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‘Breeder for race and nation’: gender, sexuality and fecundity in post-war British fascist discourse

SCOTT BURNETT  AND JOHN E. RICHARDSON 

ABSTRACT Burnett and Richardson’s paper has two related aims. First, it develops a model of how gender is articulated within fascist and other far-right discourses based on a review of the relevant scholarship. This model is presented in the first section. Researchers have in the past suggested a gap, or even a wilful ignorance, of gender in studies of the far right, and claimed that the topic is ‘neglected’ and ‘under-researched’. This gap is to some extent held open by disciplinary, historical and definitional boundaries that work fractally to split inquiry. Burnett and Richardson have thus read the literature in a kaleidoscopic fashion, including analysis across different historical periods and country contexts, to examine how gender surfaces in various ‘fascist’ discourses. This approach covered psychoanalytical, discourse analytical, historical, art historical, literary, political and anthropological approaches to gender and fascism. The second aim of the paper is to show how the model proposed is brought into relief in a particular country context: that of the United Kingdom since the Second World War. Gender in post-war British fascism has been the subject of several important studies, though none of them have specifically traced the textual journey of key ideas and themes related to gender in mediatized far-right discourse. Building on a discourse-historical analytic approach to the development of fascist politics of this period, Burnett and Richardson argue that paying attention to gender in fascist discourse is a useful lens through which to analyse the local and historical contingencies that make one fascist discursive formation differ from another.

KEYWORDS British fascism, far-right discourse, fascism, fecundity, gender, post-war Britain, sexuality

We speak in the name of the race, which demands ardent males and inseminated females.¹

Rigid articulations of sex and gender, of sexuality and, especially, of fecundity, are fundamental to the racist imaginaries of far-right and

- 1 F. T. Marinetti, ‘Contro il lusso femminile’, 11 March 1920, in F. T. Marinetti, *Futurismo e Fascismo* (Foligno: Franco Campitelli Editore 1924), 204–6 (206), quoted in English translation in Barbara Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press 1996), 12.

fascist discourse. The demographic threat of racialized Others often features in rationalizations for racist atrocities, such as misogynistic fantasies about socialists and women allowing Muslims to ‘swamp’ Europe (expressed by the perpetrator of the Utøya massacre in 2011),² white Americans being ‘replaced’ by other races as part of a Jewish plot (which ‘united’ the right in Charlottesville in 2018),³ and the Christchurch mass murderer’s repetition of ‘it’s the birthrates’ three times in the ‘manifesto’ he uploaded to 8chan.⁴

A core sense of both ‘race’ and ‘nation’ rests on establishing firm geographical and biological boundaries, boundaries that are at the same time acutely threatened by, and discursively inscribed on, the bodies of women.⁵ Affirming binary sex/gender roles is a theme of right-wing politics in general, from the conservative centre-right to violent extremism, and yet it is still not uncommon to encounter the argument that ‘the gender issue is of only secondary importance to radical right parties’.⁶ While gender may not always be explicitly placed at the centre of far-right and fascist programmes, decades of work by discourse analysts, historians and other textual scholars suggests that it is a crucial, some would even argue necessary, element of their logic.⁷

This paper has two related aims. First, we develop a model of how gender is articulated within fascist and far-right discourses based on a review of the relevant scholarship. Researchers have in the past suggested a gap, or even a wilful ignorance, of gender in studies of the far right, and claimed that the topic is ‘neglected’ and ‘under-researched’.⁸ This omission is to some extent fostered by disciplinary, historical and definitional boundaries that work to split inquiry. We have thus read the literature in a kaleidoscopic fashion—and included analysis from different historical periods and

- 2 Stephen J. Walton, ‘Anti-feminism and misogyny in Breivik’s “Manifesto”’, *NORA: Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2012, 4–11.
- 3 David C. Atkinson, ‘Charlottesville and the alt-right: a turning point?’, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2018, 309–15.
- 4 Sophie Bjork-James, ‘Racializing misogyny: sexuality and gender in the new online white nationalism’, *Feminist Anthropology*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2020, 176–83.
- 5 Sara Ahmed, ‘Affective economies’, *Social Text*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2004, 117–39 (119, 121); Alexander Maxwell, ‘Nationalism and sexuality’, in Nancy A. Naples (ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies* (Chichester, West Sussex and Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell 2016); Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage 1997).
- 6 Hilde Coffé, ‘Gender and the radical right’, in Jens Rydgren (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right* (New York: Oxford University Press 2018), 200–11 (203).
- 7 Such as Martin Durham, Julie V. Gottlieb, Barbara Spackman and Klaus Theweleit, whose work is discussed in what follows.
- 8 Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage 2015), 151; see also Ov Cristian Norocel, ‘Our People—A Tight-knit Family under the Same Protective Roof: A Critical Study of Gendered Conceptual Metaphors at Work in Radical Right Populism’, Ph.D. thesis, University of Helsinki, 2013, 18; and John E. Richardson, *British Fascism: A Discourse-Historical Analysis* (Stuttgart: ibidem 2017), 167.

country contexts—that adopts psychoanalytic, discourse analytic, historical, art historical, literary, political and anthropological approaches to gender and fascism.

Our second aim is to show how the model we propose is brought into relief in a particular national context: that of the United Kingdom since the Second World War. Our intention, then, is to explore how sex/gender are invoked, and discursively ‘worked up’, within the British variant of a broader political phenomenon across a period of around sixty years. Gender in post-war British fascism has been the subject of several important studies,⁹ though none has specifically traced the textual journeys of gendered ideas and themes in political propaganda. Building on a discourse-historical analytic approach to the development of fascist politics of this period,¹⁰ we argue that paying attention to gender in fascist discourse is necessary both in itself and because of the ways that it allows a more productive examination of adjacent/overlapping concepts in fascist ideological discourse. In short, we argue that ‘race’ and nation are always gendered in British fascist discourse—and vice versa.

Fascism and gender

In this section, we argue that fascist constructions of gender share four distinctive features that are organized around the defence of the race against external and internal enemies. The first mobilizes gender as a political metaphor, in which manly strength safeguards the (ethnic) nation while feminine softness threatens it. The second articulates domestic adherence to ‘traditional’ sex roles as the basis for future prosperity. The third centres on the claim that contemporary gender norms have departed from eternal (ancient, natural) values. The fourth feature is the promised consequence of protecting those eternal values and the gendered order: securing a utopian future for the ‘race’ through a logic of competitive fecundity, in which racial enemies have been annihilated, expelled and/or outbred. We will address each of these features in turn.

Gender as metaphor

Gender provides a conceptual schematic that fascists apply when thinking through other forms of social structures and complex processes of social

9 Martin Durham, *Women and Fascism* (London and New York: Routledge 1998); Julie V. Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism: Women in Britain's Fascist Movement* (London: I. B. Tauris 2000); Laura Miller, ‘Ideological Themes of Eugenics and Gender in Contemporary British Fascism: A Discursive Analysis’, Ph.D. thesis, Loughborough University, 1999.

10 Richardson, *British Fascism*.

change. For Italian Fascists, the bourgeois liberalism associated with modernity had caused the 'decay of virility' and the creeping 'decadence, degeneration and feminization' of Italian culture.¹¹ The advance of democracy and feminism severed 'the cord that linked masculinity with *tradition*',¹² making the nation querulous, militarily weak and divided. The answer to this national malaise was a politics of youthful virility.¹³ In an ideology that encouraged starting again from Year One, the glory of ancient Rome was reflected back in statues of adolescent male warrior athletes whose vigour and virility symbolized Fascism's 'regenerative effect on Italian society'.¹⁴ The new men of fascism would stand firm against the debilitating flow of modernity, which also meant standing against the current of historical change, embodied as 'the masses' or the 'crowd'. Mussolini claimed that the '*crowd* loves strong men. The *crowd* is like a woman' but 'women exert no influence upon strong men'.¹⁵

The equivalence between the masses, debility and femininity was typical also of the proto-fascist discourse of the *Freikorps* soldiers analysed by Klaus Theweleit.¹⁶ For the Nazis (whose ranks the *Freikorps* men would swell), the 'conviction that German men were born to be warriors and victors' had been profoundly affected by the humiliations of the First World War.¹⁷ Various fascist discourses from this period argued that strong leadership decayed under an overly liberal political elite that no longer controlled the 'feminine masses' and their demands.¹⁸ A militaristic, death-dealing masculinity became 'a rock against which to break the feminine, contagious lust, dissolution—all the threats the mass contains'.¹⁹ In a similar fashion, Vichy France constructed the bourgeois democracy of the Third Republic as 'feminized' and advocated a virile, rural and athletic culture as the remedy.²⁰

11 Sandro Bellassai, 'The masculine mystique: antimodernism and virility in Fascist Italy', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2005, 314–35 (314, 315).

12 Ibid., 316.

13 Spackman, *Fascist Virilities*, 3.

14 Mark Antliff, 'Machine primitives: Philippe Lamour, Germaine Krull, and the fascist cult of youth', *Qui Parle*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2001, 57–102 (61).

15 Emil Ludwig, *Talks with Mussolini*, trans. from the German by Eden Paul and Cedar Paul (1933), quoted (with emphases) in Ishay Landa, *Fascism and the Masses: The Revolt against the Last Humans, 1848–1945* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge 2018), 320, 321.

16 Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Volume 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, trans. from the German by Stephen Conway with Erica Carter and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1987); Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Volume 2: Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*, trans. from the German by Erica Carter and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1989).

17 Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Volume 2*, 357.

18 Landa, *Fascism and the Masses*, 320, 330.

19 Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Volume 2*, 45.

20 Richard J. Golsan and Melanie Hawthorne, 'Introduction: Mapping the terrain', in Melanie Hawthorne and Richard J. Golsan (eds), *Gender and Fascism in Modern*

The British Union of Fascists, on the other hand, identified decolonization and imperial decline as acute threats to white masculinity.²¹ They mobilized a Kiplingesque imperialist narrative in which the 'frontier virility' of figures such as Walter Raleigh and Clive of India shone an unfavourable light on the decadence of the imperial centre.²² Geopolitically, Britain was surrendering its masculine empire to embrace a feminine commonwealth, and feminization was seen as having crept into all aspects of British life. Fascist newspapers called for aggression against the 'feminine reticence of the British press'.²³ British fascist A. K. Chesterton's lampooning of the government reveals this strategy:

Mrs Baldwin, the PM, offers to masculinity only the odour of a pipe. Mrs Macdonald, the Lord President of the Council, differs only from orthodox femininity by talking eternally without ever saying a word. Tart Miss Eden pits her flapper brains, without the accompanying charm, against the real men like Mussolini and Hitler.²⁴

While fascism developed in interaction with specific local contexts, it was undergirded transnationally by longer-term shifts in the forces of production in which men under capitalism became 'interpellat[ed]' as 'consumers rather than producers'.²⁵ In Fascist Italy, as Barbara Spackman argues:

Production and reproduction [were] . . . strictly, and asymmetrically, linked for men and women: only men involved in economic production are figured as capable of sexual reproduction . . . and the 'feminine' as applied to men named first the soldier returning from the barracks to find himself jobless, and later the taxed 'celibate' who produced no offspring.²⁶

France (Hanover, NH and London: University Press of New England 1997), 1–11 (7, 8).

- 21 Julie V. Gottlieb, 'Women and British fascism revisited: gender, the far-right, and resistance', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2004, 108–23 (112–13).
- 22 Robert H. Macdonald, *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880–1918* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 1994), 160, quoted in Liam J. Liburd, 'Beyond the pale: whiteness, masculinity and empire in the British Union of Fascists, 1932–1940', *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2018, 275–96 (282).
- 23 Julie Gottlieb, 'The marketing of megalomania: celebrity, consumption and the development of political technology in the British Union of Fascists', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2006, 35–55 (39).
- 24 A. K. Chesterton, 'Return to manhood: regiment of old women routed', *Action*, 9 July 1936, quoted in Gottlieb, 'Women and British fascism revisited', 94.
- 25 John Champagne, *Aesthetic Modernism and Masculinity in Fascist Italy* (London and New York: Routledge 2013), 10.
- 26 Barbara Spackman, 'Fascist women and the rhetoric of virility', in Robin Pickering-Iazzi (ed.), *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture* (Minneapolis, MN and London: University of Minnesota Press 1995), 100–20 (101).

These anxieties about production are also visible in recent formations. Neo-Nazi white militias in the United States in the 1990s, for example, styled their politics as a manly response to the profligacy of a welfare state ‘captured by feminists . . . [that] therefore, like all feminists and feminist institutions . . . emasculates white manhood’.²⁷ Welfare may be embraced in some contexts, if masculinized. Swedish far-right parties developed a ‘welfare chauvinist’ politics that uses the metaphor of a patriarchal family as an idealized political model,²⁸ and that styles itself as the real protector of social democracy.²⁹ It is the ‘softness’ of liberal culture that calls for the ‘hardness’ of heteronormative masculinity in order (in the words of the leader of the Sweden Democrats) to ‘restore law and order, to safeguard the Swedish welfare model, to restore society to the community and to allow Sweden to become Sweden again’.³⁰

Gender as sexed role

Many discussions of gender and fascism focus on the extent to which women’s agency was accommodated within fascist parties and movements. Early twentieth-century fascism was neither consistently misogynist, nor were early feminists inclined uniformly to reject fascism. In both Italy and Germany, fascism introduced ‘progressive’ (at least for the ethnic majority) and modernizing legislation, such as maternity assistance and infant medicine.³¹ In Britain, Julie Gottlieb argues that, while the enthusiasm of some women for fascism should not be construed as feminism per se, there certainly was ‘feminine fascism’.³² Prominent fascist women (such as the some of the Mitford sisters) ‘perceived little tension between feminine political action and fascism, and . . . conceive[d] of their roles as far more than auxiliary drudges’.³³ Spackman argues in the Italian context that the progressive and conservative elements of Fascism were ‘bound together: the “progressive” cause, women’s suffrage, is but a means to a “reactionary”

27 Michael Kimmel and Abby L. Ferber, “‘White men are this nation’: right-wing militias and the restoration of rural American masculinity”, *Rural Sociology*, vol. 65, no. 4, 2000, 582–604 (595).

28 Ov Cristian Norocel, ‘Constructing radical right populist resistance: metaphors of heterosexist masculinities and the family question in Sweden’, *NORMA: Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2010, 169–83.

29 Ov Cristian Norocel, “‘Give us back Sweden!’ A feminist reading of the (re)interpretations of the *Folkhem* conceptual metaphor in Swedish radical right populist discourse”, *NORA: Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2013, 4–20 (12).

30 Jimmie Åkesson, ‘SD-K Kampanj’ (2009), quoted in English translation in Norocel, “‘Give us back Sweden!’”, 12.

31 Roger Griffin, *Fascism: An Introduction to Comparative Fascist Studies* (Cambridge and Medford, MA: Polity Press 2018), chap. 4, chapter section ‘The variety of fascist gender politics’.

32 Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism*.

33 Gottlieb, ‘Women and British fascism revisited’, 109.

end, the destruction of the parliamentary form of government'.³⁴ Women thus had key social and political roles to play in the battering ram fascism took to liberal democracy.

Fascists tended to present themselves as liberators of *donna-crisi*, the sterile and neurotic 'crisis woman' who had undergone the 'false emancipation' of feminism.³⁵ Instead, women were offered their 'real' role—that of *donna-madre*—one that would secure their happiness.³⁶ These roles were expressed in heroic terms: women, as "'reproducers of the race'", were to 'embody traditional values, being stoic, silent, and fervid; as patriotic citizens, they were to be modern, that is combative, public and on call'.³⁷ In Marinetti's terms, woman 'does not belong to a man but rather to the future and to the race's development',³⁸ and boys and girls thus needed to be channelled through education into their dignified and proper roles from an early age.³⁹ German women, on the other hand, kept the 'race' from becoming mere 'mass' through their 'passionate submission' to reproduction.⁴⁰ In Vichy ideology, it was only when women transgressed their roles as ideal mothers, spouses and homemakers, and tried to compete with men, that they were anathematized as being (like Jews and homosexuals) at the root of social decay.⁴¹

There are clear continuities between historical fascism's advocacy of a passionate, dignified and pure commitment to race and household, and contemporary far-right movements' advocacy of women's rights within specific bounds. Nordic white supremacists, for example, have claimed the right to define what gender equality means,⁴² and campaign against 'prostitution, abortion and pornography—all of which are seen as degrading women'.⁴³ The protection of women's rights is produced as an essential

34 Spackman, *Fascist Virilities*, 12.

35 Griffin, *Fascism*, chap. 4, chapter section 'The variety of fascist gender politics'.

36 Robin Pickering-Iazzi, 'Introduction: inventions of women's making, in history and critical thought', in Pickering-Iazzi (ed.), *Mothers of Invention*, ix–xxxii (x–xi).

37 Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press 1993), 147.

38 F. T. Marinetti, 'Contro il matrimonio,' in F. T. Marinetti, *Democrazia Futurista: Dinamismo Politico* (Milan: Facchi Editore 1919), quoted in English translation in Spackman, *Fascist Virilities*, 7.

39 Spackman, *Fascist Virilities*, 8; Durham, *Women and Fascism*, 14.

40 Maximilian Delmar, *Französische Frauen: Erlebnisse und Beobachtungen, Reflexionen, Paradoxe* (Freiburg: Guenther 1925), 78, quoted in Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Volume 2*, 74.

41 Golsan and Hawthorne, 'Introduction', 7.

42 Diana Mulinari, 'Gender equality under threat? Exploring the paradoxes of an ethno-nationalist political party', in Lena Martinsson, Gabriele Griffin and Katarina Giritli Nygren (eds.), *Challenging the Myth of Gender Equality in Sweden* (Bristol: Policy Press 2016), 137–62 (139).

43 Michael S. Kimmel, 'Globalization and its mal(e)contents: the gendered moral and political economy of terrorism', *International Sociology*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2003, 603–20 (613).

virtue of the nation, a pseudo-emancipatory gender politics that comforts far-right masculinity.⁴⁴ Migrant (usually Muslim) masculinity is, in contrast, constructed as harbouring 'bad patriarchies',⁴⁵ which promote rape and other repressive acts against women.⁴⁶

The 'eternal values'

While fundamentally reactionary, fascism does not reject all that is new. Italian Fascism famously took much of its inspiration from Futurism, and embraced technological and scientific progress. Gleaming automobiles, factories and their machines, and the terrifying technologies of war were all exalted by the Fascists, even as they idealized a return to the land, and an escape from corrupt city life.⁴⁷ The connection between the heroic past and a gleaming future involved invoking 'an eternal and transcendental norm, one that was above history and thus ontologically antimodern, and of divine or natural origin'.⁴⁸ These glories of the past in fascist discourse, again, are premised on overlapping conceptions of 'race', nation and gender. Thus, in a typical diagnosis of cultural degeneration, a Nazi politician argued that modern books, films and the theatre work to 'drag into the dirt all that is heroic, brave, soldierly, decent, moral' in order 'to undermine our family life, to prevent our boys and girls from maturing in strict morality to become a race capable of defending itself, all so that these forces can sit back on their moneybags and rule over a listless race'.⁴⁹

Antisemitic tropes are a staple of fascist discourses in which Bolshevism, feminism and Jewishness are conflated.⁵⁰ The Nazi women's leader Guida Diehl claimed that behind feminism 'lurked a more sinister culprit: the Jew, luring women into rational thinking and sexual pleasure'.⁵¹ British

44 Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*, 22.

45 Suvi Keskinen, 'Antifeminism and white identity politics: political antagonisms in radical right-wing populist and anti-immigrant rhetoric in Finland', *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2013, 225–32, (226).

46 Norocel, "'Give us back Sweden!'", 14–15; Hannah Bows, 'Closing the gender gap: women and the far right in contemporary Britain', in Nigel Copsey and Matthew Worley (eds), *Tomorrow Belongs to Us: The British Far Right since 1967* (London and New York: Routledge 2018), 169–84.

47 Antliff, 'Machine primitives', 61; Bellassai, 'The masculine mystique', 315.

48 Bellassai, 'The masculine mystique', 318.

49 Maximilian von Killinger, *Männer und Macht: Die SA in Wort und Bild* (Leipzig 1933), quoted in Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Volume 1*, 387.

50 Durham, *Women and Fascism*, 15; Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Volume 2*, 13; Emily Turner-Graham, "'Resistance never looked so good": women in white power music', in Anton Shekhovtsov and Paul Jackson (eds), *White Power Music: Scenes of Extreme-Right Cultural Resistance* (Ilford and Northampton: Searchlight/RNM 2012), 103–13 (103).

51 Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (London and New York: Routledge 1987), 82, quoted in Miller, 'Ideological Themes of Eugenics and Gender in Contemporary British Fascism', 94.

fascists asserted that being resolutely antisemitic was part of a woman's duty, continuous with motherly caring for the nation, as it was Jewish finance that had engineered the First World War.⁵² The accusation that Jews specifically benefitted from the violation of timeless cultural and natural laws, and the violence of the proposed response, differed between country contexts. What remained constant was the diagnosis that modern values were degenerate.

Contemporary far-right discourses similarly invoke the protection of historic values. In Nordic far-right movements, for example, the welfare state 'built by our forefathers' must be protected from threatening migrant Others.⁵³ Masculine entitlement guaranteed by former dispensations is eroded in the present by 'state immigration policies, international Zionist power and globalization'.⁵⁴ What is crucial here is that emasculation is seen as a tactic of sinister forces. In White Power movements in the United States, Jews are blamed for the debilitating effects of pornography, and for having mobilized African Americans, women, gays and 'cowardly white men to do their bidding'.⁵⁵ In both the American and the Nordic examples, it is only hard, unyielding masculinity aligned with natural and ancient truths that can secure the survival of the race.

Competitive fecundity

The eternal values structure the norms of gender and sexuality that, together, work to secure the prosperous future of the race through a logic of competitive fecundity. According to this logic, virility and fertility become 'political imperatives'.⁵⁶ One of the most salient issues in the fascist 1930s culture wars against feminism was the supposed promotion of contraception by 'Jewish-backed' feminists.⁵⁷ For Italian Fascists, increasing birth rates was a central part of a 'demographic campaign' to secure the future of the nation, styled as *la difesa della razza*, the defence of the race.⁵⁸ In Germany, as Martin Durham points out, Hitler maintained that hundreds of thousands of Germans were being

seduced by Jews, who, with 'satanic joy' lurked 'in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood, thus stealing her from her own people'.

52 Julie V. Gottlieb, "'Motherly hate': gendering anti-Semitism in the British Union of Fascists', *Gender & History*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2002, 294–320.

53 Ov Cristian Norocel, Tuija Saresma, Tuuli Lähdesmäki and Maria Ruotsalainen, 'Discursive constructions of white Nordic masculinities in right-wing populist media', *Men and Masculinities*, vol. 23, no. 3–4, 2020, 425–46.

54 Kimmel, 'Globalization and its mal(e)contents', 612.

55 Ibid., 609.

56 Daniel Woodley, *Fascism and Political Theory: Critical Perspectives on Fascist Ideology* (London/Abingdon and New York: Routledge 2010), 212.

57 Gottlieb, "'Motherly hate'", 309.

58 Pickering-Iazzi, 'Introduction', ix.

This was a systematic attack on the white race and where the Jew did not ruin its women, then he brought black troops into the Rhineland with the same aim in mind.⁵⁹

In this reproductive war for the future, a woman could be 'stolen' through impregnation by racial Others, or through birth control, which signalled the 'decline of the race',⁶⁰ whereas fecundity was its 'indispensable defense'.⁶¹ This race 'hygiene' was informed by the pseudosciences of race biology and eugenics,⁶² but, here too, this was not uniform in its application. Eugenic thinking in France mobilized the Lamarckian idea that acquired traits could be inherited, promoting physical exercise as a way to prevent racial degeneration in the male body and prepare women's bodies for childbirth.⁶³ In Britain, from the interwar period to contemporary fascism, the Galtonian 'scientific' tradition of eugenics served as a core ideological theme.⁶⁴ Whereas eugenics is constructed as on the side of 'science and reason, liberalism is constructed as opinion and emotion' that will inevitably lead to the degeneration of the race, and 'outbreeding by the *Other*'.⁶⁵ For numerous contemporary far-right parties in the European Union, migration and declining (white) fertility rates reduce European homogeneity and dominance, thus motivating patriarchal visions of the future.⁶⁶ This battle for the future of the race is a particularly acute and violently conceived form of what José Esteban Muñoz calls 'white reproductive futurity'.⁶⁷ Reproductive futurity in fascism goes hand-in-hand with the ever-present threat of violence, whether through sterilization, incarceration, deportation or death.

59 Durham, *Women and Fascism*, 17 (quoting Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (New York: Mariner Books 1969), 348).

60 Maximilian Delmar, *Französische Frauen*, 79–80, quoted in Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Volume 2*, 45.

61 Marinetti, 'Conto il lusso femminile', 206, quoted in English translation in Spackman, *Fascist Virilities*, 12.

62 David Cesarani, 'An alien concept? The continuity of anti-alienism in British society before 1940', in David Cesarani and Tony Kushner (eds), *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass 1993), 25–52.

63 Caroline Campbell, 'Gender and politics in interwar and Vichy France', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2018, 482–99.

64 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press 1989), chap. 3; Miller, 'Ideological Themes of Eugenics and Gender in Contemporary British Fascism', 290–1; Women and Fascism Study Group, *Breeders for Race and Nation: Women and Fascism in Britain Today* ([London?] 1979), 13.

65 Miller, 'Ideological Themes of Eugenics and Gender in Contemporary British Fascism', 293.

66 Jemima Repo, 'Thanatopolitics or biopolitics? Diagnosing the racial and sexual politics of the European far-right', *Contemporary Political Theory*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2016, 80–118 (113).

67 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York and London: New York University Press 2009), 95.

Modelling the gendered dynamics of fascism

Wherever and whenever fascism arises, similarly gendered patterns are traced. The claim, then, that fascist discourse is essentially concerned with gender is persuasive.⁶⁸ This concern can be pictured (see [Figure 1](#)) as the four dynamics discussed earlier, articulated around external and internal enemies. The harder/stronger the men are in their embodied, gendered roles, the harder/stronger the nation is metaphorically, and together they can prevent enemies from violating the eternal values that secure the future of the race through vigorous reproduction. If, however, the enemies are allowed to undermine the eternal values and erode the masculine/feminine binary, then the feminized nation is vulnerable. Feminized men are too weak to protect women, while masculinized women fail to procreate to secure of the future of the race. Only men who are violent and virile and women committed to the reproductive sphere can ensure that (white) children are raised to protect the eternal values, thus securing the future of race and nation. The fascist imaginary is thus profoundly wound up in an imagined zero-sum contest for ethnic or racial dominance in which a regressive vision of the gender binary is both arsenal and battlefield.

Post-war British fascism

In this section, we apply this model to the historical development of mediated discourses of gender, sexuality and fecundity in post-war British fascism.⁶⁹ In British fascism, motherhood was constructed as women's natural, biological role: violating this imperative entailed violating scientific truth. Such gender ideology cannot be viewed in isolation to the (gendered) 'traditional values' of the wider national culture, and indeed claiming consonance between fascist and 'mainstream' values is a well-worn approach in fascist propaganda. The Superman of the British fascist imagination was always a *British Superman*.⁷⁰ Accordingly, the material discussed in the following section approaches the different British fascist traditions as premised on distinct ideological bases, but not ones that are discrete and fully separate from mainstream British culture. Our arguments therefore have significance regarding the 'mainstreaming' of fascist politics.⁷¹

68 As advanced in Theweleit, *Male Fantasies Volume 1* and *Male Fantasies Volume 2*.

69 See also Richardson, *British Fascism*.

70 Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Building a British Superman: physical culture in inter-war Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2006, 595–610.

71 See Aristotle Kallis, 'When fascism became mainstream: the challenge of extremism in times of crisis', *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2015, 1–24; Aristotle Kallis, 'A thin red line? Far right and mainstream in a relational perspective', in Giorgos Charalambous (ed.), *The European Far Right: Historical and*

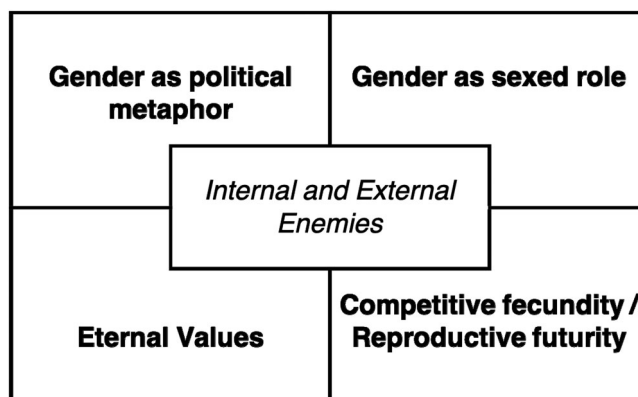


Figure 1 Modelling the dynamics of gender and fascism

From the Union Movement to the National Front, 1945–1967

The thirty years following the Second World War saw a process of the gradual (though partial) consolidation of the British far right, from many small and competing groups, with contrasting accounts of Britain's degeneration, to the dominance of the National Front during the 1970s. At least three streams of the reactionary far right can be identified in these developments: one that was broadly Mosleyite and sought to continue in the British Union of Fascists tradition (though with some political additions, such as a supra-national, white 'Europe-a-Nation'); a second that grew from the writings of Arnold Leese in an explicitly National Socialist tradition; and a third that opposed (non-white) immigration from the Commonwealth, a form of racial populism that differed from British fascism's traditional paranoid and conspiratorial antisemitism.⁷²

In the 1930s, Leese had explained that 'The Jew' was behind a plot to use 'Arabs, Negroes, Somalis and Chinamen' to achieve the 'poisoning of our Anglo Saxon blood'.⁷³ In the period immediately after the war, however, Mosley's re-formed 'Union Movement' was less specific in its diagnosis. A section of one of their late 1950s leaflets, headlined 'A Doctor Warns' (Figure 2), claimed that 'West Indians "Out-breed" white families by three to one'.⁷⁴

This difference in birth-rates is not linked explicitly to a conspiracy. It is unclear whether another 'enemy within' lurks behind the black immigrant

Contemporary Perspectives, PRIO Cyprus Centre/Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Report 2 (Oslo and Nicosia: Peace Research Institute Oslo/Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2015), 7–12.

72 Richardson, *British Fascism*, 115.

73 Arnold S. Leese, 'Some questions and answers', *The Fascist*, March 1933.

74 Union Movement anti-immigration handbills, 1965: Modern Records Centre, Warwick University Library, Coventry, MSS.21/1451/88–89.

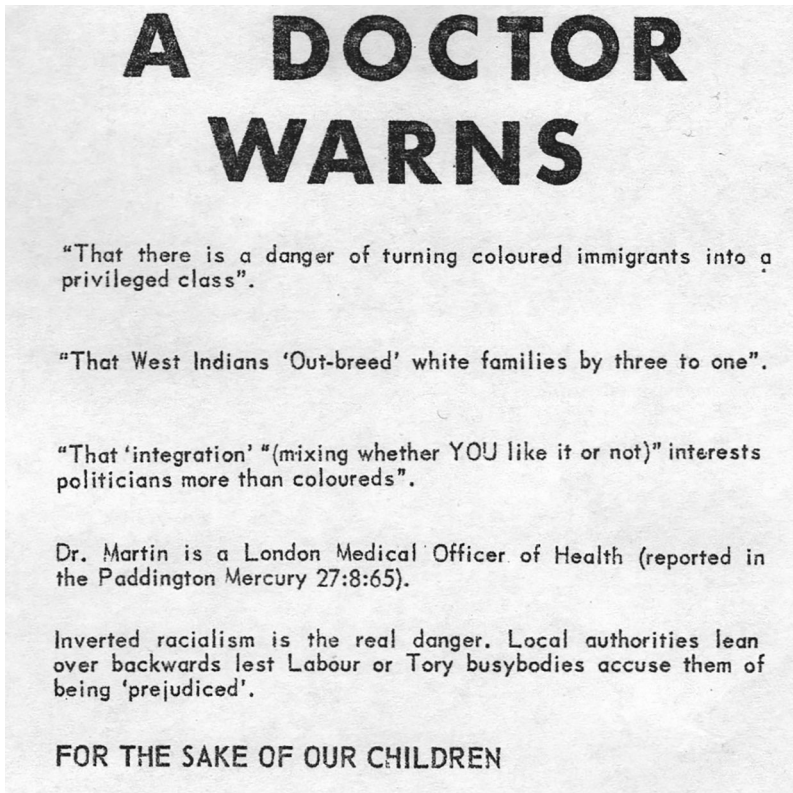


Figure 2 The Union Movement and competitive fecundity

as a threat to race-reproductive futurity in this construction, though this is perhaps hinted at, with the claim that 'integration' (a fascist code for miscegenation) 'interests politicians more than coloureds'.

Eugenics, race biology and conspiratorial antisemitism became visible again in the (early) British National Party's newspaper *COMBAT*, edited by John Bean throughout its seven-year existence (1960–67).⁷⁵ In a 1960 article, Colin Jordan claimed the 'racial ruination of our nation through mass interbreeding' was the inevitable consequence of the 'influx' of non-white immigrants, which served the interests of 'Jewish domination'.⁷⁶ The animating tension in fascist discourse between enemies within and reproductive futurity is thus made explicit. The BNP was at this point committed to 'Racial Nationalism in Britain', as part of a 'global white world struggle for the preservation of European man and the continuation of his civilising mission',⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Richardson, *British Fascism*, 113.

⁷⁶ Colin Jordan, 'Policy of the British National Party: 2. Liberation of Britain from the coloured invasion and Jewish domination', *COMBAT*, no. 9, December 1960, 4.

⁷⁷ John Bean, 'Preservation of our British stock', *COMBAT*, no. 20, January–February 1963, 4.

a reference to colonialism. That European 'man' is named specifically, along with 'his' mission, are evidence of how nostalgia for the Empire was wrapped up in a mythology of virility, and thus the metaphorical component of the gender order. The colonies, and imperial domination, are both the site of a British Golden Age and the source of its greatest threat: 'mongrelisation of our stock'.⁷⁸ In Bean's construction of a decolonizing Britain, sinister forces are 'doing their best to destroy the nobility of race and replace it by a mulatto one-world race'.⁷⁹ He is, however, at pains to explain that, though the products of these unions were evidence of pollution, they would be treated with 'care' under BNP eugenic policies:

In the care of the half-caste child, it would be allowed to stay with its white parent until the age of eighteen and enjoy all rights and privileges, etc—this is where the white partner in a mixed marriage had not decided to emigrate with their coloured partner. At eighteen the half-caste would be given free passage to the country of its choice, or he or she would be allowed to remain in Britain, enjoying all rights and privileges, including marriage, except for the fact that he or she would be legally enforced to undertake sterilisation.⁸⁰

The racist violence of this proposed enforced sterilization hardly needs pointing out, nor does the wider political aim of a racially pure country of which this eugenic policy is part. What is unusual, however, in the arguments of Jordan and Bean, is that there seems to be no presumption that 'the white partner in a mixed marriage' would be a woman, nor that their aim to preserve the white race is tantamount to stopping white women having children with black men. This was, however, not the case with the Racial Preservation Society (RPS), which gathered momentum in the mid-1960s on an explicitly racial populist platform, avoiding some of the more esoteric excesses of the National Socialist stream, and feeding the growth of what became the National Front in 1967. They returned to the theme of competitive fecundity taken up by the Union Movement, arguing that while the 'native' birth rate is '17.4 per 1,000 . . . for Afro-Asian immigrants it is as much as 122 per 1,000, at least seven times greater than ours',⁸¹ where 'we' clearly refers to white Britons specifically. The front page of the first issue of the RPS's *Sussex News* (Figure 3) illustrates their obsession with non-white immigration and the threat that this supposedly posed.

This propaganda neatly lays out two key themes that racial populists would repeatedly recycle from this point onwards: first, that immigration causes crime; and, second, that immigration is a threat to public health

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 *The Great Betrayal: Facts on Immigration* (Brighton: Racial Preservation Society 1968), 2: Working Class Movement Library, Salford, Fascism-Box 3.

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Sussex News

No 1
OCTOBER 1965

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The Sussex Racial Preservation Society is a non-political body dedicated to the Christian solution of the race problem.

RACE RIOTS? COLOURED IMMIGRATION AND ITS EFFECT ON THE CRIME FIGURES

RACE RIOTS in Sussex would seem impossible a few years ago, and yet with the coloured population increasing by thousands every month it would seem that after Los Angeles anything can happen. The newly-formed Sussex Racial Preservation Society do, however, suggest a solution to the race problem: in a recent pamphlet entitled *Generous Repatriation: Who Pays?* they suggest a scheme that is of sufficient importance that we reproduce it below in full:

Generous Repatriation — Who Pays?

THE Sussex Racial Preservation Society are of the opinion that the really generous repatriation of coloured people to their homelands can be accomplished without placing any further burden on the British taxpayer. How can this be done? The health and welfare services expenditure for the past year totalled £1,127 million. This amounts to £3 million per day. We feel that a saving of at least 10% would be achieved by repatriation making available over £112 million per annum. This money given in the form of grants to immigrants would be sufficient to give every man, woman and child a grant of say £1000 (i.e. a coloured family of father, mother and four children would receive £6000). The grant could be continued until such time as their countries of origin were fully self supporting. These latter grants could be paid in part

to these returned immigrants and part to their respective governments. This annual grant would do more for these unfortunate people than their situation here affords them, where they are subjected to dreadful indignities in this overcrowded island where they cannot hope to keep their self respect, in slums into which they are forced to congregate. However, racemixers and leftist economists would counter that whereas money internally circulated in Britain has an entirely different nature to external transactions and that money paid overseas on this scale would seriously affect our balance of payments, we say positively that without the hindering effect of unskilled coloured labour, the country could more quickly tackle full-scale automation, thus making us economically viable and better able to help less industrialized countries.

COLOURED IMMIGRATION AND ITS EFFECT ON THE CRIME FIGURES

DUE TO the fact that no statistical crime figures are published in this country in relation to the coloured population, we shall deal with a few statistics from the U.S.A. We do this partly because the figures are most informative and also because apologists for coloured immigration here would no doubt cry 'One must admit that in the U.S.A. these people are probably as integrated as they are over likely to be and as this race-mixing progresses, the incidence of crime among coloured people increases. The following figures are all derived from the reports of the United States Dept. of Justice Records. The reference numbers are given in brackets.

WHEN CONSIDERING THESE FIGURES 'TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THAT COLOURED MAKE UP ONLY ONE-TENTH OF THE POPULATION OF AMERICA.

(U.C. Rep. Vol. 25, No. 2, 1956). The figures for the years following show similar proportions and, in fact, the 1960 report (Vol. 31, No. 1) if read carefully may incline one to think that the situation has worsened appreciably. **RAPES.** Considering again their low proportion of the population, the figures for rape are equally alarming. They tell us that coloured men raped six times as many women as did white men (Vol. 25, No. 2, 1956). The figures for 1960 reveal that in that year the ratio was that coloured men raped eight times as many women as did white men (Vol. 31, No. 1). **PROSTITUTION & VICE.** Still not forgetting the low proportion of the population that the coloureds constitute, they were involved in sixteen times as many offences in this category as whites (U.C. Rep. Vol. 25, No. 2, 1956). **ROBBERY.** The proportion for robbery was thirteen times as many, and for aggravated assaults by coloureds we find that there were also thirteen times as many as by whites (U.C. Rep. Vol. 25, No. 2, 1956). (This figure is based on their ratio of crime in proportion to the coloured population.)

The above figures for crime in America are disturbing enough but probably the most revealing fact is that the incidence of crimes committed by coloureds is three times higher in the northern states than in the southern states (U.S. Dept. of Justice, U.C. Rep. Vol. 25, No. 2). One may fairly observe that the more the degree of integration—the more crimes by coloureds, and that 'Civil Rights' can, honestly, only be earned, and when awarded the 'hand-outs', are invariably abused.

Having dwelt for so long on the problems of America, let us look to our own. At the end of 1963 the Cambridge Institute of Criminology stated: 'It is quite clear that the proportion of immigrants who are convicted of crimes is far greater than that found in the British population'. Mr. Norman Pannell, M.P., on July 22nd, 1960, stated that half the indictable offences in London were committed by coloured immigrants. (In 1960 there were less than 100,000 coloured immigrants in London, which means that ONE-EIGHTIETH of the population were committing HALF the crimes.)

One could hardly call the following which appeared in the 'Sunderland Echo' on January 1st, 1965, as a diatribe-call to abide by the law. Entitled 'Pakistani Views', it is a quote from the English language edition of a Pakistani newspaper. It reads: 'Coloured immigrants note Labour. Wilson will be forced to increase the flow of coloured immigrants. Already our people have positions in the county councils, the Civil Service and in education and university work service. An all-coloured political party has been formed ready for the day of take-over. Coloured people—you have nothing to lose except your chains. You will rule the world. Drive the English out from Britain —their last colony. You are the new coloured rulers.'

The Sussex Racial Preservation Society was so staggered by this last item that we sent a man to Sunderland to investigate the story. We are sorry to say that the evidence was there for all to see. 'These unfortunate people, so long deprived by ruthless exploiters of cheap labour, will gladly grasp any straw that is thrust at them by Communists masquerading as Socialists, whose sole ambition is to destroy the white man's world—dominated by one philosophy—Communism.'

Photo by courtesy of Y. Macthrye

COLOURED IMMIGRATION AND ITS EFFECT ON THE HEALTH OF GREAT BRITAIN

LEPROSY. Unknown in Britain since the Middle Ages, yet on 30/9/64 there were 328 lepers in Britain, an increase of 74% in five years. This would be bad enough, but we find the Daily Telegraph quoting in a more recent article 358 lepers in England. We then find that the true figure is 500—B.C. TV, 22/9/65. From this, one may assume that leprosy is today, a health hazard in this country.

VENEREAL DISEASES. Coloured immigrants account for 77.7% of the number of gonorrhoea cases in Britain between 1952 and 1961. Compared with the white population, the incidence of the disease among West Indians is 20 times as high. (British Journal of V.D., 1963)

Ministry of Health report indicates that in 1963 gonorrhoea was 59 times higher among coloured immigrants than among Britons. That syphilis was 30 times higher. It was reported in a special programme on the subject on television, that there were 100,000 new cases per year (in Britain) of this dreadful disease. They did not, as is to be expected, mention the incidence in relation to the immigration figures but did say that young white girls of twelve were among the new patients and that V.D. is developing a resistance to modern drugs.

TRACHOMA. This eye disease un-

known in Britain before coloured immigration, is contagious, and can lead to blindness. Mr. F. C. Rodgers, a leading research worker in ophthalmic diseases reported having found several active cases of trachoma among coloured immigrants. Mr. Rodgers stated that this is a serious threat to the ocular health of the United Kingdom. (Daily Telegraph 2/6/65)

BLOOD TRANSFUSION. A petition seeking legislation making it compulsory for blood banks to label blood of Negroes are being made to the Community Blood Centre, Dayton, Ohio. A spokesman for the group, Mr. T. Ross, said: 'A substantial percentage of the Negro population is afflicted with the so-called sickle cell trait, a genetic or hereditary blood characteristic peculiar to the Negro race, it is a type of anaemia. Due to the fact that not all blood banks label blood by race, whites stand a chance of getting infected with this contaminated blood. A law to this effect already operates in Louisiana, U.S.A.'

An all-Negro magazine dealing with the health of Negro children in a long article stated many suffer from anaemia. (Obony April 1965, p. 26)

The 31-year-old mother of 4 young children, bled to death during an operation at Brook General Hospital, Woolwich. It was stated at a Southwark inquest Dr. Sachindra Basu said: 'I got the blood from the fridge. I read the names on the labels but did not check the patients' blood group.' He read mistaken the names of Gladys Steer and Glenister. (Daily Telegraph 12/6/65)

OVERCROWDING IN HOSPITALS. Birth-rate of coloured immigrants is eight times that of whites. (Sunday Express 18/4/65)

Health gives the coloured birthrate at 122 per thousand, the white birthrate for Wolverhampton is 16 per thousand. Assuming as is proper that the coloured community of Wolverhampton is no more highly sexed than the rest of the coloured population, it means that one and a quarter million coloureds are producing something in the region of 100,000 children per year (immigrants are in the 20/40 child-bearing age group). It is also reasonable to assume that in a certain number of years there will be more blacks than whites in Britain, even if no more were allowed in.

Recently in Wiltshire, 70% of the immigrant babies were occupied by immigrant mothers.

At Wolverhampton the figures were 3.9% of the population were producing 22.7% of all the births, 49.2% of all legitimate births, and accounted for 30.4% of all hospital confinements. (Daily Telegraph 31/5/65)

The number of persons awaiting admission to hospitals on 31/12/64 was 498,972. (1964 Annual Report on the National Health and Welfare Services, H.M. Stationery Office)

Interestingly, Henry Brandon writing in the Sunday Times 25/7/65, states: 'Nearly one-quarter of Negro births are illegitimate, and that the illegitimate birth rate is eight times higher among Negroes as among whites. (He refers to America for these figures but the situation in all aspects of this problem have a marked similarity to those in Britain.)

TUBERCULOSIS. Dr. V. H. Springett, physician to the Birmingham chest clinic said (May 1960): 'The rate of T.B. among Pakistanis in Birmingham is very high: at least 20 times as great as among



Figure 3 Front page of Sussex News, October 1965

(and here they specifically point to leprosy, venereal disease, trachoma, blood transfusions and tuberculosis). Venereal disease links immigration with sex, which relates co-textually with the photo in the bottom corner: a black man walking on the street with a white woman. One of these images on its own might not mean that much to the reader; they may not understand what aspect of the image they're meant to attend to, given that the image

appears without caption or reference in the accompanying articles. However, across the remainder of this four-page paper, there are five other examples of similar images: in two cases, black men walking on the street with white women and appearing to hold hands (Figure 4). When viewed in concert—intertextually—a sense of the message that the RPS is promoting becomes clearer: that non-white men are (frequently? increasingly?) entering into sexual relationships with white women. The RPS's battle to 'preserve' (our) race was articulated around the dynamic of appropriate gender roles. The white women in these images are constructed as shamefully betraying their role as safeguarders of the reproductive futurity of the white race. White men, it is implied, must intervene in the sex lives of (their) white women, and protect the nation from these dark and virile men.

The National Front: Spearhead in the 1970s

The National Front (NF) came into being in 1967. Their magazine *Spearhead* served as a major mouthpiece for their ideology in the 1970s, particularly during the periods when its owner/editor, John Tyndall, was the party



Figure 4 Four photographs from *Sussex News*, October 1965

leader, and under the editorship of Richard Verrall. The NF prioritized being taken seriously as an acceptable political party in Britain, meaning that much of the paranoid rhetoric of the National Socialist stream was toned down, particularly in their election materials. The picture they painted of the world was a 'small boat in which the beleaguered White races are slowly sinking as the rising tide of the coloured world population threatens to swamp it. Britain is simply hastening her ruin by pouring more in, instead of bailing out.'⁸² By broadening the geopolitical scope to the world and to 'White races' in general, Verrall invokes overpopulation discourse, a favourite theme of the international development and environmental movements at the time. Paul Ehrlich's neo-Malthusian *The Population Bomb* was published in 1968,⁸³ and served as fuel for the racist scapegoating of the developing world for the failures of international development.⁸⁴ This broad concern about world population dovetailed with the construction of the 'British race' as especially worthy of protection. In their 1979 General Election manifesto, the NF stated:

It is essential that the British race reproduces itself. . . . Alone among parties, the National Front is also concerned to reverse those trends which make for a decline in our population qualitatively as well as quantitatively. . . . The aim of our social policy is not 'equality' but the preservation and improvement of the British people.⁸⁵

This political imperative included an old theme, picked up by the Women and Fascism Study Group in their report on the NF in 1979: because women are constructed as 'mothers, or, more precisely, breeders'—the *Breeders for Race and Nation* of their pamphlet's title—any attempts to limit the 'fertility of white women is the cardinal sin in a theory which measures "racial strength" in numbers'.⁸⁶ Women's rights to reproductive health services therefore had to be curtailed as a racial imperative, as did uncontrolled 'breeding' in general. Eugenics was still very much a part of the NF's worldview: Verrall defined it as 'selective breeding to obtain healthy stock', which, in the hands of the NF, was viewed as a 'valuable weapon for promoting race cleanliness'.⁸⁷ This race-hygiene discourse identified the source of pollution:

82 Richard Verrall, 'Policies to meet the rising tide of colour', *Spearhead*, no. 101, January 1977, 6–7; this quotation was reprinted in an unattributed article headed 'Suicide of the West' (*Spearhead*, no. 119, July 1978, 20) together with a cartoon. Many thanks to Daniel Jones of the Searchlight Archive for confirming this citation.

83 Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine Books 1968).

84 Robert Fletcher, Jan Breitling and Valerie Puleo, 'Barbarian hordes: the overpopulation scapegoat in international development discourse', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 7, 2014, 1195–215.

85 National Front, *It's Our Country—Let's Win It Back! The Manifesto of the National Front*, 1979, 57.

86 Women and Fascism Study Group, *Breeders for Race and Nation*, 4.

87 R. Verrall, 'The British one-worlders', *Spearhead*, no. 106, June 1977, 9.

immigration and integration meant 'blurred' ethnic lines and presented a 'major genetic threat'.⁸⁸ In order to see off this threat, the NF consistently represented themselves, in the gender-as-metaphor dynamic, as 'virility personified', whereas the perceived liberalism of other parties, which included the drive towards integration, was 'feminine'.⁸⁹ Real men were needed on the political scene: those who understood that it was 'no use being dishonest about the character of the Negro out of a liberal desire to be polite. Everything we know about these simple, savage and cultureless people shows that they and White Civilisation are incompatible.'⁹⁰

Incompatibility is made a matter both of blood and culture, which are thereby conflated. Miscegenation was not only a threat created by consensual sex; black men were also represented in fascist discourse of this period as committing acts of sexual violence against white women. The NF routinely constructed black male sexuality as 'perverted', and 'fear of the "animalistic" Black male as sexual predator' was widely deployed.⁹¹ While the British (white) man's proper gender role was that of protector as father and husband, the black man was thus constructed as his antithesis. During their heyday in the 1970s, the NF printed accounts of black men raping white women on almost a weekly basis.⁹² This black, masculine menace was constructed as threatening Britishness itself. In the late 1970s, the National Party produced a leaflet entitled *STOP IMMIGRATION*. Under a blurry black and white photograph, of a black man and white woman with blonde hair, the leaflet read: 'Our greatest national asset is the inherited talent and innovating ability of our own British People. This asset is threatened by racial intermixing with the millions of Coloured Immigrants who now occupy large areas of our major towns and cities.'⁹³ Thus was the supposedly brutish and violent hyper-masculinity of the black man constructed as a threat to the 'talent' and 'innovation' of the British: a claim that suggests an overlap between technological and commercial prowess and the ability to control the bodies of women, both of which are constructed here as part of British national heritage.

Fascism after Thatcher

The National Front was basically wiped out by Margaret Thatcher's election victory in 1979. As would happen again thirty years later, a populist shift in

88 Paul Thomas, 'Integration: lessons from the past', *Spearhead*, no. 96, August 1976, 14.

89 Women and Fascism Study Group, *Breeders for Race and Nation*, 3.

90 'African "moderation" . . . and the meaning of white supremacy', *Spearhead*, no. 99, November 1976, 4.

91 Women and Fascism Study Group, *Breeders for Race and Nation*, 5.

92 Vron Ware, *Women and the National Front* (London: Searchlight 1981); see also Miller, 'Ideological Themes of Eugenics and Gender in Contemporary British Fascism', 233–87.

93 National Party, *STOP IMMIGRATION*, author's archive.

Conservative Party rhetoric took the wind out of the far right's sails. To be able to compete on the political scene, ambitious fascist organizers had to represent themselves as up to date. And that meant making room for women as prominent leaders of the movement. Jackie Griffin, wife of future BNP leader Nick Griffin, explicitly connected the fascist theme of 'passionate submission', the gender role dynamic that constructs fascist women as heroic and modern, with racial futurity when she argued in 1985 that

women of the National Front need to come together and find their role in our revolution. . . . Some women may wish to support their man in the party giving him a family and thus strengthening his reasons to continue. After all, without such women where would the White future be that we're fighting for?⁹⁴

It was John Tyndall's newly rebooted British National Party, however, that was to prove the most successful political development of this period (though the stuttering successes of the early 1990s wouldn't be replicated until the 2000s, under Griffin's leadership).⁹⁵ Tyndall's response to social change was to deploy both gender-as-role and gender-as-metaphor in arguing that the 'rampant feminism of our times, represented as it is mainly by the most repulsive harridans, is due to the general decline among the White Race (and particularly in Britain) of real manhood'.⁹⁶ Virile men would never allow unattractive women a voice in political matters, and (the implication was) neither would attractive, submissive, fascist women. The 'feminisation of the male', he declared, in a direct echo of the 1930s, is a 'liberal sickness'.⁹⁷

This argument was also taken forward by women in the fascist movement. Linda Miller argued in 1990 that feminism 'comes from a perverted, destructive ideology—the cornerstone of which is that somehow child-bearing is a degrading activity', whereas it was 'our ability to bear children that is the mark of our great worth as a sex'.⁹⁸ In doing so, she picked up the Italian Fascist theme of feminism as the 'false emancipation' that produces *donna-crisi*. It was also a continuation of the dynamic of competitive fecundity, in which the value of women's bodies was expressed in military terms. In an article that cites Ehrlich in its title—'The Population Time-Bomb'—Tyndall

94 Jackie Griffin, 'Women in the Front', *Nationalism Today*, no. 33, September 1985, 15.

95 Nigel Copsey, *Contemporary British Fascism: The British National Party and the Quest for Legitimacy*, 2nd edn (Basingtoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2008).

96 John Tyndall, *The Eleventh Hour: A Call for British Rebirth*, 3rd edn (Welling: Albion Press 1998), 245.

97 John Tyndall, 'A prophet who one day will be honoured', *Spearhead*, no. 295, September 1993.

98 Linda Miller, 'Feminism: the word for a perverted natural right', *Spearhead*, no. 252, February 1990.

argues that the bodies of 'non-European' women were being used as 'a weapon of war' in a deliberate bid for black power:

In every white country where these non-Europeans have established their own ethnic and religious enclaves, they are working unstintingly to tip the balance of power away from the natives and in their favour, and much of this work consists of labours in the bedroom and the maternity ward.⁹⁹

Eugenics was still a theme in *Spearhead* in this period, described as 'the scientific application to mankind of the findings of the study of heredity — with the object of perpetuating inherent qualities which aid the development of the human race'.¹⁰⁰ The utopian promise of the 'science' of race is thus a particularly consistent theme of British fascism, intimately involved in the protection of race-reproductive futurity.

Fascism around the turn of the millennium

The public-facing media of the BNP from the late 1990s once again returned to the language of 'scientific' solutions to social problems, and a particularly virulent position in the culture wars. John Bean, who at this point edited the BNP's magazine *Identity*, returned to a tried and trusted theme in arguing that feminism was playing a role in the cultural disintegration of Britain, through the emasculation of boys. Describing Andrea Dworkin as a 'grotesque 300-pounder. . . obsessed with how bad sex is for women', he suggested that someone should have sex with her in order to cure her both of her feminism and her lesbianism.¹⁰¹ Women fascists once more railed against feminism. Accordingly, they argued that the 'growth of "women's liberation" and feminist movements . . . is forcing women to abort children and pursue material, selfish interests'.¹⁰² Her solution paraphrases William Pierce's 'Fourteen Words': 'Nationalists recognise that in order to "secure the existence of our race and a future for our children" we must cherish our future offspring.'¹⁰³

The threat of the 'militant feminist' to white civilization was illustrated in Nick Griffin's infamous antisemitic 1997 pamphlet *Who Are the Mind-Benders?*¹⁰⁴ Here, a still from the 1965 Russ Meyer sexploitation B-movie,

99 John Tyndall, 'The population time-bomb', *Spearhead*, no. 292, June 1993.

100 A. Moore, 'Producing better people', *Spearhead*, no. 299, January 1994.

101 John Bean, 'The menace of triumphant feminism', available on the *Spearhead* website at www.spearhead.co.uk/0101-jb.html (viewed 10 March 2022). Bean's suggestion threatens the hate crime of so-called 'corrective rape'; see Vasu Reddy, Cheryl-Ann Potgieter and Nonhlanhla Mkhize, 'Cloud over the rainbow nation: "corrective rape" and other hate crimes against black lesbians', *HSRC Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2007, 10–11.

102 Diane Stoker, 'Nationalists and abortion', *Identity*, no. 52, February 2005, 12–14 (13).

103 Ibid, 12.

104 Nick Griffin, *Who Are the Mind-Benders? The People Who Rule Britain through Control of the Mass Media* (British National Party 1997).

Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!, is reproduced without credit (Figure 5). A powerful woman in a revealing black jumpsuit is pictured subduing a man who flails dramatically on the ground. The caption makes the ideological links explicit: the woman's virility is a token of the 'militant feminism' that has been 'pushed relentlessly by the mass media'. In case it was not clear, the man on the ground is presented as a synecdoche for 'the white male' as a collectivity who are 'mocked and belittled at every turn'. There is of course also an unintended irony in the choice of this image. While supposedly chosen for its documentary verisimilitude—both of militant feminism and the 'relentlessness' of the media—it simultaneously appeals to the prurience and scopophilia of its audience. Meyer's choice of big-breasted and attractive women for his films was arguably part of a knowing satire on the unreality of male sexual desire.¹⁰⁵ Griffin clearly misses the joke, though his choice suggests he wants his readers both terrified and a little aroused.

A similar prurient male gaze is prominent on the front cover of a 1996 issue of Griffin's *The Rune* magazine, which pictures a Barbie-doll like white woman with an hourglass figure illuminated by a streetlight. In the shadows, a hook-nosed sweaty man, a truly Goebbelsian caricature of 'the Jew', lurks with 'satanic joy', poised to rape and defile the woman who is represented as 'your wife' or 'your daughter'.¹⁰⁶ That attractive, curvaceous women are the rightful property of white men, and that they are stolen from them by Jews and by feminism, is thus still a dominant theme.

In the early twenty-first century, priorities shifted: Islam became a central focus for right-wing hate. 'Islamic' terrorism was a rhetorical device to which Muslim fecundity could be compared: 'The main threat to Europe from Muslims comes not just from that small minority of terrorists . . . but from the law-abiding majority who will outbreed and then out-vote us.'¹⁰⁷ Taking up the theme of women's bodies as weapons of war, and repurposing it for the age of the suicide bomber, the BNP website describes 'the Muslim woman' as a 'ticking time-bomb on the British way of life—a baby-bomb poised to breed the British people out of existence'.¹⁰⁸ The article cited statistics that focused only on women (as opposed to male migrants): 'the number of births for every thousand British women is 1.9%, the rate is

105 Kristen Hatch, 'The sweeter the kitten the sharper the claws: Russ Meyer's bad girls', in Murray Pomerance (ed.), *Bad: Infamy, Darkness, Evil, and Slime on Screen* (Albany: State University of New York Press 2012), 143–55.

106 John E. Richardson, 'British fascism, fascist culture, British culture', *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2019, 236–52 (249–52, including a reproduction of the *Rune* cover).

107 Philip Smeeton, 'Europe's parallel society: a ticking demographic bomb', *Identity*, no. 47, September 2004, 10–11 (10).

108 Nick Griffin, 'Don't just remove the burqa—remove them!' (newsletter), 19 January 2014, archived version of the *British National Party* website available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20140121213035/http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/don-t-just-remove-burqa-%E2%80%93-remove-them-1> (viewed 11 March 2022).

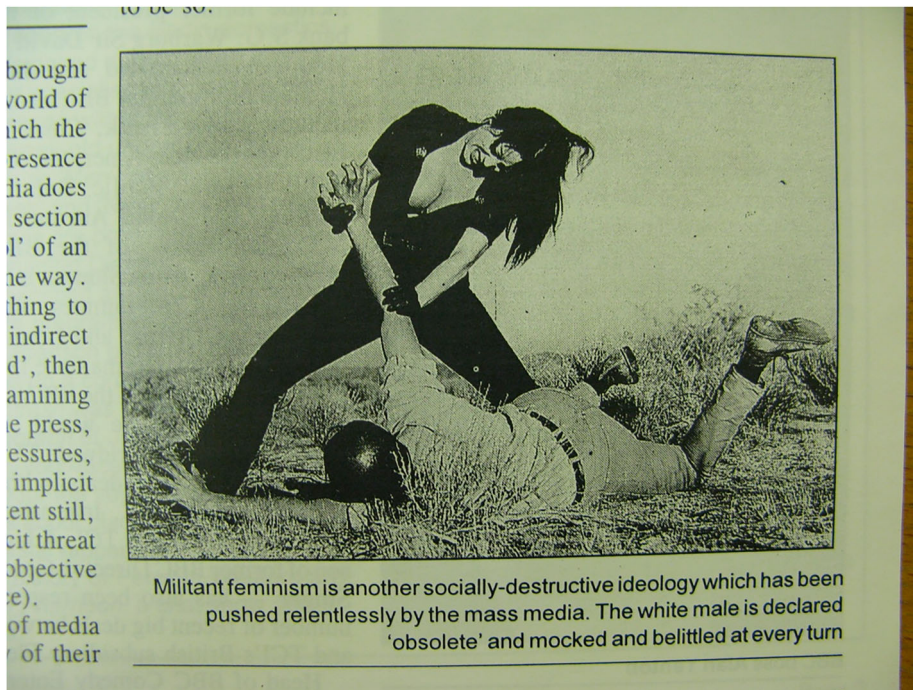


Figure 5: The 'militant feminist' of Griffin's *Who Are the Mind-Benders* (1997)

nearly 20% higher at 2.3% for every thousand immigrant women'.¹⁰⁹ Time and again, writers stress the specific need for white women to have more white children to compete with expanding non-white populations both in Britain and abroad. Women in the BNP such as Diane Stoker argued that women's rights should be curtailed in pursuit of increasing the white population, including abortion rights: 'Once the female consents to the male to sexual intercourse then she has exhausted her right to choose.'¹¹⁰

One article set specific targets: four children per (white) couple in order to 'prevent white extinction, the Arabisation of Europe, and the Latinisation of the United States'.¹¹¹ The dynamics behind these demographic shifts are identified as relating both to immigration and to birth rates: the problem is 'not just based on immigration. Just as dangerous is the present birthrate and the distribution of these children by "underclass" and ethnicity.'¹¹² These two issues, immigration and birth rates, were also linked in BNP policy. In the early 2010s, their policy on immigration specifically claimed 'Non-indigenous births will soon account for more than half of all the

109 Ibid.; see also Esther Harstein, 'Whites must breed or face extinction', *Identity*, no. 58, September 2005, 11.

110 Stoker, 'Nationalists and abortion', 12.

111 Harstein, 'Whites must breed or face extinction'.

112 Elizabeth Rose, 'Optimum population policy', *Identity*, no. 86, January 2008, 24-7 (26).

babies born in Britain',¹¹³ making it clear that it was the birth rates of racial Others that were animating the anxieties connected to demographic calculations about their own racial-reproductive futurity.

White children are consistently constructed in fascist discourse in ways that emphasize their purity, beauty and innocence. Visually, they tend to be represented by girls rather than boys, or as very young children and so of indeterminate sex. This is particularly the case in photographic representation. One of six core BNP leaflets in circulation in the early 2000s was dominated by the slogan, 'Building a Future for Our Children. Britain First!', underneath which was a photograph of three white, blonde children: one a baby and two toddlers.¹¹⁴ White girls are on the covers of at least eight issues of *Identity* magazine;¹¹⁵ one of them also paraphrases the Fourteen Words, with the title 'Securing a Future for British Children',¹¹⁶ again indexing the BNP's racial nationalism: 'British' means 'white'. No pictures of white boys ever appear on a cover; associating maleness with beauty and innocence—even when it comes to young boys—violates the metaphorical and role-oriented construction of fascist masculinity as hard and unyielding. The BNP positioned the whiteness of these 'British' children against the threat of 'race mixing'. Echoing the view of John Bean in the 1960s (quoted earlier), Nick Griffin wrote that mixed-race children are 'the most tragic victims of enforced multi-racism. But that does not mean that we accept miscegenation as moral or normal. We do not and never will.'¹¹⁷

As we have noted in other country contexts, the BNP affirms the 'freedoms' of white British women, contrasting them to the supposed repression of Muslim women. Visual comparisons of young white women and young Muslim women¹¹⁸ repeat 'a visual iconography in which young British white girls in shorts are seen as symbols of freedom and contrasted with Muslim women in black burkas'.¹¹⁹ How these various discursive components fit together can be nicely seen in an article on the BNP website, which argued that immigration is destroying the British family:

113 See, for example, the BNP leaflet 'Immigration: Open your eyes', archived version from the *British National Party* website at <https://web.archive.org/web/20130707104011/http://www.bnp.org.uk/policies/immigration> (viewed 31 March 2022).

114 For images of these leaflets, see *Identity*, no. 33, June 2003, 9.

115 *Identity* issues: no. 4, October/November 2000; no. 30, March 2003; no. 33, June 2003; no. 36, September 2003; no. 47, September 2004; no. 52, February 2005; no. 58, September 2005; and no. 64, March 2006.

116 *Identity*, no. 30, March 2003.

117 Nick Griffin, 'Knowing who we are and where we have to go', *Identity*, no. 30, March 2003, 4–8 (4).

118 See the cover of *Identity*, no. 64, March 2006.

119 Martin Durham, 'Securing the future for our race: women in the culture of the modern-day BNP', in Nigel Copsey and John E. Richardson (eds), *Cultures of Post-war British Fascism* (London and New York: Routledge 2015), 68–85 (77).

[T]hanks to the success of second-wave feminism, many young women now regard marrying and raising children as something undesirable and even oppressive. . . . It's not just genes that aren't being passed on. The morals, traditions and values which were the foundations of Western civilization aren't being passed on either. . . . If a people don't replace themselves in sufficient numbers, they will be replaced by those who will. . . . a swarm of immigrants continues to pour over Western borders. . . . They have no sympathy or empathy with the West, believing they are entitled to claim the territory and bounty of the West . . . [Muslim men] are very masculine, not driven by empathy, emotion or pity and have complete confidence in their faith. They use women as breeding machines and have no guilt whatsoever about making others pay for it all.¹²⁰

Here, in a nutshell, we have all of the gendered dynamics of fascism we modelled earlier. Women who abandon ancient and natural values, and fail to play their appropriate gender roles as reproducers of the race, make room for threateningly virile racial Others who sire swarming populations that replace the native white population. The numbers tilt the nation away from the values of 'Western civilization' which falls into deeper degradation and emasculation, allowing the 'fiercely patriarchal' Muslim man to dominate a future that has been lost for whiteness.¹²¹

Reproducing futurity in Brexit Britain

The local dynamics of British fascism relate to its imperial history, to a characteristically British articulation of science and progress as wound up in Darwinian/Galtonian laws, and to the ways in which traditional conservatism wins over swathes of fascists at key junctures: after the Second World War, when to support Mosley was to be a traitor to the nation; at the end of the 1970s, when Margaret Thatcher mobilized a discourse of the protection of British (white) families that sucked the air out of the National Front; and again in 2015, when Nigel Farage's United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) grew to electoral prominence at the expense of the BNP. It is worth noting here that Farage's discourse ahead of the Brexit referendum was scarcely distinguishable from that of the BNP. Warning of a country overwhelmed by 'unsustainable' migration, Farage waved around the figure of '1.7million [sic] births' to immigrant mothers as an impending demographic threat.¹²² In contrast, the BNP, which had stood 338 candidates and gained nearly half a million votes in 2010, had collapsed by 2015. The masculinity


120 Christopher J. Green, 'How immigration insanity is destroying the family unit', 25 October 2015, archived version of the *British National Party* website available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20151028050515/http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/how-immigration-insanity-destroying-family-unit> (viewed 11 March 2022).

121 Ibid.

122 Nigel Farage, 'Nigel Farage: It's official . . . Britain's population surge is TOTALLY out of control', *The Express* (online), 30 October 2015, available at www.express.co.uk/

and militarism of Brexit discourse¹²³ arguably captured the imagination of the 'losers of modernity',¹²⁴ those who felt 'emasculated' by the social changes happening around them, which saw women, migrants, gender non-conforming individuals, and a host of threatening Others gain limited, but increasing, prominence in society.

It would thus be profoundly misleading to think of gender as a 'secondary' issue in fascism. Indeed, our analysis of post-war British fascism shows that sexuality, gender and fecundity function as the discursive glue that connects evolving iterations of formations of the far right. While these movements respond to shifting political landscapes, different racial Others (whether colonial immigrants from the Caribbean or Asia, Jews or Muslims) are imagined as possessing the virility to control women's bodies as weapons of reproductive war that 'replace' and otherwise ruin the longed-for lily-white future. British heritage in various forms anchors the assertion of the centrality of gendered roles, the only proper foundation for a prosperous future. These combinations of sex and gender are quite clearly part of the virulent code from which new strains of fascism will continue to evolve.

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[comment/expresscomment/615678/Nigel-Farage-Ukip-Britain-immigration-figures-soar-uncontrolled](https://comment.expresscomment/615678/Nigel-Farage-Ukip-Britain-immigration-figures-soar-uncontrolled) (viewed 11 March 2022).

123 Columba Achilleos-Sarll and Benjamin Martill, 'Toxic masculinity: militarism, deal-making and the performance of Brexit', in Moira Dustin, Nuno Ferreira and Susan Millns (eds), *Gender and Queer Perspectives on Brexit* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2019), 15-44.

124 Bows, 'Closing the gender gap', 171; see also Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-wing Populism in Western Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1994), 25.

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