# Fascist discourse

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**Introduction**

This chapter introduces and discusses critical approaches to the analysis of fascist discourse. Although compared to other topics – *inter alia*, newspaper reporting, race/racism, sex/gender – the examination of fascist discourse is thin, recently this has started to be remedied with notable contributions to the analytic and empirical literature. Whilst some may argue that this relative infrequency is reason to exclude a chapter on fascist discourse from a Handbook on Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), I maintain that fascist discourse is vitally important to analyse, understand and oppose. Most obviously, fascist politics is inimical to the emancipatory agenda of CDS. CDS should be aimed at analysing and counteracting power abuse, and how this is variously represented, enacted, justified and achieved in and through discourse; fascist political projects (whether ideology, party or movement) epitomize power abuse *in extremis*. Studying such political outliers yields additional benefits in that it brings into better focus the dialectic between extremisms and the social and political mainstream. Consider, for example, the ways that mainstream UK parties censured the British National Party (BNP) whilst simultaneously aping their language in order to appear tough on immigration (Richardson, 2008; see also Wodak 2011); or the way that the BNP adopt slogans and communication tactics of mainstream UK parties in order to appear more moderate (Copsey, 2008; Richardson & Wodak, 2009).

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows: first I briefly discuss the work of historians of fascism, focusing in particular on work defining the ideological core of fascism. I identify a problem with this work, and a solution in the form of the ground-breaking work of Michael Billig (1978). Following and building on this, I next discuss fascism and discourse, showing the ways that work has developed from early philology of Klemperer, through to more recent work in CDS.[1] Finally, I present a case study which applies my approach to the critical analysis of fascist discourse: a speech delivered by Nick Griffin, the then-leader of the BNP, at a party meeting in 2010.

**Fascism and fascism studies**

Since the end of the 1960s, a body of work has developed whose primary focus is on fascist ideology, and which aims to extract the ideological core of "*generic fascism* that may account for significant and unique similarities between the various permutations of fascism whilst convincingly accommodating deviations as either nationally or historically specific phenomena" (Kallis, 2009: 4, emphasis added). This

work on generic fascism has formulated lists of "significant and unique similarities", aiming to distil the "various permutations of fascism" down to a minimum number of necessary and sufficient characteristics: the so-called 'fascist minimum' (c.f. Nolte, 1968). Such work reaches its apotheosis in the work of Roger Griffin, whose one-sentence definition of fascism – "Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism" (Griffin, 1993a:26), or "formulated in three words: 'palingenetic populist ultra-nationalism'" (1998: 13) – is, truly, a minimal fascist minimum. Indeed, the extreme brevity of his definition drew withering comment from Paxton (2005: 221), who suggests Griffin's "zeal to reduce fascism to one pithy sentence seems to me more likely to inhibit than to stimulate analysis of how and with whom it worked."

Fascism, Griffin argues, aims to rejuvenate, revitalise and reconstruct the nation following a period of perceived decadence, crisis and/or decline. Griffin uses the Victorian term 'palingenesis', meaning 'rebirth from the ashes', to characterise this central motivating spirit (*Geist*) of fascism, though it is only when combined with the other elements in the noun phrase, that his fascist minimum is given a sense of political form. Thus, in response to criticisms that 'national rebirth' is not a uniquely fascist ideological commitment, Griffin argues: "I agree entirely […] It is only when the two terms are combined ('palingenetic ultra-nationalism') that they form a compound definitional component" (Griffin, 2006b: 263-4). Detailing his noun phrase a little more, he uses

> 'populist' not to refer to a particular historical experience […] but as a generic term for political forces which, even if led by small elite cadres or self-appointed 'vanguards', in practice or in principle (and not merely for show) depend on 'people power' as the basis of their legitimacy. I am using 'ultra-nationalism' […] to refer to forms of nationalism which 'go beyond', and hence reject, anything compatible with liberal institutions or with the tradition of Enlightenment humanism which underpins them" (Griffin, 1993b: 36-7).

Griffin's heuristic definition approaches fascism primarily as a set of ideological myths expounded by its leaders. As he has argued: "The premise of this approach is to take fascist ideology at its face value, and to recognize the central role played in it by the myth of national rebirth to be brought about by a finding a 'Third Way' between liberalism/capitalism and communism/socialism" (Griffin, 1998: 238). There is no doubting the significant influence that Griffin's definition has had, particularly on American and British scholars. Some praise his scholarship and the heuristic value of his definition, and include themselves within his claimed 'new consensus' on fascism studies; others are far more circumspect about its politics and the degree of convergence that Griffin claims between his work and that of others. For example, Woodley (2010: 1) has argued that the 'new consensus' in fascism studies developed by "revisionist historians" such as Griffin, "is founded less on scholarly agreement than a conscious rejection of historical materialism as a valid methodological framework." Mann (2004: 12) goes further, arguing:

> Griffin's idealism is nothing to be proud of. It is a major defect. How can a 'myth' generate 'internal cohesion' or 'driving force'? A myth cannot be an agent driving or integrating anything, since ideas are not free-floating. Without power organizations, ideas cannot actually *do* anything. (Mann, 2004: 12)

The three concepts Griffin identifies (palingenetic; populist; ultra-nationalism) may be necessary but, even combined, they are insufficient to properly define fascism or fascist discourse, since they are detached from material practices. In contrast, Billig's (1978, 1988a, 1988b, 1990) work offers a highly adaptable definition of fascism, both ideologically and as a political movement (for an extended discussion, see Richardson, forthcoming). He argues that fascism is characterised by a shifting constellation of four general features. To be classified as 'fascist', a party or movement needs to possess all four characteristics, the first three of which are ideological: (1) *strong-to-extreme nationalism*; (2) *anti-Marxism*, and indeed opposition to any mobilisation of the working class as a class for itself; and (3) *support for a capitalist political economy*.

Given its nationalism, fascist support for a capitalist political economy is usually of a protectionist, Statist or autarkic nature; at minimum it is opposed to finance or international capital, and aims for mercantilism protected within the borders of the nation-state. "In this respect it differs from traditional laissez-faire capitalism, which seeks to reduce the activity of the state to a minimum" (Billig, 1978: 7). Whilst many fascist parties use populist, even pro-worker rhetoric, and oppose aspects of capitalism (particularly banking, 'usury' and international capital), *no* variety of fascism whether as ideology, party or regime has been willing or able to replace capitalism. As Kitchen (1976: 85) argues "the social function of fascism was to stabilise, strengthen and, to a certain degree, transform capitalist property relations", ensuring the continuation of capitalist political economy, the economic and social dominance of propertied and bourgeois classes, and thus the continued exploitation of the working classes. Accordingly, fascism should be regarded as "a specific form of post-liberal capitalism" (Woodley, 2010: 133). Under fascism, "capitalism would be controlled but socialism destroyed" (Mann, 2004: 19). Note that this does not mean that fascism is simply, and directly, the tool of capital*ists*; fascism is not a dictatorship of monopoly capitalists or any other 'agents'. Rather, a shared fear of the proletariat organising as a class for itself encourages an uneasy alliance between a mass fascist movement and the traditional elites of industry, politics and the military to protect capital*ism*, as a mode of political-economic accumulation and system of property relations.

Billig's (1978) fourth feature is absolutely key, given that it distinguishes fascism from ideologies of both the political right and various political nationalisms: (4) *these ideological commitments are "advocated in such a way that fascism will pose a direct threat to democracy and personal freedom"* (Ibid.). Fascists do not simply oppose Marxism, or left-wing politics more generally, they actively try to stamp them out – denying rights of political association, banning parties, and (ultimately) killing opponents. Fascism based itself "on a radical elitism, that is on the notion that certain human beings were intrinsically, genetically better than others, who consequently could be treated as if they did not have the right to exist" (Renton, 2000b: 77). In Gabriele Turi's neat turn of phrase, fascism formulates "a mode of being and, above all, of not being" (Turi, 2002: 121, cited in De Grand, 2006: 95).

Fascism exists as a mode of inegalitarian political action. And so, to capture this dimension of fascism, I propose an addition to Billig's definition: (5) *fascism is a political movement*. The mass, or 'popular', nature of fascism is vital, since it is the mass nature of fascism that distinguishes it from other forms of right-wing, authoritarian rule. The first three ideological components (nationalism; capitalism; anti-Marxism) are features common to many right-wing political ideologies, ranging from the traditional

right-wing through radical- and populist- varieties; it is the anti-democratic *weltanschauung* and violent methods which set fascism apart from parliamentary right-wing politics. However, non-fascist totalitarian or dictatorial regimes also use terror, violence and oppression; some of these oppressive regimes also advocate or orientate to the three ideological features Billig (1978) argues characterise fascism. The difference, therefore, is *the mass basis of fascism*; whether this mass base is invoked rhetorically (as often happens with post-WWII groupuscule movements), organised as a party or coalesced as a movement, fascism acts like "*an extra-parliamentary mass movement* which seeks the road to power through armed attacks on its opponents" (Sparks, 1974: 16; emphasis added).

**Fascism and discourse**

As early as the 1940s, close links between general research on language and studies on political change were established, mainly in Germany. Linguistic research in the wake of National Socialism was conducted primarily by Klemperer (2013 [1957]) and Sternberger et al. (1957). Klemperer and Sternberger sampled, categorized and described the words used during the Nazi regime: many words had acquired new meanings, other words were forbidden and neologisms were created. As Klemperer (2013: 15) explains:

> Nazism permeated the flesh and blood of the people through single words, idioms and sentence structures which were imposed on them in a million repetitions and taken on board mechanically and unconsciously. [Nazi discourse] increasingly dictates my feelings and governs my entire spiritual being the more unquestioningly and unconsciously I abandon myself to it.

Understandably, Nazi genocide has meant that, since 1945, there is little electoral cache in labelling a party or movement 'fascist'. However, as Billig (1978) points out, fascist movements during the inter-war period "encountered a qualitatively similar problem", resulting in concealment of the true intentions of the party. In the period between 1930 and 1933 (when Hindenburg appointed Hitler Chancellor of Germany), the Nazi party tried to appear more moderate in official discourse; they wanted to be perceived as a political party aimed at achieving power by constitutional means rather than violent direct action (Cohn, 1967). Even during WWII, "Nazis used a euphemistic discourse [in official communiques] with which to conceal their crimes" (Griffin, 2014: 39). Griffin (2014: 39-40), for example, quotes a letter written to the Chief of Himmler's personal staff in which the writer (SS-Major General Dr Harald Turner) shows "no qualms about stating that he and his subordinates had shot dead all the Jews they could lay their hands on. But when referring to industrialized mass murder, he then uses the phrase 'definitive clearing out' (*endgultiges Raumen*) of the camp […] and places apostrophes around the expression 'Delousing Van' as an instrument of the extermination" (p.40).[2]

The contradictions between the pronouncements and actions of fascists are a direct reflection of the deceptions that they need to perform in order to appeal to a mass audience. Fascism is inherently and inescapably inegalitarian. This inegalitarianism is marked in two major ways: first, fascism seeks to deny and, in its regime form, reverse the small progressive victories that have helped ameliorate the structural violence that capitalism heaps onto the working classes (see Celli, 2013; Kitchen, 1976; Renton, 1999).

This entails that fascist discourse must conceal the ways it encodes the economic interests of the minority in order to entrench the exploitation of the majority. Even the liberal historian Roger Griffin acknowledges that Marxist approaches to the analysis of fascism have demonstrated "empirically how any apparent victory of […] fascism can only be won at the cost of systematically deceiving the popular masses about the true nature of its rule" (1998: 5). This leads on to the second way that fascism enshrines and enacts inegalitarian politics: "fascist movements use ideology deliberately to manipulate and divert the frustrations and anxieties of the mass following away from their objective source […whether through] an emphasis on essentially irrational concepts such as authority, obedience, honour, duty, the fatherland or race […or] emphasis on the hidden enemies who have sinister designs on society and who threaten the longed-for sense of community" (Kitchen, 1976: 86).

Contemporary politics presents two perpetually recurring discursive strategies for fascist parties: dissociating themselves from fascism or rehabilitating it. Parties taking the second route necessarily consign themselves to a position outside of democratic politics, leading the party down a pseudo-revolutionary path, trying to secure power through violence and 'street politics' (Richardson, 2011, 2013; Rudling, 2013). Fascist parties seeking power through the ballot have universally adopted the first political strategy – explicit verbal dissociation from fascism, both in terms of political and ideological continuities. In Britain, this approach was initially exemplified by Oswald Mosley and the Union Movement (UM), wherein fascist euphemistic common-places used by the British Union of Fascists before the war were recoded for the UM re-launch after the war (Macklin, 2007; Renton, 2000). Similar 'rebranding' has since taken place across Europe, wherein parties with fascist political predecessors – including the Austrian FPÖ and BZÖ (Engel & Wodak, 2013), the French FN (Beauzamy, 2013), the German REP and NPD (Posch et al, 2013), the Portuguese CDS/PP and PNR (Marinho & Billig, 2013), the Romanian 'New Right' (Madroane, 2013) and several others – both *orientate towards*, and simultaneously *deny*, any continuity with arguments and policies of previous movements. The result is an intriguing, and often contradictory, mix of implicit indexing of fascist ideological commitments accompanied by explicit denials of these same commitments. A successful discourse analysis of contemporary fascism should therefore

> recognise the possibility that different levels of ideological sophistication might be contained within the same piece of propaganda. An ambiguous symbolism might embrace both the simplified grammar of gut feelings and the more complex grammar of an ideology. The social scientist, like the successful propagandist, must understand the rules of both grammars (Billig, 1978: 91).

The increased success of the far- and extreme-right, from 2001 onwards, brought a concomitant increase in academic analysis of the discourse they produce and disseminate. In addition to important studies of single parties (Castriota & Feldman, 2014; Richardson & Colombo, 2013; Tilles, 2014) or national traditions in fascism (see Copsey & Richardson, 2015; Wodak & Richardson, 2013), this work has contributed to Critical Discourse Studies in three principal ways. First, fascist discourse is analytically extremely rich, allowing us to explore many of key concepts in CDA. Analysing fascism certainly requires us to engage with questions of power, ideology and political discourse; however inter-textuality and inter-discursivity are equally important, especially for examining how ideas, arguments and attitudes are

transposed over time (Richardson & Wodak, 2009a). The 'cultural Marxism' conspiracy theory is a case in point. This theory was developed "by American thinkers, most of them white nationalists, to explain the rise of political correctness and anti-racist beliefs as well as the advent of multiculturalism" (Beirich , 2013: 96). Accordingly, political correctness developed directly from the work of the Frankfurt School, who "set out to translate Marxism from economic to cultural terms with the aim to destroy traditional Western values" (Cox, 1999: 20). The theory did not stay put in America, but was adopted (and adapted) by extremists across Europe: since 2004, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) has been publishing conspiratorial assessments of the Frankfurt School and the Cultural Revolution through its educational institute, the Bildungsakademie; the BNP adopted the phrase and explanation after their poor showing in the 2014 European Parliament Elections; and the mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik referred to and discussed 'cultural Marxism' in excess of 200 times in his so-called manifesto (Richardson, 2015).

Recent work on multi-modality and the affordances of genre are similarly valuable in demonstrating the ways that images (Colombo & Richardson, 2013; Richardson & Colombo, 2014; Richardson & Wodak, 2009b; Richardson, 2011; Wodak & Forchtner, 2014), party logos (Engström, 2014; McGlashan, 2013), colour (Richardson, 2008) , music (Machin & Richardson, 2013; Shekhovstov, 2013; Spracklen, 2015) and the internet (Engström, 2014; Turner-Graham, 2014) are utilised as part of fascist political projects. Engström's (2014: 11) perceptive analysis of online visuals used by the BNP discusses the ways that the Union Flag is used to communicate "complex ideological messages consisting of conceptual structures from distant domain matrices, thus suggesting conceptual relations that are not necessarily obvious to an outsider."

Second, and building on this point, at the linguistic level, fascist discourse is typically ambiguous and disguised, and directed towards a seemingly contradictory set of ideological commitments (Billig, 1978; Feldman & Jackson, 2014; Richardson, 2011; Wodak & Richardson, 2013). Fascist discourse is especially complex at the semantic-pragmatic interface, given the ways that fascists use vagueness, euphemism, linguistic codes and falsehood as part of manipulative discursive strategies (Engel & Wodak, 2013; Engström, 2014). Nick Griffin's appearance on the BBC's flagship current affairs programme Question Time (22 October 2009) has been given significant attention, particularly for the way he put across "his political message through implicit meanings" (Bull & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2014: 1; see also Cranfield, 2012). Goodman and Johnson (2014) also analyse this programme, plus two radio appearances, focusing on the ways that Griffin attempted to present the BNP as moderate and, actually, the victims of an ill-defined 'political elite' (see also Johnson & Goodman, 2013). Fascists, like other racist political parties, use a strategy of calculated ambivalence (Engel & Wodak, 2013) in order to "allow for multiple readings and denial of intended discriminatory messages" (Wodak & Forchtner, 2014: 249) - and they are getting better at doing this (Wodak, 2015). Edwards' comparative analysis of BNP Election manifestos, from 2005 and 2010, shows how their discourse changed, "growing more sophisticated in its knowledge of techniques of disguising racial prejudice" (2012: 256).

Given that vague noun phrases used to mark out in-groups and out-groups typically "have to be inferred from the context" (Engström, 2014: 11) this points – third – to the vitally important role of context in critical analysis (Beauzamy, 2013; Richardson, 2013). CDA is, properly, the critical analysis of text in context, and it is only through contextualisation we can demonstrate that, when fascists use similar

arguments or terms of reference to those in mainstream political discourse – e.g. Britain, British, democracy – they do not *mean* the same thing (Edwards, 2012; Richardson & Wodak, 2009a). The best of the recent research on fascist discourse addresses its complex levels of signification, viewing the semantic-pragmatic content of fascist discourse as a social semiotic accomplishment, in which cultural, political and historic contexts prove particularly salient. In short: fascists frequently do not say what they mean, or mean what they say, and knowledge of the complex inter-textual, inter-discursive, socio-legal and organizational histories of fascism are required in order to fully make sense of fascist discourse.

**Case study: Griffin speech at the BNP 'Indigenous Family Weekend'**

This chapter will now turn to a brief examination of a speech that Nick Griffin, the then-leader of the British National Party, gave in 2010, at an event called the BNP 'Indigenous Family Weekend' (31 August 2010). My discussion draws on the discursive strategies proposed in the Discourse Historical Approach to CDA (see Reisigl, this volume). Griffin's speech was essentially structured in two parts of unequal size. In the longer first section, Griffin details the degeneration of Britain and specifically argues that this political and cultural degeneration has an "ethnic" dimension. As part of this, he identifies four social groups that he regards as the enemies of the BNP (see quote below for details). In the second part of the speech he discusses the ways that party members can meet these challenges, predominantly through a form of cultural and civic entryism rather than explicit 'above the line' political campaigning as 'the BNP'. Here I will concentrate on the first part of the speech, towards the end of which, Griffin provides the following summary of his argument thus far, and of the four different groups that oppose the party:

> these four groups: the Marxists, who encompass literally everybody who tells you the lie that all human beings are equal […] together with the freaks, who just hate normality and decency. Together with those who profit from the destruction of cultures and identities, and together with those who want, consciously or perhaps subconsciously, our land, our wealth, our women [pause] because history is sexist, believe me. Those four groups, intertwined, have created this enormously powerful body which is waging a total war on our culture, our civilisation and our identity. We know it. Politically, they're waging a war on our party

Thematically, this extract fits almost exactly with Billig's (1978) constellation definition of fascism, indexing the nationalist, anti-Marxist, anti-international capitalism, and anti-egalitarian politics of the BNP. The extract also demonstrates the continued importance of what Byford (2011: 32) refers to as "the conspiratorial tradition of explanation" in fascist political ideology, and the ways that conspiracy is positioned as the (often *single*) motivating force in history.

Consider, first, the nominal and predicational strategies invoked in the ways that the four 'enemy groups' are named and described:

| Nominal | Predicate |
| --- | --- |

| | |
|---|---|
| the Marxists | who encompass literally everybody who tells you the lie that all human beings are equal |
| the freaks | who just hate normality and decency |
| those | who profit from the destruction of cultures and identities |
| those | who want, consciously or perhaps subconsciously, our land, our wealth, our women |

The party's opposition to these various 'enemy groups' is not only stated explicitly, but also signaled by the way that they are named and characterized: Marxists lie; the freaks hate; and the nameless – whose basic humanity is even implicitly backgrounded by the way the noun phrase lacks a head noun (those [people/individuals/groups/etc]) – profit from destruction and covet what properly belongs to Us. The perspectivisation is illuminating here, since it presupposes a male-centred discourse of (white) men talking to other (white) men, about protecting *their* (white) women. The tricolon "our land, our wealth, our women" simultaneously claims women as a possession of the men (those in the audience; in the party; the white men in the country?), and constructs these (our) women as a resource or asset, in the same way as "our" land and money. Griffin attempts to inoculate himself from the obvious sexism of this construction, by identifying this as the perspective of "history". However, the pause, and the hurriedness of this after thought (muttered almost *sotto voce*), marks it as an apparent or show concession to the audience.

Of course, it is insufficient to simply quote from this speech and presume that the nominals Griffin used accord with their conventional meanings: does Griffin really mean 'followers of Marx' when he refers to "Marxists", for example? In fact, he does not. Earlier in the speech, he elucidates 'Marxist', making it clear that he simultaneously means something more general and yet more specific. "Marxism", he explains, is less about Marx and "is far more about how you view people":

> the fundamentals of Marxism, is [sic] that everyone is essentially equal. And it is only our environment which changes us. That is the fundamental of it. Once you understand that, you understand that, the Marxist attack on our culture, because our culture is a symbol of our special identity and if we have a special identity we can't be equalled

Griffin's general objections to Marxism, in this iteration at least, are therefore twofold: first, the political principle "everyone is essentially equal" cuts against the inegalitarianism of Griffin's fascist political project; and second, there is Marxism's apparent "attack on our [national] culture". Griffin's reasoning here is a little convoluted, but it can be reconstructed as follows: 'Marxism' is committed to equality; however, our culture is singular/distinct; our culture is therefore special, it is exceptional; as such, our culture has no equivalent; the existence of our special/exceptional culture therefore disproves the Marxist belief in equality; because of this, the Marxists "always wanted to destroy this country and our ideals more than anything else". Three characteristics of fascist ideology – nationalism, anti-Marxism, inegalitarianism – therefore play off and mutually reinforce each other in this account. The speech reveals: the continued central role of 'national culture' in fascist identity; the belief in the superiority of

our national culture and the attendant implication of the inferiority of others; 'Marxism' is bad because it is anti-national, and should be opposed because it attempts to debase our culture on the basis of some wrongheaded egalitarianism.

However, for Griffin, 'Marxism' also means something far more specific due to its significant role in the conspiracy that "is waging a total war on our culture". Within the National Socialist ideological tradition, the struggle against Marxism is synonymous with the struggle against 'The Jew' (Kershaw, 2008: 52). There is a definite sense of similarly coded language in Griffin's speech, in particular where he describes Marx*ists*, as opposed to Marx*ism*:

> to be a Marxist in modern Britain, in the modern West, isn't a matter of wearing a hammer and sickle armband on your sleeve, or wanting the workers to have the same wages as everybody else. Certainly not with the Marxists who are involved in high politics and high finance, where they've got far, far higher wages than the workers and they do not want to change that relationship

Who, we should ask, are "the Marxists who are involved in high politics and high finance"? The incongruity of the statement needs to be resolved by the listener if it is to make any sense. The rather straightforward (and well known) opposition of Marxists to high finance suggests that Griffin is using "the Marxists" in a way other than its conventional meaning – that is, in a coded way. The extensive pedigree in fascist discourse of a direct association between both Jews and Marxism and Jews and capitalism – "Jewish Bolshevism" in Hitler's speeches and *Mein Kampf* (Kershaw, 2008), "Jewish-German-Bolshevism" in the Protocols and its reception in Britain in the 1920s (Byford, 2011), or "Cultural Marxism" in contemporary discourse (Richardson, 2015) – pushes one towards parsing "the Marxists" in this formulation to mean "the Jews". However, Griffin remains ambivalent on this point.

The second group of people opposing the BNP are referred to in the extract above as "the freaks", who "just hate normality and decency". From an earlier point in the speech:

> the sad freaks who turn out on demonstrations against us, with the people of our blood […]. People who are corrupt and rotten inside hate decency. It's about jealously. And so much of the attack on our culture, and on ours, and on this party, and on good people, is actually coming from people who simply can't begin to match it. And because they can't match it they want to tear it down and destroy it.

The predicational strategy in the first sentence of this extract offers an implicit racialization of the "freaks": Griffin states that they go to "demonstrations against us, <u>with</u> the people of our blood". This particular noun phrase ("the people of our blood") is used to denote (other) white people – they share 'the same blood' as members of the BNP and so, *sui sanguinis*, the same race. Griffin's construction logically distinguishes the "freaks" from "the people of our blood", and so constructs them as non-white. These "freaks" "hate decency" and so, in turn, can only produce degenerate culture. Again, though not spelled out in detail, this position indexes a significant and well established rhetorical thread in British fascist discourse, associating Jews with debased culture in general and the conscious and intentional debasement of British culture in particular. For example, writing in the newspaper of the National Labour Party, the future leader of the National Front and BNP John Tyndall (1959) argued: "The Jew […] has

created no true art. All he has, has been copied from others. […] it is beyond the capacity of the Jew to create what is beautiful to the natural tastes of the European […] By his systematic attack on all European culture the Jew is polluting and destroying the European soul" (**The Jew In Art**, *COMBAT*, Issue 3 April-June 1959, p.4). Griffin's vituperative attack, therefore, whilst not seeming explicitly antisemitic is nevertheless readable in such a way – thereby implicitly (but deniably) indexing a far more aggressive strain of political sentiment than its surface meanings suggest.

The third group of national enemies Griffin identifies are capitalists – though it is interesting and significant to note the particular agenda of capitalists that he criticizes earlier in the speech:

> hugely important in terms of the destruction of Britain, there are those who profit from it […] capitalism doesn't look at a tree and think 'what a beautiful thing', capitalism looks at the tree and thinks 'how much can I get if I cut it up? How much can I get if I sell it and what can I do with the piece of land on which it stands to make even more profit?' And that is why, they are hell-bent, these people, on destroying the culture and identity, not just of us, but of every single people on the planet

The capitalism depicted here is international; in the interest of maximizing profit, it is directed towards destroying national particularism; international capitalism stands outside all nations as the enemy of them all. It is the threat that (international or anti-national) capitalism poses to national "culture and identity" which marks it as beyond the pale in this account, not the exploitation of workers. Indeed, British *people* are curiously absent from Griffin's representation of British *culture* – an arboreal idyll categorized by capitalism as little more than a resource for their profit (not ours). However, the extract above also contains an interesting and subtle shift in referential strategy: the extract starts with a personification ("those who profit"), changes to an abstract noun ("capitalism"), albeit one possessed with the power to think and to look ("capitalism looks at the tree and thinks"), and ends by shifting back to a personification ("they are hell-bent, these people"). These referential transferences intimately associate a destructive system with the wishes and interests of a particular group of people, and so they simultaneously imply a solution: If the problem with capitalism is "these people", then capitalism can be salvaged with their removal from power and influence. Griffin is, again, strategically vague concerning the identity of "these people".

In his expanded description of the fourth and final enemy grouping, Griffin gets more explicit again regarding the 'ethnic' status of the conflict:

> those who would demolish Britain and Britishness, and England and Englishness, also encompass those who want to do so quite simply because they are consciously or subconsciously part of a rival ethnicity, culture, religion. This produces all sorts of interest groups, whose interest is in doing us down. Because if we, the people of these islands, who came from these islands and built these islands, if we are firmly in control of our own destiny, then it limits the capacity of other people to use our resources, our wealth, our people, our territory, for their own ends

Griffin studiously avoids both the word race and racial markers (white, Black, etc); instead the terms of distinction are "ethnicity, culture [and] religion". However, Griffin goes on to state that by "we" he is

referring to “the people of these islands, who came from these islands and built these islands”. In so doing, he constructs an exclusive definition of ‘the people’ as not only those who originated here (i.e. were born in Britain), but also those with a longstanding filial bond with Britain going back through time. His use of “came from”, rather than ‘come from’ implies a citizenship based on heritage – a heritage of parentage or lineage. The alternative formulation – ‘people who come from these islands’ – whilst not a civic definition of citizenship would nevertheless allow, for example, children of immigrants to claim British nationality by virtue of being born and raised in the UK. Therefore, (national) *culture* is *inherited* in Griffin’s speech and so acts as a homologue for race; resources, wealth and land are presumed a birthright of the ‘ethnic British’; ‘non-British others’ are a threat to and a drain on our resources; and so, in a radical act which at minimum entails welfare chauvinism but could include repatriation (and everything else in between), They – i.e. all those that the BNP considers to be “consciously *or subconsciously* part of a rival ethnicity, culture, religion” – should be denied access to “our resources, our wealth, our people, our territory”.

**Conclusion**

The study and analysis of fascism are contested territories. One justification for using the generic term ‘fascism’ is that it enables appreciation and comparison of tendencies common to more than one country and more than one period in time – and also that it helps draw out the interconnections between these different periods in time. Any appropriate theory of fascism can only begin with the idea that fascism must be interpreted critically; however, a critical approach does entail recourse to polemic. Instead it means that we need to take a step beyond the immediate, and take into account detailed analysis of the social, political and cultural factors as well as the significance of ideas and arguments (Iordachi, 2010); to look at what fascists do as well as what they say; and to closely examine the dialectical relations between context and the text/talk of (assumedly/potentially fascist) political protagonists.

The speech I briefly examined, Griffin describes an international conspiracy between four overlapping and interlocking groups, whose aim is to “demolish Britain and Britishness, and England and Englishness”. The BNP, as “the party of the ethnic British”, oppose this destructive aim, and it is for this reason that the party also finds itself a target in this “war”. Whilst the ideational content of the speech is, in one sense, well mapped out – the psychological, political and economic reasons ‘why they hate us’ are spoken about in detail – in another sense the speech remains extremely vague. Nominals like ‘the Marxists’, ‘capitalists’, ‘the freaks’ and ‘non-British interest groups’ are never tied to real world referents; the frequent use of anaphoric pronouns (they, those, these people, etc) give a sense of firmness and assurance via repetition, but the noun phrases they refer back to are floating signifiers. These ambiguities are, of course, intentional – they are part of a *strategy of calculated ambivalence* (Engel & Wodak, 2013) which allows Griffin, like all fascists, to speak on two simultaneous levels of meaning. At the denotative level, he presents the politics of the party as nationalist and enshrining the interests of “the ethnic British”; at the connotative level, he insinuates an elaborate antisemitic conspiracy theory. A conspiracy between (Jewish) Marxists and (Jewish) international capitalism is a standard feature of

British fascist ideology and would be recognizable to a sizable portion of the BNP activists in the audience.[3] Similarly, cultural degeneracy and using multiculturalism to weaken 'the white race' are tropes strongly associated with Jews in fascist discourse. As Copsey (2007: 74) argues, for British fascists, "it has long been axiomatic that multiculturalism is a Jewish conspiracy." In this speech, Griffin treads a finely calculated line between *revealing* and *not revealing* such conspiracies, and the (Jewish) identities of the conspirators in particular.

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[1] Some of the authors cited below would not regard their work as CD*A*; however, I do think that they fit within the broader and more inclusive CD*S*.

[2] At this stage in the war, civilians were being murdered on an almost imaginable scale, by Einsatzgruppen and Einsatzkommandos, in countries to the East of occupied Poland. Over two days, 29-30 September 1941, Sonderkomando 4a murdered 33,771 Jews in Babi Yar ravine near Kiev, for example. The scale of murder – of men, women and children – was reported to exert "considerable psychological pressures" on some men, to the extent that some "were no longer capable of conducting executions and who thus had to be replaced by other men" (Gustave Fix, member of Sonderkommando 6, quoted in Klee *et al*, 1991: 60). Gassing Jewish civilians was offered as an alternative; vans were initially developed with an airtight compartment for victims, into which exhaust gas was piped while the engine was running. Wilhelm Findeisen (Einsatzgruppen C) explains how they operated: "The van was loaded at headquarters. About forty people were loaded in, men, women and children.

I then had to tell the people they were being taken away for work detail. Some steps were put against the van and the people were pushed in. Then the door was bolted and the tube connected […] I drove through town and then out to the anti-tank ditches where the vehicle was opened. This was done by prisoners. The bodies were then thrown into the anti-tank ditches" (quoted in Klee et al, 1991: 72). In December 1941, the Gas-Van Inspector August Becker was informed that "gas-van with drivers were already on their way to or had indeed reached the individual Einsatzgruppen" in the East (quoted in Klee *et al,* 1991: 69). The euphemism 'delousing vans' draws on a typical Nazi biological metaphor, which characterises Jews as an infestation.

3 See YouGov (2009) 'European Elections', Fieldwork dates 29 May – 4 June 2009, available at http://www.channel4.com/news/media/2009/06/day08/yougovpoll_080609.pdf [Accessed 19 August 2014].