

Inspirations: Jess Phillips MP at the University of Reading (16th November 2017)

By Dr Madeleine Davies (Department of English Literature)

Jess Phillips MP gave a talk at the University of Reading on 16th November and reminded everyone present of the need to fight for social justice, fairness, and equality. The event was very well attended and students, colleagues and members of the local community listened carefully as the MP explained her beliefs and her work. The event was live-streamed and a Twitter feed supplied a steady flow of sound-bites from the talk: ‘women pay the price [of government cuts] and men reap the benefits’ was one of the re-tweeted comments.



Students led the questions and the MP replied to challenges with wit and good sense: her integrity was clear as was her fundamental faith in our capacity to make vital changes in our society and within all of our contexts. Jess’s laser-like intelligence and her sense of compassion threaded through all her comments.

The talk and the Q&A section was followed by a book-signing for her recent book *Everywoman* (kindly organised by Blackwell): Jess’s sales topped those of any of our previous speakers.



The MP spent a great deal of time talking to guests at the event, and posing for photographs. It can sometimes be difficult to hold on to faith in politicians but Jess Phillips reminded us that there are many MPs who really are motivated by beliefs and core values that transcend party politics.

Dr Mark Shanahan led the Q&A section that followed the talk, and we would both like to thank Jess Phillips MP for giving us her time and for inspiring so many in the

audience. She is a hero I’m delighted to have met and I hope that many in the audience will follow the invaluable advice she gives in *Everywoman*: ‘Tell the world what you care about, because it makes them care too, and we need people like you to speak up.’