trees." (Dworkin, 1983: 174). Hence we have the notion of "husbandry" – the verb "to husband" meaning "to plow for the purpose of growing crops" (Dworkin, 1983: 184).

Actual, real-life, fleshy women in politics – not being mythical heroines or symbols, but being understood in the context of these – face a series of contradictory

expectations in a patriarchal society and in politics. It is instructive to assess these in the context of the history of women in the French *Front national* prior to Marine Le Pen's election as leader, which came in 2011. The party that would become the *Front national* was founded in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen. From the outset, the language used by J-M Le Pen about women and female bodies was at once idealized and derogatory. Le Pen metaphorized France as a "fiancée savoureuse", a promised land that might be attainable if the perceived risks of migration and moral degeneration could be averted (Lallemand, 1997 [1991]: 98). Yet, while the woman-land of France was seen as virginal, pure, and desirable, the actions of actual Frenchwomen were often criticized as tainted and prone to disappointment. This is seen in J-M Le Pen's emotive description of abortion as "une genocide antifrançaise" and the French women who terminated pregnancies as propagating "une culture de mort". (Alduy & Wahnich, 2015: 54).

Yet, simultaneously, the presence of women has featured heavily in *Front national* propaganda in a number of ways and to a number of ends, many of which evoke the iconography and symbolism of woman-as-nation-state (so woman-as-body) or woman-as-mythical-warrior. In an essay included in Bacchetta and Power's collection, Claudie Lesselier identifies a number of functions of an activist woman in the *Front national*, and in far-right French propaganda more generally, which support this inherently contradictory expectation. In 1985, Jean-Marie Le Pen insisted in an interview on "femme et politique", published in *National Hebdo* that the fact that some women, including his daughters, worked on behalf of the party proved that the *FN* was not a party that excluded women. He also insisted upon their devotion to the national heroine Saint Joan of Arc, equalled only by the important role the party recognised in the mother. (Lesselier, 2002: 115.) Since 1987, the *FN* has held a

demonstration every year on 1 May, the day commemorating Joan of Arc, "a figure who seamlessly combines religious, national, military, and feminine thematics, and thus introduces the idea of woman as a fighter" (Lesselier, 2002: 114).

Lesselier argues that a primary function *FN* women have been called upon to fill is that of embodying "The Party-as-Family". This describes the notion that members are encouraged to feel as if they belong to a "countersociety", organised as a family (Lesselier, 2002: p. 116). In the annual 1 May demonstration in 1990, a number of *FN* women marched with their children, or pushed baby carriages that were empty, to symbolise the decreasing birth rate and the idea that French women were failing to do their duty. Jean-Marie Le Pen greeted them with the words: "Femmes d' Europe! Vous êtes charme et fécondité" (Lesselier, 2002: p. 117). So, notwithstanding the political agency these women expressed by marching in a demonstration, they were effectively reduced by the leader of the party they supported to their sexual and maternal functions.

(Fig. 1. Front national poster 1989-1990)

Women have also been charged throughout the FN's history with providing a 'good image' for it, as the party has worked hard to undo its reputation for machismo. Between 1989 and 1990, a poster with the caption 'Le Front Nationale, c'est vous!' (Fig. 1) was used to recruit to the party. It shows a wholesome family, comprising a blonde-haired, Caucasian mother and her identikit daughters, designed to soften the party's image by suggesting that this mother is the type of FN voter you might meet at the school gate or in the *boulangerie*, and suggesting also, along the lines of Andrea Dworkin's analysis, that these precious females of France are precisely whom the FN will protect from the incursion of non-white immigrants, societal degeneration and threats to traditional Catholic family values. Although relatively little specific attention was paid to policing the behaviour of immigrant and non-white French women until the *affaire du foulard* of November 1989 (See Kofman, 1997: 101), it is notable that the Islamisation of France was a widespread concern that the Front national was able to play on, both explicitly and by suggestion, throughout the 1980s. The front cover of *Le Figaro* of 26 October 1985 asks "Serons-nous encore français dans 30 years?" and shows a bust of Marianne traduced by veiling. The ostentatious European blondeness of the women depicted in the Front National poster (Fig. 1), in tandem with its notably 1950s-style advertising aesthetic, offers a nostalgic image of the acceptable French female citizen and works to preclude and erase a parallel image of the – unacceptable – head-scarf-wearing Muslim French woman.

In all of these uses, women appear as *symbols*, and self-contradictory ones. They are warriors or homemakers and nothing in between. Often, they are little more than impregnable chattle to be protected by the good men of France. Yet, much is also expected of them. The burden placed on a female activist to fulfil a number of – incompatible and rigid – roles is summarised by Lesselier as follows.

> Women activists are supposed to demonstrate … that they can reconcile the traditional image of femininity and, when possible, motherhood, with a salaried job and political duties, as well as legitimise their political involvement as a family responsibility even when it clearly does not correspond to the reality of their motivations. (Lesselier, 2002: 118)

Marine Le Pen and French Femininity

The election of Marine Le Pen to President of the *Front national* in 2011 was marketed as heralding a change of tone and style for the Party. Brigitte Beauzamy writes that it was dressed up as: "a sign of the party's modernization and renunciation of its roots – be they fundamentalist Catholic and counter-revolutionary or fascist" (Beauzamy, 2013: 182). And as Alduy and Wahnich point out in their linguistic study of Marine Le Pen's use of political language: "elle ne manque pas de rappeler régulièrement qu'elle est elle-même mère de trois enfants, divorcée, et qu'elle travaille" (Alduy and Wahnich, 2015: 53). Marine Le Pen has insisted on marketing herself as ideologically more culturally liberal than the party's previous official position with regard to issues including abortion, gay rights, and the condemnation of anti-semitism (albeit often by omission of comment on these issues, rather than by direct statements of support for them). Yet, some traditional *Front national* themes remain strong in her language, including her critique of European integration, a strong nationalist stance, and finally a deep suspicion of Islam (but, notably, by adopting for the first time in *FN* rhetoric the language of "la laïcité" which has historically been a theme of the left). (See: Beauzamy, 2013: 182; Scrinzi, 2017.)

Yet, Le Pen's self-presentation and the cultural and media understanding of her extend, in a number of significant ways, the discourses around women on the far

right articulated by Lesselier. A typical article in *Le Lab politique* of 5 July 2015 focuses on Marine's trajectory from "la fille de Jean-Marie" to the "mère de famille", where the family is the party and (aspirationally) the nation (De Violet, 2015). The article charts her desire to stake her claim to the future of the party and to re-make it in her image, consigning her father to the past, opening with the words: "Marine Le Pen en a un peu marre qu'on la ramène sans cesse à son statut de 'fille de'". And a section of the recent biography of Marine Le Pen is entitled "'Fifille' coupe le cordon", emphasising at once the desire and the difficulty of being "l'héritière [qui] s'émancipe" (Rosso, 2011: 31). Her persona, then, seems constrained to that of a moveable player within a family romance. Where the age-old epic story of the singular male hero would involve killing the father in order to take his place as chief patriarch, Marine can move only from the role of daughter to the role of mother. She is thus not fully allowed to be a self-defined individual, but limited by the language of biological female roles and playing on the stereotypical notion discussed by Lesselier that feminine political ambition is modelled on domestic/ family dynamics. In a recent article on the *Front national*'s attitudes to women under Marine Le Pen, Francesca Scrinzi has argued persuasively that, while the association between woman and mother remains strong for the party, its female leader has attempted to nudge its members from seeing women as "mothers of the nation" to seeing them as "working mothers" (Scrinzi, 2017).

Marine Le Pen thus embodies a gendered hybrid of roles or archetypes representing both tradition and reform. She is "maternal figure", "Joan of Arc-style warrior", and "modern working woman" in one. Her blog, a slick piece of marketing, has the tag line on its home page: "Je suis une femme libre, une mère, une Française et j'ai choisi de m'engager pour mon pays" (http://carnetsdesperances.fr/marine-le-

accessed 28 June 2018). Marine Le Pen, then, treads a difficult line that no male political leader would ever have to tread between being the exceptional individual leader she seems to want to be and carefully playing to the persistent *FN* stereotypes of the good female activist rooted in ideas of family, biology and maternity. Yet it is evident that while she feels discomfort with this limitation, she does not explicitly address the all-pervading sexism at the heart of politics. Indeed, when discussing "La parité des sexes" in the context of all-female quotas in political parties in a discussion sponsored by Sciences Po and *Elle* magazine in 2012, she argues for individual merit – for women competing on a par with men – in the political sphere, such that the best candidate regardless of sex should always be appointed to a given position. Marine Le Pen states:

> Je pense que notre république et nos valeurs sont très claires.
> On accède à tel ou tel poste en fonction de son mérite. Ni en
> fonction de son sexe, ni en fonction de la couleur de son peau,
> ni en fonction de ses origines. Ni dans un sens ni dans l'autre,
> d'ailleurs. On ne peut pas vous le refuser en raison de cela,
> mais vous n'êtes pas censé avoir un avantage en raison de ses
> spécificités.
> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_6kz6yaZOg, my
> transcription, accessed 28 June 2018.)

Le Pen argues here that, in terms of political representation, there should be no difference between people with regard to their sex, ethnic origins, religion etc., they should be judged as individuals only on their ability to do the job. The claims for individualism and meritocracy may, however, ring a little hollow from one who has essentially inherited her position from her father. She further argues that quotas of the kind discussed are in violation of the notion of the universal subject of the republic.

The dearly beloved concept of the universal republican subject on which the French state is founded is indeed at odds with notions such as positive discrimination or quotas ensuring female representation. Yet, just as Marine Le Pen's claims of

meritocracy sit uncomfortably with the realities of nepotism, so, as many feminists

have pointed out over the years, France is a hyper-gendered culture, such that women

are culturally conditioned to perform roles that are deemed proper to their sex and that

do not always fit well with the subject of universal republicanism, who is modelled on

a white French man (See: Lépinard and Mazur, 2008). It is precisely in the context of

the persistence of belief in the universal subject of republicanism and the

contradictory demand for women's extreme compliance with femininity, I would

contend, that the open letter published in *Le Monde* on 9 January 2018, written by a

number of high profile women including Catherine Deneuve, can be understood. This

letter – a response to the campaign of #metoo or, in French, #balancetonporc, defends

the right of men to pursue seduction clumsily. The letter is headed "Nous défendons

une liberté d'importuner, indispensable à la liberté sexuelle". Particularly striking is

the following passage:

> Une femme peut, dans la même journée, diriger une équipe
> professionnelle et jouir d'être l'objet sexuel d'un homme, sans
> être une « salope » ni une vile complice du patriarcat. Elle
> peut veiller à ce que son salaire soit égal à celui d'un homme,
> mais ne pas se sentir traumatisée à jamais par un frotteur dans
> le métro, même si cela est considéré comme un délit. Elle peut
> même l'envisager comme l'expression d'une grande misère
> sexuelle voire comme un non-événement. (Par collectif, *Le
> Monde*, 2018)

This statement shows how 21st-century French women are expected to fulfil a series

of very rigidly drawn – and incompatible to the point of cognitive dissonance-

inducing – roles. Crucially, none of these roles are merely that of *individual human*

being with her own tastes and life projects, and only half of them are also expected of

men, who are permitted to be citizens and public actors without also having to worry

about their physical desirability as an object. What is especially noteworthy is the

degree to which this demanding, coerced cultural femininity is naturalized as inherent to women both in this letter by concerned French women *and* in the far-right French discourses explored in the previous section. As Eleanor Kofman has pointed out, the far-right women's movement *UFRAM* (the *Union féminine pour le respect et l'aide à la maternité*) interpreted "real feminism" as "the defence of a feminine nature." (Kofman, 1997: 102). The rhetoric of the far right is the rhetoric of patriarchy itself writ large, and without its benign and faux-egalitarian mask. Along these lines, it is worth reminding ourselves that the French language has no separate words for the biological term "female", and the gender "feminine" for human beings. (The word "femelle" is only applied to nonhuman animals and "feminité" indicates embodied experience as much as gender role). Femininity *is* femaleness in French, suggesting much about the French understanding of women's experience, since what can be expressed in a language so obviously conditions what can be thought and lived.

Anne Marie Waters and "Identity Category Violation"

To illustrate further the complexity of, and apparent contradictions inherent in, the category of the right-wing woman leader, I turn now to consideration of a limit example: Anne Marie Waters, who ran for the leadership of UKIP in 2017 and now leads her own fledgling political party "For Britain". Waters, who had previously set up the group "Sharia Watch" to attempt to monitor and raise awareness of the existence and activities of Sharia courts in the UK, ran for UKIP leader on an explicitly anti-Islam ticket. This divided the party membership and saw her denounced by the former leader Nigel Farage as racist, Islamophobic, and likely to lead to the destruction of the party if she won (Roberts, 2017). Waters came in second,

being narrowly defeated by Henry Bolton, a virtual unknown. (Bolton was then himself – ironically – forced out of his position following the coming-to-light of racist comments made by his girlfriend Jo Marney about Meghan Markle. (See: Quin, 2018.))

Waters is a fascinating political phenomenon. An Irish-born lesbian feminist, former Labour activist, and ardent anti-Islamist, it is striking that she as an individual, and her set of political values, fail to fit any of the roles and stereotypes expected of, and taken up by, the far-right-wing female activists identified by Lesselier in the French context, and also fail to add up as an easily understandable or consistent political package in the UK context. To analyse how Waters signifies – or fails to signify – in the field of political meaning-making *and* gender meaning-making, I want to borrow, analogously, a concept from linguistics, that of category violation. A famous example of category violation in the linguistics sense is Noam Chomsky's sentence:

> "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously." (Chomsky, 2002
> [1957]: 15)

This sentence obeys grammatical and syntactical rules pertaining to adjectives, adverbs, nouns and verbs, but it is nonsense in terms of meaning, because the adjectives chosen contradict each other and the adverb is not appropriate to the verb it describes, confounding our expectations. If we transpose this concept from syntax and grammar to the codification of identity politics and identificatory labels, we arrive at a critical concept that I will call *identity category violation*. This concept may be used to describe exceptional women who occupy leadership roles in political organisations

in general, since as Lesselier writes: "all women politicians are confronted with questions about how they reconcile their feminine and political responsibilities" (Lesselier, 2002: 118). In the case of Waters, the Chomskyesque formulation to convey the category violation she embodies would read something like:

> Irish-born, British-nationalist lesbian leads anti-Islam party feministically.

Here, then, we see an example of identity category violation on steroids, *à la puissance treize.*

To illustrate the extent to which Waters herself seems uncomfortably aware of the identity category violation she embodies, we can turn to one of the regular Facebook Live videos that Waters posts. The style of Waters's media persona in these vlog messages to her followers is very casual and direct, lacking the polish and sheen of Marine Le Pen's blog and carefully managed online presence, and attempting to create a sense of directness and intimacy. The transcript below comes from a 58.52-minute-long vlog published online on 13 December 2017. In this section of video, Waters discusses the fact that the American right-wing *provocatrice* and social commentator Ann Coulter has once again trolled the public by stating she would prefer that women – especially liberal women – did not have the right to vote. Many of Anne Marie's "For Britain" followers supported Coulter's point and wanted their leader to share their views, prompting the visibly tortured, earnest rejoinder she makes in this vlog:

> A lot of people have criticised me for this, and that's perfectly
> fine, I'm perfectly willing to take people's criticisms. But I'm

also perfectly free to stand my own ground and stand by my principles. Look, when I criticise people like Laurie Penny, for example, or other so-called feminists, for being complete and utter hypocrites about the treatment of women in Muslim countries, what if she – or any of them, not just Laurie Penny - were to come back to me and say "but look, Ann Coulter says that women shouldn't be allowed to vote, so if you don't condemn that, who is the hypocrite here?" And she'd have a point. You know people can say that it is a joke, or what have you, but it's not. Ann Coulter has repeatedly stated that, in her ideal society, women would not be allowed to vote. Now, if I hold Jihadists to account, and I criticise Jihadists for their ideal society being a dark place of tyranny where women have no say, then I am going to criticise others when they say the same thing. It's called consistency and it's called principle. (https://www.facebook.com/amwaters0/videos/192297209802 0046/ my transcription, accessed 28 June 2018.)

Waters grapples womanfully in the video with the tension between her own sense of consistency and the contradictions they represent. As someone who claims to critique Islamic fundamentalism largely on feminist and pro-lesbian and gay grounds (specifically the protection of girls and women's rights), but obviously attracts to her message the more traditional and hard-right male ex-UKIP voter, who is likely to have as little time for gay and lesbian concerns and for feminism as he would have for Islamism, she constantly and precariously has to tread a fine line between her distinct ideological interests.

The case of Anne Marie Waters – an extreme case in which the various identity categories and affiliations we would expect to see together in the same person are radically disrupted – demonstrates in a particularly acute way that our notion that we can both understand and predict reliably the categorization of political identity as it is imbricated with the other identity categories of sex, gender, sexuality, nationality, etc., is deeply flawed. Even in the case of Le Pen, who adheres much more closely in her rhetoric to Lesselier's category of far-right-wing female activist than Waters (perhaps in part owing to the specificity of the French context), there is evidence of

the violation of identity categories, in so far as she who should be helpmeet or daughter now leads the Party, and her own lifestyle choices (divorced, a single mother) do not align exactly with the traditional values and role imagined for a right-wing woman.

Some Concluding Remarks: Coming Full Circle

What is especially noteworthy is that, unlike in their strictly linguistics sense, sociologically and philosophically speaking, *identity* category violations may show up the instability, or flimsiness, or fictional quality, of the rules that govern them. In this case, those rules pertain to the reification of "identity". Thinking in these terms may suggest that the movement towards a greater focus on identity politics in recent years, including the notion of "intersectionality" within feminism and its extreme occasional outcome of producing a so-called "hierarchy of oppression", may not be an unambiguously edifying or progressive political undertaking, despite being a dominant discourse of the left in multiple countries.[3] With its exhortations to check one's privilege, centre others in one's politics, and ex-communicate those who reject these prescriptions, there is a disturbingly authoritarian underpinning to this ideology. While this is a larger subject, deserving of more space than I have to give to it here, I would nevertheless emphasize that I have deliberately drawn on a second-wave, radical, and therefore class-analysis-based feminist – Andrea Dworkin – to frame this article, rather than a postmodernist or third-wave feminist. This is not only because Dworkin wrote a book which analyses right-wing women, but because the branch of feminism she represents understood (much as a Foucauldian analysis understands, albeit using a radically different frame of analysis), that the classes to which

individuals are allocated – and the supposed nature of those in said classes – have

much to do with the interests of the ones doing the allocating, categorising, and

defining. These cannot be uniquely understood as some, very recent, identity politics

claims would have it, on the basis of identification and self-identification of

oppression alone. Further, what too much recent, third-wave intersectional feminism

demands, I would argue, is the same kind of being-for-the-other that much

mainstream patriarchal discourse already demands of those in "class woman". What is

needed is an awareness of *individuality,* separated from adherence to narrow group

interests and the ontologization of oppression, and an ongoing and sophisticated

class-based awareness of the way in which power continues to function.

And so I have come full circle and will close with another quotation from

Dworkin's *Right Wing Women*:

> Women desperately try to embody a male-defined feminine
> ideal because survival depends upon it. The ideal, by
> definition, turns a woman into a function, deprives her of any
> individuality that is self-serving or self-created […] Like the
> chameleon, the woman must blend into her environment,
> never calling attention to the qualities that distinguish her.
> (Dworkin, 1983: 19)

By reading accounts and self-representations of Le Pen and Waters in terms of their

presentation of their gender and their politics, and their claims for an individuality

that is not identical with the labels ascribed to them, we have seen how the imaginary

construct of the representative of the "body politic" in the twenty-first century

remains both strikingly and normatively gendered, in ways that do not map on to the

lived reality of the female political agents in question. We have also seen how living

as a multifaceted human being while female risks perpetrating identity category

violations, resulting in a lack of legibility, that doing the same while male would not –

or at least not to the same extent, since men have always been allowed to be complex

individuals.

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Notes:

[1] The undue media focus on female politicians' appearance, especially clothes and make-up, is not, of course, limited to right-wing leaders. Joyce Marie Mushaben calls

this phenomenon "lipstick watch" and notes its prominence in coverage of Hillary Clinton, Condoleeza Rice, and the subject of her study, Angela Merkel (Mushaben, 2017: 21).

[2] I use this term, first coined in my Inaugural Lecture (Downing, 2014), to signify the opposite of "selfless", i.e. what women are traditionally supposed to be. The linguistically jarring nature of the neologism is intended to reflect the ontologically jarring nature of the very concept it is designed to describe.

[3] The idea of "intersectionality" probably originates with the writings of US legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. Her influential article of 1989 set out to show that employers in the USA, including General Motors, were discriminating against black women not only on the grounds of sex, as they employed white women in customer-facing roles, and not only on the grounds of race, as they employed black men on the factory floor, but because of the particular – intersecting – axis of sexism and racism that black women alone face (Crenshaw, 1989.) For an overview of how intersectionality has since developed, been deformed, and now manifests in a range of national and linguistic contexts, see Bilge (2009).

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