

A Field Guide to Straw Men

Sadie and Exile, Esoteric Fascism, and Olympia's Little White Lies

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OVERTURE

This essay is a response to a situation that has unfolded in the past few years in Olympia, WA concerning the social and political (or ‘metapolitical’¹) affinities of former Green Scare² prisoners Nathan “Exile” Block and Joyanna “Sadie” Zacher (henceforth referred to as Exile and Sadie, respectively). In particular, it addresses itself to the arguments and sensibilities expressed in their defense by their friends and by writers less personally invested who have weighed in on the situation, directly or indirectly. These arguments and sensibilities will be principally represented in the present writing by the following three pieces:

a) an article entitled “Don’t Worry, You Can Sleep at Night,”³

b) an e-mail entitled “Reflections on Credibility,” sent to various Olympia “anti-fascists” which served as a statement of conscientious objection and resignation by someone apparently disappointed and horrified at the backlash against Sadie and Exile and their circle of die-hard supporters, and

c) a blog post, more serious and intelligent than the two foregoing pieces, entitled “I Say Potato, You Say Dangerous Resurgence of Fascist Ideology”⁴ by Arnold Schroder (formerly Scott Schroder).

These reviews are followed by remarks on the social context of the controversy, the nature of the disagreements involved, and suggestions for moving forward. It has been produced primarily for anarchist and Olympian readerships, as well as for those of the subcultural scenes most concerned (neo-folk, metal, eco-defense, antifa, etc.).

BACKGROUND

A couple years ago, it was discovered by some anarchists that Exile, who along with Sadie had recently relocated to Olympia after getting out of prison, was responsible for a tumblr blog called “Loyalty is Mightier than Fire”⁵ whose bent seemed increasingly congenial to fascist and neo-fascist authors and imagery⁶. At first, the handful of people concerned about this entertained the possibility that the quotations and pictures which peppered Exile’s blog were, as his

¹ See the article, “Apoliteic music: Neo-Folk, Martial Industrial and ‘metapolitical fascism’” by Anton Shekhovtsov, at http://www.shekhovtsov.org/articles/Anton_Shekhovtsov-Apoliteic_Music.html for an in-depth treatment of some of the main themes involved in this conflict.

² For a cursory glance at the Green Scare and related links, see the wikipedia entry: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Scare

³ This article appeared in issue #3 of Black Seed: a green anarchist journal.

⁴ This post can be found at: <https://springspeakstruth.wordpress.com/2014/11/10/i-say-potato-you-say-dangerous>

⁵ <http://loyaltyismightierthanfire.tumblr.com/>

⁶ Considerations of length, concision, and focus prohibit a long discussion in the present essay of the definition of fascism or of neo-fascism (which in some cases introduces significant permutations of the old generic type which are relevant to a discussion of Sadie and Exile), and in the realm of fascist studies there is no exact consensus anyway. For our present purposes I will recommend that the reader see the works on the recommended reading list, or do a cursory internet or library search for a few of the better sources on the topic, and provide here one of the most brief definitions posited by Roger Griffin: “Fascism is a political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism.” The word “palingenetic” in this case refers to notions of national rebirth. Furthermore, fascism/neo-fascism is related to a slew of other far-right populist, authoritarian, and esoteric currents which I do not maintain are negligible or equivalent compared with fascism, or mere weigh-stations on an inevitable or teleological path to fascism.

defenders would go on to claim (at those times when such a claim was convenient), incidental expressions of an eclectic and wide-ranging interest in spiritual traditions and anti-modern strains of thought— areas of interest shared by many of us. Our misgivings grew, however, as did the compendium of block quotations by Julius Evola, Miguel Serrano, and other fascists, along with a smattering of references we now know to be fairly typical for Third Position⁷ and esoteric neo-fascists: references to Conservative Revolutionary thought, the Strasserite wing of national socialism, volkish nationalism, and other cultural tributaries of fascism, neo-fascism, and related far-right phenomena. Furthermore, the number of swastikas appearing on the blog, culled from any number of contexts and styles, grew to be impressive, even staggering.

While the content on the blog proper had grown during this period of deliberation to be quite enough for most of the anti-civilization and insurrectionary anarchists in town (those anarchists initially most amiable to/interested in Sadie and Exile) to write off Exile, it was uncovered that his tumblr account had an extensive log of “likes” that ventured much further beyond the pale of what has been described so far. When brought up in conversation, the “likes” were promptly made private. It seemed Exile was rather fond of portraits of Hitler, memes threatening racist skinhead violence, imagery of intimidating white men with the caption “support your local fascist crew,” links to a veritable cornucopia of transphobic screeds, and at least a couple articles about how the prison experience will necessarily turn whites into “racialists” for all the insight they would gain into the “problem of the Blacks.”

What followed was a series of in-person, face-to-face conversations undertaken by anarchists with Sadie and Exile and their supporters. In total, the number of talks was around 4 or 5, with a few different configurations of participants. Some of the people who sat across the table from each other had been close friends and comrades for years. These are important details to keep in mind as you read on, since it is entirely possible to come away from the experience of reading the three aforementioned pieces of writing (reviewed separately below) with the impression that no real life conversations ever occurred, that no substantial knowledge of one another existed between the involved parties, and that regard for Sadie and Exile was tepid at the outset of their time in Olympia. The conversations were undertaken by anarchists to ascertain a few things: Are Sadie and Exile actually devotees of the ideas of Julius Evola, et al.? Are they favorably disposed toward all-white spaces? Are they as transphobic and racist as the blog and its “likes” seem to suggest? Do they have neo-nazi friends? The anarchists emerged from the conversations with answers to each of these queries that were essentially affirmative (“Evola shows us the way,” “We don’t really care how people organize themselves” “Some of my good friends are neo-nazis.”).

⁷ The Third Position, Third Way or Third Alternative is a political position that emphasizes its opposition to both communism and capitalism. Advocates of Third Position politics typically present themselves as “beyond left and right”, while syncretizing ideas from each end of the political spectrum, usually reactionary right-wing cultural views and radical left-wing economic views. Third Positionists often seek alliances with separatists of ethnicities and races other than their own, with the goal of achieving peaceful ethnic and racial coexistence, a form of segregation emphasizing self-determination and preservation of cultural differences. They support national liberation movements in the least developed countries, and have recently embraced environmentalism. The term Third Position was coined in early 20th century Europe, and the main precursors of Third Position politics were National Bolshevism, a synthesis of nationalism and Bolshevik communism, and Strasserism, a radical, mass-action and worker-based form of Nazism, advocated by the left-wing of the Nazi Party until it was crushed by the Night of the Long Knives.

Political scientist Roger Griffin dismisses Third Positionist claims of being “beyond left and right” as specious. He argues that Third Positionism is an ideological mutation of the far right, which rejects both Marxism and liberalism for a synthesis of palingenetic ultranationalism with either socialism, distributism, corporatism or anarchism.” — from the Wikipedia page on “Third Position”, found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Position.

Furthermore, during the period of fallout which followed (and continues), it was learned by the anarchists involved in the situation that members of Exile and Sadie's prison support team had deep concerns of their own going back for years about Exile's proclivity toward white "tribalist" variants of neo-fascist thought which, in their estimation, manifested as a racist version of Odinism. Upon re-reading Exile and Sadie's sentencing statement with this knowledge in mind, the references to "the ancestors" and the "fair folk" which had seemed innocuous before took on a more sinister ring. The same statement is signed "air trees water animals" (ATWA), a slogan of white supremacist Charles Manson.⁸

The list goes on. Consequently, here are some things that have been said, with a minimum of equivocation, by some anarchists:

- As convinced devotees of the ideas of Julius Evola, Miguel Serrano, Ernst Jünger, and a few other notable leading lights, with much more than a passing or incidental interest in isolatable components of their work (such as interest in "Evola's writings on the Holy Grail," or "Jünger's ideas about the lifelessness of mechanistic modern culture," for example) but rather a vital interest in advancing the main of their doctrines (which was not denied when confirmation was sought) Nathan "Exile" Block and Joyanna "Sadie" Zacher are fairly characterized as neo-fascists.
- As such, Exile's promotion of the imagery and trappings of Fascism, Nazism, and esoteric neo-fascism of various stripes represents more than mere fetishism. He's not just particularly enamored of ancient solar symbols. His statements in person as well as his extensive log of tumblr "likes" demonstrate a real conviction on his part. The images on the main blog page are not smoking guns per se, but the icing on an otherwise obvious cake. And that cake is rotten, my friends.

And here, on the other hand, are the statements that one is most likely to encounter about this particular anarchist response:

- "They don't understand that Evola's work was misappropriated by fascists."
- "They think it's wrong to be interested in one's European heritage."
- "They don't understand the nuances of the neo-folk genre."
- "They have no interest in earth-based spirituality."
- "They are ideologically-blinded, stereotypically leftist anti-fascists."
- "Shouldn't they worry about the real fascists? or the police?"
- "They're just saying we're GUILTY BY ASSOCIATION!!!"
- "They are puritanical moralists who uphold taboos against certain forbidden materials and symbols and mistake any handling of those materials as an endorsement of their worst associations."

⁸ You can read Sadie and Exile's statement here: <https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2007/07/11/18434814.php>

- “They are hysterical drama queens.”
- “They are unnecessarily sabotaging the unity of their own anarchist scene.”
- “They are bored/boring.”
- “They are government agents.”
- “They don’t understand the fire they are playing with by labelling Exile and Sadie “fascists,” and their supporters as “fascist sympathizers.” They don’t understand that violence, ostracization, and other negative consequences could result.”

Now, let’s see what these are worth...

Julius Evola

This is as good a place as any to give a brief description, as a case study, of one among the flurry of names and terms encountered above: Julius Evola. The reason for this choice is that Evola is arguably the most important of Exile’s leading lights, and a figure of immense importance— perhaps the most important figure— for post-war European fascism, and spearheader of the philosophical school known as Traditionalism. The name of Exile’s blog is an Evola quote. The influence of Evola has been treated in several articles and books⁹ but for our present purposes, a few extremely short remarks will have to suffice. It would be hard to do better at the task of introducing Evola than fascist studies writer Roger Griffin in his anthology *Fascism*, which is worth quoting at length here:

Julius Evola (1898-1974) spent much of his life elaborating into a highly sophisticated ‘total’ vision of the world his lifelong obsession with the notion that the Westernized ‘modern world’ represented the rotten fruit of two thousand years of decadence. As a result the primordial ‘Tradition’ which he alleged preceded it had all but vanished. In his voluminous and massively erudite pseudo-scientific writings he argued that his Tradition had expressed itself historically in several organic, hierarchically structured, and metaphysically based States which, under the leadership of an elite caste of warrior-priests, formed the core of vast empires through which superior races and their superior values prevailed. During the 1930s he convinced himself that if [Italian] Fascism could ally itself with the more ‘aristocratic’ un-demagogic forces within the Third Reich it would create the basis for the re-establishment of such a Traditional empire in Europe (he wrote the *Synthesis of Racial Doctrine* for Mussolini’s regime in 1941). However the defeat of the Axis caused him to adapt his philosophy to the age of ‘ruins’ in which cultural rebirth was indefinitely postponed.¹⁰

Basically, Evola wanted to constitute a synthesis of the Roman and Germanic empires, but on a pan-European basis (a departure from the narrow nationalism of the original fascisms). He has several times been described by the friends and defenders of Sadie and Exile as having been

⁹ Among them *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* by Mark Sedgwick, and *Social and Political Thought of Julius Evola* by Paul Furlong.

¹⁰ Griffin, *Fascism*, p. 317.

“mis-appropriated” by the fascists (in the style of Nietzsche) or even as an “anti-fascist” or otherwise explicitly non-fascist. This is presumably because at some point Evola indeed referred to himself as such. This he did in frustration that the classical fascist regimes to which he had hitched such high hopes were showing themselves to be not sufficiently versed in the precepts of esoteric Eastern spiritual traditions and consequently had succumbed to materialism and charismatic political buffoonery in a way unconscionable to Evola. In other words, Evola’s commentary on fascism can be considered a kind of constructive criticism. His relationship to Italian Fascism was turbulent as he attempted to “steer the ongoing Fascist Revolution towards the realization of [...] idiosyncratic longings for a new civilization.”¹¹ It was in furtherance of this end that Evola’s brand of Traditionalism “allied itself overtly to totalitarianism, misogyny, anti-Semitism, racism, imperialism, and biopolitics, and hence became the accomplice to the most elitist, uncompromising, and terroristic forms of Fascism and Nazism.”¹²

Bear in mind throughout the present writing that similar expositions of other main influences on Exile are possible but have been excluded due to considerations of length.

PREMISES

Before going further, I would like to disclose a few facts and premises upon which I will be operating:

- I am white. Over a century ago my ancestors bought into the club of whiteness which had earlier been assembled to subjugate and decimate them, and the rest of the world. I am a person with pale skin and the attendant privileges thereof. I live as an uninvited guest on the land of indigenous peoples that I can’t even name with certainty before looking it up.¹³ These things are true also for the vast majority of the people involved (and those not involved who have decided to comment) in this drama. The effects of this on the discourse surrounding the conflict will become apparent to you if they have not already.
- I take it for granted that the presence of a convinced neo-fascist, however obscure and avowedly anti-authoritarian the strains of thought he follows, is potentially of serious consequence in a small, mostly white, insular northwest college town like Olympia, which (in addition to a vicious and insane police department, a small army of white gentry, and a somewhat surprising track record of violence) has a constant small presence of hardcore white power enthusiasts as well as occasional outbursts of larger/more flagrant/more organized neo-nazi boneheads, fascist or fascist-sympathetic bikers and car clubs, etc. No matter how “anti-political” or strictly cultural his interventions into the life of the town, they have ever-present potential to go well beyond the narrow countercultural dispute they might otherwise constitute. The high level of discussion and exposure of race-related matters in recent years (including Olympia’s own episodes) have shown that race is anything but irrelevant, even (or especially) in Olympia.

¹¹ Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, p. 217.

¹² Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, p. 138.

¹³ The fictitious geo-political entity called Olympia is on land that has been home to Squaxin, Nisqually, Puyallup, Chehalis, Suquamish, and Duwamish peoples.

- The white power movement in the United States has increasingly moved away from outright bigotry in recent years. There are separatists instead of supremacists, “racialists” instead of racists, queer fascists being welcomed into the fold, etc. It can be heard from more than one quarter of the movement that there is not one iota of hate in them for other cultures, just a desire that all peoples should have their own discrete homeland and customs.¹⁴ It is not true that in every case these changes are merely semantic, code for the old, virulent white power. Contrary to popular belief, “hate” is not a prerequisite for fascism. For an increasing portion of the neo-fascist scene, even nationalism can be dispensed with in favor of new, avowedly anti-state and “tribalist” versions of white power. The old trappings are not necessarily part of neo-fascism’s mythic core.¹⁵
- A conflict which has an in-person dimension, and which involves some people who had been close friends for several years (and more who had been friends and/or friendly acquaintances) is, on an important level, different than a conflict that is a simple aggregate of internet trolling and social games of exclusion and social capital, etc.
- A conflict that is based on fear, ignorance, taboo, censure, resentment, puritanism, ideological territoriality, vicious cliquishness, groupthink, leftist convictions, and/or a desire to control and to administer images is qualitatively different from a conflict motivated by genuine aversion, differences in non-negotiable principles, irreconcilable social and political affinities, critical thinking, research into and rumination upon the topics of the conflict, or solidarity with many and varied struggles. It would be very easy, however, for these disparate elements to mix and mingle, and on both sides of a dispute. It would be difficult to totally avoid the water in which we swim, even if the effort to do so is of utmost importance.
- Persons for whom civilization itself is an irredeemably disastrous enterprise, and for whom the most stringent critiques of the Left, liberal democracy, and historical anti-fascism resonate deeply, might still find contemporary anti-fascist struggles on the ground and, more broadly speaking, struggles against white power to be compelling for some mix of reasons related to conscience, strategy, personal history, current events, race, class, self-defense and others. For such people an idea that is not the only or even the most interesting one (in this case, anti-fascism) might still make demands of time and attention that outwardly seem to suggest otherwise. Furthermore, such people need not be operating according to the (probably?) mistaken ideas that fascism is poised to become a hegemonic force in world or national politics again, or that it is more damaging to liberatory struggles and life on earth than are neoliberalism or postmodern capitalism.

¹⁴ “Some pursue aggressive policies of imperialist expansion, whereas for others the regeneration of the nation does not involve subjugating other nations or actively persecuting ethnic minorities and may, so they hope, even be inaugurated through the conquest of cultural hegemony instead of through the legal or violent seizure of state power.”— from *The Nature of Fascism* by Roger Griffin, p. 45.

¹⁵ See the works of Roger Griffin, especially *Modernism and Fascism: The sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* for an excellent discussion of the tenets of fascism and of the social and political currents that played into its rise, even if these currents also existed in contention with it, sometimes profoundly. Also, I must urge the reader again toward the article, “Apoliteic music: Neo-Folk, Martial Industrial and ‘metapolitical fascism’” by Anton Shekhovtsov, which can found at http://www.shekhovtsov.org/articles/Anton_Shekhovtsov-Apoliteic_Music.html for a discussion of the “metapolitical” and “apoliteic” turn in neo-fascist and far-right circles.

- Anarchism (including anti-civilization and insurrectionary anarchism) and fascism (including deep green esoteric fascism) may be thought of as examples of social, philosophical, or political modernism¹⁶ (along with marxism, socialism, nihilism, etc.) and as such share a number of similarities and theoretical overlap ranging from the seriously problematic to the fairly innocuous, depending on the proclivities of the source and the ideological figment under consideration. However, the differences between them are potentially more important than the similarities, and going “beyond right and left,” or “learning about your heritage,” for examples, could mean things to an anarchist which are completely opposed to the notions which go by the same name for a fascist. Consequently, any idea of “traditions” worth keeping for an anarchist would have nothing to do with metaphysically based States run by castes of warrior-priests, with patchworks of ethnically pristine hamlet cultures, with vast empires or superior races, or with an age of ruins as conceived by the likes of Evola and his acolytes.
- It is not only possible but desirable to simultaneously oppose cryptic, neo-folkish fascism AND other, more institutional manifestations of oppression (i. e. “the real fascists,” the police, government, etc.).

With those things said, let’s take a brief look at the main texts whose authors sought, if not to defend Sadie and Exile, then to discredit the allegedly botched, moralistic, immodest, unsafe, overblown, witch hunt response of “the anti-fascists.”

REVIEWS AND REFUTATIONS

A) ”Don’t Worry, You Can Sleep at Night ...and being able to sleep functions as a symptom of a greater problem” by Hunter H.

This article consists mostly of a meditation upon nihilism, ideology, hipsterdom, consumerism and various lifestyle choices which is bookended with remarks about anti-fascism that feel grafted on to the piece but which leave no doubt that it is meant as a remark upon the latest round of Olympia drama. However, aside from those beginning and closing stretches of the piece, I find myself in agreement with most of it. Arguments against the shallow, resentment-fueled¹⁷ rebelliousness of those who seek to carve out ideological (counter-)

¹⁶ See again *Modernism and Fascism* by Roger Griffin for a superb contextualization of turn-of-the-century visions of renewal, regeneration, and revolution.

¹⁷ Ressentiment in philosophy and psychology, is one of the forms of resentment or hostility. It is the French word for “resentment” (fr. Latin intensive prefix ‘re’, and ‘sentir’ “to feel”). Ressentiment is a sense of hostility directed at that which one identifies as the cause of one’s frustration, that is, an assignment of blame for one’s frustration. The sense of weakness or inferiority and perhaps jealousy in the face of the “cause” generates a rejecting/justifying value system, or morality, which attacks or denies the perceived source of one’s frustration. This value system is then used as a means of justifying one’s own weaknesses by identifying the source of envy as objectively inferior, serving as a defense mechanism that prevents the resentful individual from addressing and overcoming their insecurities and flaws. The ego creates an enemy in order to insulate itself from culpability.” — from the Wikipedia article on “Ressentiment”, found at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ressentiment>. Clearly, anarchist subcultures are rife with resentment, levelled internally and externally.

hegemony, and critiques of a social order which preserves itself and brings about cohesion through sophisticated pacification techniques (rather than with garish brutality) which subtly bring about identification with the machine on the part of its subjects are all very fine, as far as they go. There are even small excerpts that I would describe as excellent in terms of succinct descriptions of complex dynamics, such as: “European anti-fascist demonstrations draw out supporters by the thousands, but serve as no attack on any actual forces of power. Rather, these demonstrations merely vocalize a popular moral position while glorifying the dominant structure in place that stands in contrast to the dark spectres of extremism, fascist or otherwise.” Very fine.

But, let’s look at the very first sentence of the piece: “No longer do the ideological extremes function as a the ultimate threat to our livelihoods, yet many within the so-called anarchist milieu (or other radical-leftist currents) remain focused on defending themselves from such extremes as central tenets of their praxis.” I’m curious to know what circumstances compel this writer to state with certainty that ideological extremes and extremists are not threatening. Because white anarchists may not be threatened frequently by other violent white fanatics doesn’t mean that fascism is not a danger, obviously to non-white people but also to dedicated anti-fascists and “race-mixers” of any background known to them. Fascists, white power advocates, and adherents to the far-right exist in fairly large numbers, in every echelon and every countercultural scene in the US, and regularly attack people or otherwise foster a climate of fear for many. But I suppose if you are disconnected from that reality, if you’re surrounded predominantly by other whites, or if you’ve never had to sleep with weapons under your pillow because you suspect your home might be invaded by nazis in the middle of the night, then it’s understandable to take this position.

Near the end of the article, Hunter H. repeats the well-worn trope about the anti-fascists being of a piece with statist censors, moved by our horror at the forbidden material to ban it from every utterance and instance, and goes on to group “Anti-fa members” in the same category with the US Military, ISIS, and racist skinheads in that we share a compunction toward the “maintenance of pristine imagery and ideology.” Most anarchists I know in Olympia could be found after the release of this article wondering who exactly this author is talking about, and how useful such a grouping/categorization could really be.

Presumably, from the remove of a Hunter H., the level on which the swastika and the trappings of antifa could be considered equivalents (as arbitrary, commodified markers of political allegiance, as “tainted hamburger meat of the political,” or as fodder for Hunter’s hackneyed post-vegan metaphors) is more important than the level on which these symbols serve as admittedly unfortunate expedients for very real and consequential differences (the subtitle of Hunter’s article even seems to be a lament that antifa are supposedly not losing any sleep from guilt and shame over the ideological vortex laying claim to us). Hunter’s squeamishness about “street-gang politics” and the violent encounters on the ground between fascists and anti-fascists seems certainly to be predicated upon more than a simple and understandable aversion to the often jarring and terrifying nature of these clashes. But can that aversion really be chalked up to the “critique of ideology” put forward by one who otherwise is calling for a showdown with the entire flow of history, a complete rupture with civilization itself? The writer nonetheless doesn’t bother to elaborate upon what the nihilist response to the creep of fascist influence or even fascist violence might be, but rather reserves their backhanded venom for the enemies of that fascism and, in this case, of that civilization. Maybe the rush to accrue cool points from local heroes (or anti-social

anti-capital, if you prefer) by way of condemning people embroiled in a conflict that Hunter obviously knows little about was too time-prohibitive for further comment.

B) “Reflections on Credibility”, the anonymous e-mail of resignation

This email was sent and forwarded to a number of people in the Olympia anarchist scene. In a positively harried tone it outlines the disillusionment and horror on the part of the author with the Olympia “anti-fascists,” a term used once again as a euphemism for anyone who has the gall to conclude that Sadie and Exile are genuinely into fascism.

The email starts off with the explicit declaration that the author, who describes themselves as having been involved with anarchism and anti-fascism for over a decade, will NOT be engaging in debate about whether or not Exile is a fascist. This is a patently ridiculous claim, not only because this is the topic around which the entire conflict turns, but because in the very next few sentences the author makes it clear that they think the accusations and allegations against Exile are illegitimate. It then goes on to critique various rhetorical excesses, security culture gaffes, and alleged friendly fire made by the anti-fascists.

Again, despite some semantic maneuvering, the author’s implicit assumption seems to be that anyone who has concluded that Exile is a fascist is guilty of these rhetorical excesses, if not of outright obfuscation. The security culture gaffes (unfortunately, a nearly constant occurrence in every radical milieu) are exemplified primarily by people making anti-fascist internet posts and putting pictures of their anti-fascist tattoos on social media, tagging their friends. The friendly fire or mistargeting woefully condemned by this author and other commentators on the situation has to do primarily with two instances. One is the cancellation of the Oakland tour date of the Olympia-based neo-folk band Ekstasis due to their close connection with Exile. Members of the band have described their relationship to Exile as familial and described him as their spiritual role model or shaman. (In a statement of defense written by Ekstasis after the show cancellation, they made sure to say “Congratulations, you are the fascists,” a statement directed toward those who’d clamored for the cancellation. This has not, to my knowledge, been condemned by any of Sadie and Exile’s defenders as a rhetorical excess.) The other instance has to do with assaults on the reputation of a certain bar in Olympia after a group of neo-nazi boneheads (with no known connection to Exile) were coincidentally smashed just outside its premises at the end of May 2015. Statements on the irony of the coincidence were made by anarchists in person and online, due to the fact that a handful of employees and regulars of the bar have consistently and passionately defended Exile, some going so far, notably, as to engage in snitch-jacketing of anarchists and other vicious rumor-spreading about the opposition to Exile.

Some of the most absurd of the mis-characterizations made by the email are the following statements made by the author: “It is a commonly held position by folks in Olympia that looking into earth-based spiritualities coming from European traditions or anyone researching their own European heritage is a white supremacist or fascist [sic],” and “All neo-folk is fascist,” a statement which the author attributes to “numerous Olympia anti-fascists.” It is entirely probable that there are self-described anti-fascists in Olympia who hold these views. I have heard the latter expressed a time or two at a party or social gathering by people who either had their tongues at least partially planted in cheek, or who perhaps were weary of sifting through the many actually sketchy bands in the genre. But to conflate all opposition to Sadie and Exile with the holding of these views is curious indeed since it is common, in the anti-civ milieu especially,

to find people who are quite interested in their ethnic heritage and in European spiritual traditions (and the prospective lessons for resistance and decolonization contained therein), and who enjoy the sounds of black metal and/or neo-folk music. In fact, more than a couple anarchists have been disappointed to find that bands previously well-liked by them ended up having neo-fascist/far-right affinities. One is tempted to conclude that these straw man arguments constitute an opportunistic smear job meant to play on the prejudices of different scenes in Olympia.

One of the most ridiculous of the many ridiculous aspects of the email is the author's suggestion that the anti-fascists in question don't understand the fire with which they play. Drawing upon the many years of experience with anti-fascism under their belt, the author decides to do us a favor and impart the knowledge that anti-fascist research and information dissemination is often undertaken with the intention that gang-style violence will ensue. The insinuation is that no one opposed to Sadie and Exile has any similar experience, an invalid claim to say the least. It should also be said that the potential consequences of Exile's affinities becoming known are in reality very well understood.

The email concludes on a note of lament about how irrelevant and unsafe anarchism has become to the author's life and interests, and of regret about the milieu becoming splintered over this situation. The former sentiment would be understandable in light of the problem that all radical countercultures (especially anarchism) have had with inflated senses of self-righteousness and recklessness. It is a note sounded often by those on the threshold of their 30s which gives important indications of real shortcomings. Here, however, it rings more as a vehicle for stodgy self-congratulations and holier-than-thou posturing from one who's lived with an unacknowledged eagerness to graduate for too long. The latter sentiment of regret implies once again that the misgivings about Exile are unfounded and not worth drawing lines over, perhaps revealing a conviction common for such graduates that a false unity is preferable to a genuine strife.

C) "I Say Potato, You Say Dangerous Resurgence of Fascist Ideology: A few case studies in the internet making human interaction even more painfully absurd than it already was" by Arnold Schroder

I often describe this blog post as the best offering that the "other side" has got, and I counsel people to read it if they want to know just what that is. To boot, it's one of my favorite kinds of writing: deeply personal but highly intelligent and informed, soulful, lengthy, in due course touching upon every sub-topic relevant to the matter at hand. It's written in a world-weary, plaintive tone that is highly sympathetic and relatable, only occasionally spilling over into smugness. In a word, it's seductive. What's still more is that I ostensibly share a number of basic convictions with the author, among them that industrial civilization is the absolute enemy and that the majority of people's fighting energy, such as they want to mobilize it anyway, should be directed at this enemy (and I would add, at least in the US context, at its police and its other proponents of white power). Schroder's phrase about targeting those with "most of the money and the guns," resonates even in the face of post-industrial innovations in the power structure and its social control which ensure that post-modern capital is less a citadel to be stormed and more a shimmering web, a never-ending circus/mining operation aimed at more and more intangible ore deposits of the imagination for the production of value, all while the outlands burn and the excluded at home are devoured in a death trip that only continues despite all self-congratulatory

progressive drivel to the contrary. Truly, the fruit of civilized alienation. And here, in Schroder, is a soul who gets it. Right?

In short, if I were learning about the dispute for the first time by reading this blog post, or if I was in the position of feeling caught in the proverbial middle, the opening stretch of this piece would likely convince me that an unscrupulous, dull, and opportunistic cabal of Antifa somewhere in Olympia had acted like real assholes lately. I'd believe that it was sad but true: that they had pre-emptively cast out something or someone never esteemed, never understood, and that it was done perhaps for no better reason than to bind the group more tightly together in its struggle against a hostile outside world, to ease existential terror, to bring before them the latest in a line of objects upon which to project the fantasies of their twisted, pathologically-adolescent minds, too steeped in Olympia's brand of social justice moralism despite their best efforts or pretenses at abstention. Here would be people of that contemporary madness, that idiosyncratic derangement ever in the ascendent in radical circles, which allows them to rub elbows with the bringers of the Gulag, but emphatically— hysterically— not with the bringers of the Concentration Camp. I might even believe it all because I myself had been peripheral to, or even involved in, groups capable of being thusly described.

But lest you think my praise uncritical or rooted in a substantive affection, I'd have you know that the rangy erudition of Schroder effectively masks a few significant omissions, and they are ones which would be very conspicuous if only you weren't being borne along on the gentle, lilting tide of Schroder's thoughtfulness and originality, his dry humor and his learned gravitas. It is truly ironic that the essay begins with these words: "When one crafts fiction, one does it, no matter how fervently fidelity to real life may be desired, with a certain narrative elegance and coherence that life itself often lacks." Schroder proceeds to do just that. It is my contention that what he leaves out is of greater consequence than the many elegant words he lets fly.

Schroder uses the phrase "twinges of admiration" when talking about the former reputations of Sadie and Exile among anarchists, and part of me suspects that this is downplaying the matter purposely. It would be too hard in Schroder's seat to resist making the most of the often deserved reputation of the anarchists as a vicious clique who are always-already champing at the bit to excommunicate someone. But whether or not this characterization is purposeful, the fact is that anarchists had much more than a passing glimmer of admiration for Sadie and Exile before this sordid saga laid bare just what their regard for the "fair folk" consists of. Sadie and Exile basically had garnered the rock star status accorded to those in or near the anarchist milieu who undertake direct action, go to prison for it, and refuse to snitch. They were materially supported by anarchists during their years in prison with funds, publicity, letters. Therefore, an actually large measure of good faith and admiration were squandered in the aforementioned in-person conversations with them.

Aside from giving the impression right from jumpstreet that this controversy is only an excrescence of the non-life of the internet, Schroder goes on to repeat the article of faith that criticisms of Exile are firmly rooted in an irrational aversion to neo-folk¹⁸ or to explorations of what a path

¹⁸ For unfamiliar readers, from Schroder's blog post: "...We're concerned with the latter kind of folk music, and with a far smaller subset of it than everyone who plays acoustic guitar and sings — neofolk. Neofolk, as I'm using the term, has been around since the 1980s, where it developed out of the context of, and in association with, industrial and noise music. It's a thriving genre, and far too much has happened in it in the intervening decades to make any real attempt at a rigid definition. Ultimately, it has no more ideological or aesthetic cohesion than punk rock — which is to say, none. A cursory and somewhat random list of themes that have occurred in it over the years might include:

to an appropriate European indigeneity could mean. He also slyly cherry picks multiple references to Exile's blog posts to illustrate his own tour through the relevant subjects of the debate. These include but are not limited to nazism, the esoteric meaning of the swastika¹⁹, the ELF, neo-folk, and mysticism. This train of references was immediately criticized unfairly in a couple of online forums as meandering and irrelevant, when really it was a reflection of the labyrinthine quagmire of this controversy. Schroder takes us on this whirlwind tour to make a case for the relative harmlessness of Exile's blog: "What do all these images have in common, or what, when they are taken in the aggregate, do they collectively signify? I'm not sure I know the answer to that, and if I did, it might be prohibitively lengthy, but if you answered "they are all inducements to the cause of white supremacy," or "they all articulate a clear vision of a resurgence of fascist ideals in modern politics," I'm going to have to go ahead and say you're very, very wrong." Sounds so reasonable.

Of course, I could do cherry picking of my own. Rather than focus, as does Schroder in tones of semi-adulation, on Exile's use of "the statue of Christ in the ruined church, the Moroccan folk musicians, the painting of Mary and the infant Christ, the image of Michel Foucault talking about the penal system," etc., etc., I could focus on the pictures of people weeping over mass graves, the photos of bodies stacked high, the multiple images of death squads and their ferocious pitbulls (which appeared immediately after anarchist objection to the blog was made public). Sandwiched between the quotations by Evola and Serrano and Jünger there's also the steady stream of beautiful white women and white tigers, memes about how if the weights you are lifting at the gym are too heavy then you are not strong enough, and at least one laudatory anecdote about Oswald Spengler's Roman soldier who perishes at Pompeii in a natural disaster rather than abandon his post, an act which after all might be contrary to the wishes of his superior and not in keeping with the steadfastness and strength and self-mastery needed to undertake Evola's "inner immigration." Inner immigration? Self-mastery? Let me explain.

Norse mythology, nature worship, mystical Christianity, Western occultism, anti-modernism, ecological destruction, love, hate, death, fear, and Nazis." As Schroder goes on to acknowledge in the paragraph which follows this one, this list is not really so random.

¹⁹ "So if not an expression of racist or fascist ideology, what's with all the swastikas? Maybe this quote from Rene Guenon, featured on the blog, offers some insight:

"Such is the true significance of the swastika, a symbol found everywhere, from the Far East to the Far West, and which is essentially the 'sign of the Pole'; ... contemporary scholars have employed all manner of fantastic theories in their vain efforts to explain this symbol, the majority of them, obsessed by a sort of fixed idea, having been intent on seeing here, as almost everywhere else, an exclusively 'solar' symbol, whereas, if it has occasionally become such, this could only have been by accident, as a result of some distortion. Others have come nearer the truth when they see in the swastika a symbol of movement, although this interpretation, without being false, is quite insufficient, for it is not a question of just any kind of movement, but of rotational movement around a center or immutable axis; and it is this fixed point, we repeat, that constitutes the essential element to which the symbol in question is directly related." "the esoteric conception of the swastika, wherein, whatever a given culture associates with it, the symbol has an inherent, immutable, non-substitutable relevance; it is not a symbol simply devised at random to express an idea, like the word "tree" arbitrarily signifies a tree, but an actual feature of the universe, which we are no more capable of changing than we can change the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter.

If we were going to talk about this esoteric conception — if we were going to discuss whether the perceivable universe is an ever-circling, ever-fluxing field of illusory change emanating from an immutable center in which all ostensibly disparate entities are one; if we're going to talk, in other words, about whether the universe is a swastika — we are essentially in a realm where we are talking about something very much like "magic," and whether or not it is, in fact, real. Talk about complex discussions. This is a subject on which people of all political persuasions remain divided." ... Yes, we get it Schroder, the swastika once stood and still stands for something that is not nazism, something very nice. I'd like to remind you that in our age and circumstances it also most often stands for nazism.

Referring to an article that appeared shortly after this drama became public knowledge, Schroder writes, “What did New York City Antifa mean, exactly, when they, a day or two after the cancellation of the Ekstasis show, decided to publish a post called “Former ELF/Green Scare Prisoner “Exile” Now a Fascist”²⁰ — since they didn’t accuse him of saying so himself, and they didn’t accuse him of involving himself in any sort of political activity? Did they simply mean that somewhere in his inner core, somewhere inaccessible to direct scrutiny by any outside observer, in some hidden landscape lacking any means of ingress or egress to or from the world at large, he is a fascist? If so, they are likely well-equipped to understand the more abstract forays into philosophy and esotericism found on his blog.” This, however, is exactly the realm with which devotees of Evola are likely to be concerned.

Schroder’s concession that antifa are well-equipped to understand the blog is clearly more irony where sincerity would have done fine. What I referred to above as “inner immigration”, and what, exactly, NYC Antifa meant in their statement is elaborated upon in the article, “Apoliteic music: Neo-Folk, Martial Industrial and ‘metapolitical fascism’” by Anton Shekhovtsov, which is worth quoting at length to illustrate the point:

Although fascism is an enfant terrible of the twentieth century, its socio-political lifespan is not bounded by Mussolini’s and Hitler’s regimes. After the joint forces of the Soviet Union and the western liberal democracies had crushed fascism’s war machine, it was forced to evolve or, rather, mutate into three distinct forms. The groups that still wanted to participate in the political process had to dampen their revolutionary ardour rather dramatically and translate it ‘as far as possible into the language of liberal democracy’. This strategy gave birth to new radical right-wing parties that have become electorally successful in several countries over the last twenty-five years. Revolutionary ultra-nationalists, on the other hand, retreated to the margins of socio-political life and took the form of small groupuscules that kept alive ‘the illusory prospect of having a revolutionary impact on society’. The third form of post-war fascism was conceptualized in the teachings of two fascist philosophers, Armin Mohler and Julius Evola. In *Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932*, published in 1950, Mohler argued that, since fascist revolution was indefinitely postponed due to the political domination of liberal democracy, true ‘conservative revolutionaries’ found themselves in an ‘interregnum’ that would, however, spontaneously give way to the spiritual grandeur of national reawakening. This theme of right-wing ‘inner emigration’ was echoed by Evola in his *Cavalcare la tigre* (*Ride the Tiger*), published in 1961. Evola acknowledged that, while ‘the true State, the hierarchical and organic State’, lay in ruins, there was ‘no one party or movement with which one can unreservedly agree and for which one can fight with absolute devotion, in defence of some higher idea’. Thus, *l’uomo differenziato* should practise ‘disinterest, detachment from everything that today constitutes “politics”’, and this was exactly the principle that Evola called ‘apoliteia’. While apoliteia does not necessarily imply abstention from socio-political activities, an apoliteic individual, an ‘aristocrat of the soul’ (to cite the subtitle of the English translation of *Cavalcare la tigre*), should always embody his ‘irrevocable internal distance from this [modern] society and its “values”’.

²⁰ <https://nycantifa.wordpress.com/2014/08/05/exile-is-a-fascist/>

The concepts of *interregnum* and *apoliteia* had a major impact on the development of the ‘metapolitical fascism’ of the European New Right (ENR), a movement that consists of clusters of think tanks, conferences, journals, institutes and publishing houses that try—following the strategy of so-called ‘right-wing Gramscism’—to modify the dominant political culture and make it more susceptible to a non-democratic mode of politics. Like Mohler and Evola, the adherents of the ENR believe that one day the allegedly decadent era of egalitarianism and cosmopolitanism will give way to ‘an entirely new culture based on organic, hierarchical, supra-individual, heroic values’. It is important to emphasize, however, that ‘metapolitical fascism’ focuses—almost exclusively—on the battle for hearts and minds rather than for immediate political power. Following Evola’s precepts, the ENR tries to distance itself from both historical and contemporary fascist parties and regimes. As biological racism became totally discredited in the post-war period, and it was ‘no longer possible to speak publicly of perceived difference through the language of “old racism”’, ENR thinkers pointed to the insurmountable differences between peoples, not in biological or ethnic terms but rather in terms of culture. They abandoned overt fascist ultranationalism ‘in the name of a Europe restored to the (essentially mythic) homogeneity of its component primordial cultures’.²¹

Is one of us right and one of us wrong in our focus? Is it conceivable, as Schroder seems to suggest, that there is no overarching message to the blog? Or that if there is, then it is a good and contemplative and wise one? Or is it possible that Exile is using a strategy of deliberate ambiguity in a cultural intervention which attempts to render the soil more fertile for his particular brand of softcore white separatist hippie dippy anarcho-fascism (efforts the likes of which seem to be succeeding if the Pacific Northwest is any indication)? Is it not merely a sign of Exile’s worldly outlook but, in fact, deeply creepy and offensive that he uses images of old brown women in far away lands with sick hand tattoos to make his particular vision of the rebirth of Mother Europa a few shades more palatable? I don’t think it’s pushing the envelope too far or thinking in too conspiratorial a manner to recognize that a many-splendored pageant of humanity dappled with beautiful art from Bronze and Iron Age kingdoms and religions makes the medicine go down, and that in our day a neo-fascist can mobilize that pageant for his ends every bit as easily as can an anarchist. Admittedly, those ladies and that art look pretty great.

The objection could be raised, as it often is, which Schroder puts like this: “The dialogue around fascism in neofolk has always hinged on not believing people when they say they’re not fascists. We enter into this territory of claustrophobic suspicion: “Sure, you say you’re not a fascist, but anyone can just say they’re not a fascist; what are you going to do to prove it?”” This is an objection which put another way has been repeated ad nauseum by those who esteem Sadie and Exile: a dismissal of allegations which are perceived to be based on so-called “guilt by association.” It might seem strange that people known to cavort with enthusiasts of neo-fascism and who lambast their critics as shallow leftists should base their defense, as it were, on the idea that Sadie and Exile’s detractors are bringing a form of allegation against them which is illegal for the state to bring against individuals in court cases. But here is an argument that can be deployed with instant traction even by people who ostensibly have no interest in lending further weight to legal categories of the state. It can be counted on to mobilize liberal outrage in most circles and dovetails nicely with the caricature passed around of a coterie of anti-fascists which has fashioned itself into a miniature judiciary or tribunal— one which has suspended even

²¹ http://www.shekhovtsov.org/articles/Anton_Shekhovtsov-Apoliteic_Music.html

elementary protections for the accused, no less! The underlying assumption, of course, is that associating with fascists (or, say, adopting them as your shamanic guide) is acceptable or ethical essentially because a court could not arrest you for it. We are apparently supposed to ignore what we know in the interest of dispassionate jurisprudence. Is it true that people dealing with pre- or extra-legal social affinities and allegiances should not use their faculties of discernment to know who they should or should not cut off from contact simply because a similar criterion used by the state in an entirely other context is opposed by us, mostly because we would seek to take advantage of any protections afforded our associations, because we would want to get away with the shit? The bottom line: association, support, esteem ARE the problems in this context.

This bit on the legal innocence of neo-folk boosters of the New Right is followed immediately by a reference to Exile's pedigree as ELF militant: "Where it might be suggested that, if one wanted to establish some kind of credibility for themselves, burning a bunch of shit down could be a good place to start." This is a formulation that is echoed later in the piece, when Schroder offers a defense of the decorated German World War I veteran Ernst Jünger, a leading proponent in the interwar years of a school of thought which partially played into the rise of fascism in Germany called Conservative Revolution, and an abiding influence on Evola. Jünger, we are informed by Schroder, eventually played a peripheral role in a plot to assassinate Hitler, and this is offered as supposed proof of his merit. Schroder again: "I was born in 1978, and I started listening to punk rock when I was 11, so that makes me just old enough to really remember what it was like when Nazi skinheads were a constant, violent threat at punk shows and the like. I have stood my ground, as a rail-thin 14-year-old, against gangs of grown-ass skinhead men. This is a history I doubt I share with many of Rose City Antifa's members. So there's a few points in my favor, I suppose. But you know what I never did? I never once — not in my punk rock youth, nor at any other point in my 36 years of ecological anti-authoritarianism — tried to kill Hitler. And if trying to kill Hitler doesn't get you a pass with today's anti-fascists, nothing I can ever hope to do or say will." I'm not sure of an emphatic enough way to say that this doesn't matter. My own anarchist romanticism aside, arson and assassination— or time served in prison— do not an ally make, at least not necessarily. It should be elementary at this point that the enemy of my enemy is not always my friend, and Jünger, Evola and Exile are no friends to the anarchists, then or now.

Really, I'm being hasty when I say that it doesn't matter that Exile has the courage to match his convictions. Along with Schroder, plenty of us growing up in the countercultural scenes of the United States had formative experiences involving neo-nazis. Plenty of us were small and scared, and came away from the experience scarred or otherwise irrevocably changed. Some of us have friends and comrades who were sent to the hospital, to jail, or to their graves. So it matters, then, when someone is motivated by a vision of order and social regeneration which is opposed to one's own and they are willing to go down for it. Schroder's language about "getting a pass" with today's anti-fascists is more indicative than it was probably meant to be.

Ironically, while taking pains to exonerate the elitist, anti-egalitarian, anti-liberal streak in German culture, in neo-folk, and on Exile's blog, Schroder admonishes, nearly pleads with the anti-fascists to engage in the spirit of open and democratic dialogue, and this with people who it has been made clear have disgraced themselves. He condemns the nebulous nature of anti-fascist alarmism, but in his turn ends up defending not only Sadie and Exile, but also the fans of Death

in June²² whose helmsman Douglas Pearce rhetorically AND financially supports fascists– the politically active and extremely violent kind– and repeatedly makes horribly racist and fascist pronouncements in interviews and openly welcomes neo-nazis at his fascist imagery-laden shows.

But most personal to Schroder, it seems, is the case of the Austrian band Allerseelen, subject of an expose and tour date shutdown in the Northwest in 2010 orchestrated by Rose City Antifa. As his essay wears on, Schroder defiantly makes it known that he ran sound for Allerseelen after the apparently harebrained character assassination that RCA loosed upon the world. As I read, I– obstinate and pigheaded antifa emissary, tiny dictator that I am– I felt just about convinced that RCA must have gone too far to raise the ire of this agreeable anti-authoritarian eco-defender man. I really did. I paused my reading of the blog to look up the RCA statement on Allerseelen to see what kind of ephemera and whole cloth they had stretched to make their garment fit their hobgoblin. What I found is that the man behind Allerseelen, one Gerhard Petak, is particularly enamored not just of some corner of the European New Right which Schroder judges to be salutary, but of Leni Riefenstahl, the director of the infamous Nazi propaganda movie “Triumph of the Will” (Triumph des Willens) whom Petak has praised in various media. He’s also quite partial to the Order of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Romanian Iron Guard. For those who don’t know, the Iron Guard were none other than Romania’s own homegrown fascist movement. Yes, that kind of fascist, contemporaneous with Italian Fascism and German Nazism. Petak saw fit to release spoken word recordings of their founder Corneliu Codreanu²³. I guess he just really needed to commit those speeches to tape. You know... for art.

To use Schroder’s charming, trivializing phrase when referring to the cocaine swastikas on Exile’s blog: “Right. So that’s awkward.”

“THIS ISN’T OAKLAND”: the social context

For several decades one of the most robust, large, and particularly tenacious chunks of the white power movement on the North American continent has hailed from the Northwestern United States, including that grey portion of the greater region adjacent to the ocean known as the Pacific Northwest (PNW) or Cascadia. Several outfits and countless stalwart individuals have set their sights on and devoted their efforts to the establishment of a discrete new homeland, an official white ethno-state whose proposed boundaries vary but generally include the land now encompassed by the states of Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and the northern part of California. Of course, this audacious proposition is entirely consonant with the history of the encroachment of European-American civilization into this region and its concomitant ongoing attempt at genocide of the indigenous population. In the white settling of the great northwest, the treatment meted out to laboring immigrants and to the black and brown populations was characterized by grinding exploitation, by terror, dispossession, and forcibly-imposed social death. It’s a history studded with atrocity. Infamously, Oregon’s state apparatus even went one better than

²² For the fairly unambiguous case of Death in June, see “Why we don’t like Death in June” at <https://nycantifa.wordpress.com/2013/09/16/why-we-dont-like-death-in-june/> and “Death in June: a nazi band?” at <https://libcom.org/library/death-in-june-a-nazi-band>

²³ Learn all types of fun things about Allerseelen in “Statement on Allerseelen Tour” at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/45235072/Statement-on-Allerseelen-Tour#scribd>

the impressive average of northwest capitals and at its founding officially prohibited the emigration of black people to within its borders, a deliberate attempt to foster the “better elements” of culture. In its northwest corner, the pronounced tendencies toward white power that one could expect to find in no less romanticized a place as the American West can be seen to take on a more distinctly sentimental, even utopian hue, perhaps owing to the singular natural beauty of the place. What white separatists today are seeking to bring to completion is a mythologically charged task a couple hundred years in the making, animated by hopes for something like a fairy tale ending. They carry on as warriors in a world that does not understand, in the face of setbacks imposed by a liberal democratic modernity that they feel (as do many anarchists, but for different reasons) to be immeasurably, outrageously, farcically asinine.

By this point, some of the reasons for the peculiar nature of Olympia sociality may be gleaned by any reader not already familiar, that is, if you’ve bothered to keep reading this far. Despite its situation near some of the last remaining relatively intact and astoundingly gorgeous stands of wilderness forest in the US, as well as its accessibility on the I-5 corridor, “Oly” is not so much a place as an eerily comfortable bubble. Or a vortex. There’s even a local bit of superstition which holds that if you drink the well water then you’ll end up dying here, a reference to the fact that almost everybody who leaves comes back sooner or later. The pacifying triple influences of the famous hippie college in town, the huge neighboring military base, and the state capitol lend a multifarious, transient, and cosmopolitan set of dimensions to the otherwise provincial, even folkloric air of the town (they also provide some jobs to a formerly booming center of logging, milling, fishing, oyster farming, and dairying). In our little paradoxical paradise, if we don’t have it all, we have the residues and romance of what once was. As long as you can get on foodstamps and attend your herbalist workshops and art exhibitions and noise shows and Portland-style gentrifying hipster cafes and Yule celebrations unmolested by any unsightly reminders of the gaping wounds of race (or by pesky anarchist handwringing served up by those dependably dour-faced and dramatic flies in the ointment) then... well, then it just seems like everything is going to be ok.

To belabor the point for a moment more imagine, if you will, what the world would be like if the CEOs of major outdoor outfitting companies entered into a braintrust with fierce social justice militants, sustainability techies, Sally Fallon, and a bunch of Scandinavian people (just for good measure) to successfully collaborate on a bio-regional secessionist dystopia and you might get something close to the Geist of radical Olympia, at least in its most obnoxiously pernicious iterations. It’s a little bit like being lost in a progressive high school cafeteria where honest-to-god trust fund insurrectionaries rub elbows with liberal baristas, and bio-dynamic farming enthusiasts who make the same pittance of a wage as you do are the first to crack the whip when you aren’t being efficient enough, when you don’t answer the e-mails from the collective fast enough, when your suggestions for self-managed life aren’t made with enough gusto. When I say that late capitalism reigns here, I mean late like you’re grounded. In this world, it’s not all that surprising when someone who is called out for harboring fascist sympathies responds by saying that you are just as fucked up because you are so into Beyonce. Now, imagine that this green capitalist wonderland had genuinely managed to secure for a large portion of its subjects a by no means negligible measure of social services and community feeling, fresh air and mountain views, and you might be getting even closer to understanding the weird, irresistible appeal of the bubble. One of the sinister undersides to this tight folksy knit, and one that helps to explain the downright nasty attacks and endless psychologizing of adversaries in this and every other

conflict that unfolds, is that the repressed venom of people in this “community” (and I do mean the crud of their passive-aggressive souls) is usually reserved for those who are seen to break whatever version of this cozy consensus their own little group has internalized. Anarchist or fascist, it’s woe to you who upsets the freaky denizens of the rainy village enough for them to look up from their smartphones for more than an instant.²⁴

Maybe this bit of context goes some of the way toward explaining why the friends of Sadie and Exile said what they did in conversation.²⁵ Maybe they felt like they could get away with such candidness in front of people who, after all, they’d known for years and with whom they’d shared significant vistas of worldview and experience. Maybe they thought that the white anarchists—in some cases no less than their former comrades—ultimately could only pretend to be any better than the rest who find their refuge in this Neverland. Tiring of the mounting tensions, they would have hedged their bets on being more honest than they had been so far. And who’s to say they weren’t right? Anarchist response to the situation has been anything but uniform. The gamble paid off for them in the form of those friends in the anarchist scene who went in for the belittling dismissals, or who pretend not to know “what the beef is” in a scene that is such an echo chamber criss-crossed with channels of gossip that this is literally impossible. To relate another example, when news got around that the lion’s share of Olympia’s long-standing A-team were through with these creepy neo-folkish bastards, some insurrectionary anarchists in town and elsewhere in the northwest expressed their wish to talk with the menfolk of the faction so resigned, rather than with the participants of the talks who were known to be basically drama-prone (trans) bitches, not to be trusted with delicate matters of determining last straws.

But there’s more to it than (hopefully) fleeting expressions of transmisogyny or jockeying for social capital. It’s not only the ubiquitous social games and mud slinging of the town to which anarchists succumb. In light of the foregoing, how could that be all? As for my own part, if ever I want to wince I need only look back upon a half dozen or more high-profile or otherwise memorable controversies and conflicts in which I felt I had acted or spoke in a justified anti-

²⁴ Despite the workings of this sophisticated recuperation machinery— the breathability of the biopolitical fabric with its array of art students, co-op jocks, and liberal gardeners— from time to time there wells up the energy on the part of somebody or some bodies to do something as spectacularly unmediated and unchill as smashing a bunch of racist skinheads, or engaging in street fights with the police to stop military shipments out of Olympia’s port, or engaging in ecologically-motivated arsons, or ungracefully ejecting nazi-fetishists from countercultural events. To be sure, there exists a subterranean current of Olympia radical history that is nothing short of incredible and utterly inspiring (and which embraces much more than these moments of spectacular violence). Whenever one of these episodes comes to pass, you can count on a large portion of Left activists, collegiate revolutionaries, local business owners, and all-around rad folks to immediately cast the most torrid and morally-outraged kind of aspersions that they can muster onto the people acting against the scum, usually positing at fever-pitch that to do so renders one a negative and violent force in the world qualitatively equivalent to that against which we fight. Meanwhile, on the other hand, a chorus of right-wing internet trolls, local creeps, soldiers from the military base which abuts the town, and suburban and rural wingnut outliers calls for the outright summary execution or immediate imprisonment of anarchists and anti-fascists. The town’s major newspaper calls for a somewhat softer repression than this, while the smaller progressive papers counsel a still more velvet set of constraints (somewhat akin to when they call for the police to mace and beat black kids instead of shooting them). I’m not kidding.

²⁵ The title of this section (“This isn’t Oakland”) is a statement that was coincidentally uttered both by a member of Ekstasis/defender of Exile when explaining their withdrawal from the fray of race politics which besets major American cities, and by a Hammerskin in May 2015 who was threatening retaliation against support of Andre and Bryson (two black youth who were shot by Olympia police officer Ryan Donald), which he saw as not befitting the prerogatives of a northwest community. I don’t suggest that this coincidence renders the two sources equivalent, but that it is a telling confluence.

racist way... only to realize now that in all likelihood I resonated just as much as anyone else as an entitled and pretentious white goon. Who am I anyway to condemn with such furor the sins of other white people? Do I write 30-page papers about them that will be read mostly by other white anarchists only to stave off irreconcilable doubts about myself and my place in the world? I have black and brown anarchist friends who live in other towns or regions who wonder what I'm still doing here. In moments which sometimes prove uncomfortable, their puzzlement overflows and finds its way into speech or writing, and they ask me just that. Apparently, the anarchist aspiration to become or contribute to a wrench thrown in the machine or even just an ulcer in the stomach of the unliving beast, to deploy oneself in a substantive treason to whiteness, rings a bit too hollow to be believed. Too hollow. Too grandiose. Too insincere. Or if not these then, at any rate, far too implausible a notion, especially after a year and a half of nationwide demonstrations and actions for black lives has not only failed to slow the rate of slaughter but has seen its escalation to record levels in response. Oh well. Fritter away the northwest days like anyone else. Dream about living on land. Work the shit jobs that ensure that you will never, ever be able to do that. Party and bullshit. How do I put delicately to my curious friends that perhaps the main condition for my remaining here is the one that they already know and the one that is hardest to acknowledge: that I am white, so I can stand it.

But as crucial as a reckoning with these questions is, the point is not to become lost in the kind of pacified navel-gazing that this town seems to engender as an imperative, with velocity, leaving it up to someone more affected to deal with shit. Meaningful distinctions can and should be made, lines drawn that will, to whatever extent possible, orient us away from the disastrous straits in which we currently find ourselves. So, when someone tells you that they are friends with neo-nazis, wearing their statement with something approaching pride, speaking in defiant tones of their contravention of your narrow leftist precepts, you have to wonder at those who think you're a hysterical drama queen and demagogue for unceremoniously ending the relationship. You have to wonder at people whose main security concern in the situation is that your conclusion that the person is fascist or fascist-sympathetic is too flippant or reckless. Clearly, for anti-fascists, two degrees of separation from the hardcore of the opposition is simply too close for comfort. Many people, for obvious reasons, can never totally (or at all) remove themselves from the cross-hairs of fascists. But in the spirit of gang or turf war alluded to above as part and parcel of antifa work, white anarchists, anti-fascists, and anti-racist activists routinely draw the ire of the WPs (white power advocates). In a town like Olympia this presents unique pitfalls since one is never all that many degrees separate from them. In essence, taking visible stands against racism and fascism in a town where you can expect to run into nazis a few times a year or season if you frequent downtown (or the shooting range, or demonstrations, or McDonald's, or etc.) can pretty easily "out" you to them. Some people cross that threshold and become known to them unavoidably. Some choose to do so. And some, as we know, unintentionally let sensitive details slip out of ignorance, deplorable carelessness, or fatigue. But to act as if the affinities of Exile do not have the potential to jeopardize people is to advance a fallacy.

As we'll see, to suggest that a perspective against industrial civilization necessitates or excuses such affinities is equally fallacious.

AGAINST THE MODERN WORLD... WHITHER?

The open secret of civilized life is that we are all crestfallen. Against insufferable loss and psychosis-inducing captivity some innate animal propensity continually, implacably bucks until we break, hemorrhage, become despondent, or sublimate our urges into prescribed channels of recreation and anesthesia. In this view, then, Schroder describes a legitimate impulse when in the course of contextualizing his defense of Exile he writes:

Industrial civilization in general, and the massive social and technological changes of the 20th century in particular, have been, to indulge in gratuitous understatement, difficult for people to adapt to. There was never a moment of true acquiescence. We never believed in this dream. It was born dead. The moment science began to explain everything, massive resurgences of mysticism and anti-rationalism spread among educated people. The moment technology offered us a way to never touch the soil again, people began to flee to the forest. Our current epoch of hyper-mechanized warfare, hyper-mechanized work, and growing distance from the land gave birth instantly to many counter-currents. These counter-currents have taken an incredible diversity of forms, but if one bothers to peer just a little ways beneath their exteriors, beneath the simple classificatory schema, one finds a wealth of commonalities.

Though this may be absolutely correct²⁶ it must be stated emphatically that in no way does it imply an acceptance of the doctrines of Julius Evola who, after all, was elucidating his own life's most precious endeavor when he called explicitly for "a more radical Fascism, more fearless, a really absolute Fascism, made of pure force, impervious to any compromise."²⁷ The same holds for any other of the panoply of voices who acted as conduits of that impulse, who on occasion compellingly described the stultifying or horrifying aspects of the emergent social order while intentionally bolstering Aryanism in a world already indelibly shaped by white power(s). A heeding of this outcry against the ills of the modern world certainly doesn't imply complacency in the face of the cryptic stumping for such influences that Exile has made into his project and that, like any true "aristocrat of the soul," he carries on all the more proudly for having been called out. It doesn't imply a scouring of 20th century European history for the racist, conservative revolutionary men whose words take the left to task most severely, with most zeal. In all likelihood, it doesn't imply Europe at all.

It has been claimed by some in the neo-folk scene that in order to research one's Germanic heritage, it is necessary to engage with the sources that exert such a strong pull on the imagination of Exile and friends. Putting aside the dubiousness of that claim, what is never explained is why engagement should necessarily lead to embrace, or embrace to the kind of allegiance that

²⁶ Among the many works on these subjects, see again *Modernism and Fascism* by Roger Griffin for an outstandingly thorough and sweeping survey of mysticism, anti-rationalism, and occultism among the "modernist" responses to the conditions of life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. See also the early labor history essays of John Zerzan (penned in his pre-primitivist days, for those of you who don't swing that way), in particular "Industrialism and Domestication," which is collected in the book *Elements of Refusal* and can also be found here: <http://www.docfoc.com/john-zerzan-industrialism-and-domestication>. This essay, like several other works before and since, details the diffuse, passionate, violent and total resistance mounted to the advent of industrial society.

²⁷ Evola, *Il Cammino del Cinabro*, p. 100., cited on p. 309 of Griffin's *Modernism and Fascism*.

inspires one to become a low key propaganda czar, an internet and musical spirit warrior for tendencies that have historically and contemporarily been used as fuel for attacks on the colonized and oppressed peoples of the world.

Even explicitly anti-fascist white radicals potentially perform a disservice to ourselves and the causes that we would further by engaging in an uncritical public identification with what we judge to be the better of our ancestors. Everyone knows white kids love hip hop, but in the northwest we also love saying we are witches. Like the women and queers and incorrigible freaks whose lives were extinguished at the stake, we tend to look for histories where we are the subjects of oppression and resistance, often to the exclusion of sitting with those elements of the history which tie us to benefitting from and participating in oppression. If a crucial part of the pre-white history of Europe is the lead up to the construction and joining of that whiteness– if we are also descended from inquisitors, clergy, colonizers, and witch hunters– then it behooves us not only to find those moments of revolt and subversion worth celebrating, but also to truly mourn what was burned up with those bodies. We should understand that whatever it was that was lost can only be made again from scratch, re-grown in place.²⁸ It surely cannot be fabricated with Exile’s hokey, two-bit reconstructionism which hearkens to the Roman Empire or manifests a hyper-romanticized urge to usher in the rebirth of “the component primordial cultures of Europe” à la Evola²⁹ and puts on a pedestal the history of people who, by and large, sold out.

There are no easy formulas, no cut-and-dry answers. On that much our nihilist theoreticians and our admirers of Jünger and company are ostensibly in agreement. But then, how to explain when the latter insist that the need for very particular formulations of spirituality or the longing for a people of one’s own (or a resentment-fueled, us-or-them vehemence which mirrors the left at which it is aimed³⁰) effectively supersedes the exigencies of anti-racist, anti-fascist solidarity in the here and now? When they dismiss as glib posturing or leftist moralizing the recognition of those exigencies by anarchists, even those with anti-civilization principles?

In a poignant moment of his essay, Schroder asks why anarchists problematize the situation of Exile’s ideas on New Right terrain when similar ideas in the parlance of another milieu are called decolonization. He locates here an incapacity for cross-ideological cooperation and comradeship, an inexcusable narrow-mindedness in the face of concerns so colossal that they might very well prove insurmountable even if such divisiveness were overcome. In the next breath he glides into rebuking anarchists for associating with the Left analogues of such cretinous tendencies as are readily condemned everywhere and anywhere else they are found. What could be the explanation for this apparent inconsistency? Have anarchists abdicated their faculties? Do we believe the honeyed words of liars because they say what we want to hear or wear our colors while we deny potential allies because they do not? This would undoubtedly be in keeping with

²⁸ See the excellent interview with the group Knowing the Land is Resistance in issue #4 of the journal Black Seed for perspectives on spirituality and indigeness which elude the pitfalls of either primitivist or neo-fascist pagan reconstructionism.

²⁹ Here I am reminded of that prevalent sub-species of white American who believes that something worth preserving here is actually threatened with extinguishment by something else called “forced multiculturalism.” I assume a recognition of the composite nature of many traditional cultures (which are known to borrow, exchange, interact with, and welcome members from other cultures, possibly from time immemorial) is reduced to a backward or outward leftist projection of this “forced multiculturalism” so reviled by our New Right types.

³⁰ More irony that the critics of leftist moral residues within those entrenched anarchists too eager for a fight are here the same who defend Evola, who famously wrote, “The legionary [Roman soldier] spirit is that fire of one who will choose the hardest road, who will fight to the death even when all is already lost.” Ok.

the track record of anarchists as history's greatest dupes, losers, and dispensable foot soldiers, the ones who never fail to do their part in ushering in the newest incarnation of the nightmare because we couldn't resist our piece of the action. It would be exceedingly easy to throw one's hands up and walk away, concluding that the anarchists refuse to learn their lesson. At times, I have been tempted to do so myself.

But to leave the matter at that would be folly. To take Schroder's argument at face value is to buy into a disappearing act, replete with smoke and mirrors. Our politics (or anti-politics) are what we make of them. Namely, I don't believe that an interest in one's ethnic roots or pagan revival necessarily predisposes one towards racism, pogroms, or assembly-line mass murder any more than I believe that undertaking things in a communal spirit or what some anthropologists have called "aggressive egalitarianism" (as opposed to Evola's boasted "primordial" anti-egalitarianism) predisposes one towards Stalinist purges or terror famines. Yet, Schroder's idiosyncratic and oh-so-wistful rendition of the flight from Leftist authoritarianism manages to effect just such a double-edged conflation, simultaneously lending weight to the pro-civilization lobby of anarchism and propping up one more too-plausible antifa scarecrow in the process. What do I mean?

There is no shortage of leftists (including left anarchists) who maintain that to pit oneself against the dynamics inherent to civilization is to court a nascent fascism, a position that I feel consists of some combination of consummate foolishness, cowardice, denial, and/or willful ignorance about the natures of fascism, modernity, authority, and more.³¹ And as we've seen, despite his many disclaimers to the contrary, Schroder all but confirms their worst fears with the "passes" he hands out to *Allerseelen*, *Death in June*, the European New Right, etc. The other side of the coin, the scarecrow, is his suggestion that any anarchist who speaks ill of Exile must be in bed with the kind of socialists who will one day put us up against the wall. This is an argument to which many of us influenced by post-left critiques are very susceptible, finding as it does so much correspondence in real life, in the sordid history alluded to above. It's as if anarchists necessarily fail to sniff out heinous techno-bureaucrats or state-planners-in-waiting because we prefer our bogeymen to be of the right rather than the left.

But therein lies the disappearing act. As much as anything that has been said or written about the debate, this suggestion demonstrates either a serious unfamiliarity with tendencies of anarchism which have been ascendant for years (especially in Oly), or a colossal summit reached of good old-fashioned bad faith. What our neo-folkish rivals represent as the preferences of blinkered political correctness could just as easily be represented as the exact kind of dealing with nuance which, according to the pictures painted by the Hunter H.'s and Arnold Schrodgers of the world, should well-nigh be impossible for a set of myopic and reactionary brutes charged

³¹ "Is Fascism Anti-modern or Modernizing? Some forms of fascist myths are radically anti-urban, anti-secular and/or draw on cultural idioms of nostalgia for a pre-industrial idyll of heroism, moral virtue or racial purity. However, even in these cases it is only the allegedly degenerative elements of the modern age which are being rejected. Fascism's essentially paligenetic, and hence anti-conservative, thrust towards a new type of society means that it builds rhetorically on the cultural achievements attributed to former, more 'glorious' or healthy eras in national history only to invoke the regenerative ethos which is a prerequisite for national rebirth, and not to suggest socio-political models to be duplicated in a literal-minded restoration of the past. It thus represents an alternative modernism rather than a rejection of it. Thus when a fascist text bears the title 'Revolt against the Modern World', as in the case of Evola (1934), it is the decadent features of modernity that are being attacked in order to outline the prospect of a totally different type of society..." - from *The Nature of Fascism* by Roger Griffin, p. 47. See also the book *Modernity and the Holocaust* by Zygmunt Bauman.

with manicuring the ideological racket. But of course, that representation (of an anti-fascist, anti-civilization critique³²) wouldn't be swallowed as easily, wouldn't find as much correspondence in the rest of the world, wouldn't play into the prejudices of audiences to the same extent— and hence is not admissible.

Maybe someone who wasn't launching an elaborate apologia for Sadie and Exile could be forgiven for misconstruing the many, various, and complex reasons for anarchism's tortured relationship with the left, which vacillates between romance, alliance of convenience, aversion, and outright hostility.³³ Some anarchists might very well love to go smash up the next meeting of the socialist party as much as a meeting of the NSM or Hammerskins. The left may piss and moan about our using them as crowd cover for our vandalism, but the fact remains: the radical left allows us, however uneasily, to exist in its midst while we hatch our schemes to get rid of it— and ourselves— once and for all. The radical right? They murder us execution-style in the desert. They stab us outside of convenience stores. They bash us or drag us from the backs of trucks. They massacre people in black churches. Do you really think that's dumb luck or a simple fucking accident of history?

It's surreal to have to explain why there is some sense, however peculiar, in which I might still conceive of myself as a "communist" (or at least associate with some of those who do) while I would never want to find a way to reclaim "fascism"— or have the misfortune to wake up one day and realize that that's what I'd become despite any semantic acrobatics. This, contra Schroder, does not mean I fail to reject left totalitarianism along with the right. It's surreal— and symptomatic of my social context— to have to explain the reasons why one would prefer those iterations of the ideas which go by "decolonization," are advanced by the world's fighting indigenous peoples, and are taken up by portions of the left rather than those iterations which go by "the right to difference," are advanced by white people in European New Right think tanks, and are found in journals sandwiched between the ruminations of esoteric hitler worshipers. Are we really supposed to believe that we are being unfair to the more radical fringes of the right by excluding them from our futile little crusade against state and capital, against civilization? In the event that people ever get pissed enough to once again blockade the port of Olympia— let's say this time to stop shipments of timber, the traffic in the murdered bodies of the last remaining ancient forests of the northwest— do you think I'd want to stand shoulder to shoulder with someone who is friends with neo-nazis, or expects their readers to believe that all antifa envision themselves as some scrambled, miniature version of the Allies taking Rome or liberating Treblinka, or someone who claims to have not one modicum of disrespect or condescension toward the people of other races but thinks that interbreeding and thereby watering down one's own racial essence is a no-no? Are our circumstances so impoverished that the strange bedfellows we choose to accomplish a task must be of this caliber?

If it was inadequate for the guards of the old primitivism to shirk off concerns about latent fascistic affinities or an over-reliance on anthropological science with simple declarations of, "But we're against nationalism! We're against racism!," then it's immeasurably more inadequate for the skills of outright neo-fascism to offer up in defense of themselves declarations of, "But we are against all forms of oppression!," or failing that, to cop to a folksy lack of savvy in matters of

³² And one which goes far beyond a slapdash hybridization, or the necessary but insufficient indications given by leftist primers like George Bradford's *How Deep is Deep Ecology?*

³³ This deserves its own essay.

race or point out their non-white friends. It's not only laughable, it's an apparently well-deserved insult to the intelligence of those anarchists who bought it and have stuck out their friendships with them. An often overlooked point in the popular discourse is that there is much more to neo-fascism than race, and there are plenty of grounds for whites to reject it besides sheer altruism or the cosmopolitanism of liberal academics. The vision of a life well-lived held out by Julius Evola is not only based upon deeply erroneous analysis of what has gone on in the world, in the end it's also paltry, disgusting trash; a pitiful collage of coping mechanisms for ubiquitous modern insecurities, dressed up in imperial garb and animated by some of the worst affinities ever dreamed, none of which I would ever want for myself, my relatives, or my loved ones of whatever origin. Occasional moments of illumination, erudition, or expressions which some anarchists might see as refracted versions of genuine impulses do not redeem a rotten enterprise. When have they ever?

If belonging to a place, spiritual practice, and undemocratic, anti-Enlightenment values are not necessarily spurned by anarchists, they may be recognized as too important to fuck up. I submit for the consideration of the reader that to start from or arrive at neo-fascist or "alt-right" voices like Evola is to do just that. The critique of civilization does not consist of the eloquent ramblings of those men tangled in the war-torn morass who beat their breasts most ardently against the modern world because what they fixated upon in their survey of the wreckage was the slipping away of great empires, the habits and entitlements of the well-born, and the gender roles of the Middle Ages. The anti-civilization insurgency to come will reckon with those apparatuses that produce meaning as we've known it, that produce history, subjectivity, race, gender. It will do this or it will be farce. If you are a racist or a transphobe, your vaunted love for the earth is immaterial.

A FIELD GUIDE TO STRAW MEN

In a generous vein, one could choose to believe that a simple but subtle truth has eluded the above writers: the argument being made by the wayward antifa of Olympia is not that Exile is a neo-fascist because he posts so many swastikas, but that he posts so many swastikas because he is a neo-fascist. So much the worse for us all that the basis of any such generosity has been persistently undercut by a clear refusal to read between the gaping lines.

Regardless of all mindless prattling to the contrary drawing hard lines against substantial Evola influence is an excellent strategy for anarchists and white anti-racists in the northwest. If you'll indulge me in a taboo bit of futural thinking for a moment I'll ask: in twenty years, when the earth is hotter, the sea is overflowing, and white people are more panicked than ever about the ebbing away of their privileges, the crumbling of the world that whiteness had built for them, in that not-far-off time when a group of white supremacist militia men again occupy land in Oregon or Nevada, or sweep through the parts of Olympia which aren't underwater, do we want significant swaths of the "countercultural" scenes and radical avant-gardes of the northwest to express their congeniality toward the heroic men with guns (who are standing up to the government, after all!) because a supposedly harmless, novel interpretation of fascist ideology was allowed to go unchallenged where mostly white folks tread? Should we let it slide for fear of appearing as hopelessly uncool ideologues or pedantic killjoys? Do we want the next generation of rioters and arsonists, assassins and ex-convicts, midwives, healers and bio-remediation

enthusiasts to incline toward a wholesome, nominally non-racist variant of neo-fascism? Or do we want them to incline toward anarchy and anti-racist rebellion?

Call it semantics or hairsplitting. Call it ideological turf war or the power fantasies of little civil engineers and christians-on-the-inside. Call it whatever you want, but we carry on. Ink will be spilled and pixels aligned in order to bemoan the lack of unity in the anarchist scene, to admonish us toward calm dialogue, to deride us for succumbing to “ideology” (meaning: not the nihilist kind), or to plead not guilty in an imaginary court, but none of that will stay our desire to see certain enemies smashed and scatter before us. Not only in anti-civ discourse and anarchist spaces, but at the black metal and neo-folk shows, at the zine symposiums, music festivals, and pagan holiday celebrations, picture the scum getting just what we’d give to any other creepy fascist fuck. Picture their delicate pamphlets with the pretty screen-printed covers sailing through the air as their tables are flipped. Flyers posted up about them. Blood on the ground. You know the rest. Imagine them being as scared and hapless as the Hammerskins who fled just such a wrath in Olympia in May of 2015.

Clearly, this essay was not written merely to defend the honor of some group or another of northwest anarchists. In any event, honor exited the situation with Sadie and Exile’s entrance. Secondly, the anarchist responses to the situation, taken together, have confirmed the utter inability of the milieu as a whole to adequately deal with countercultural neo-fascism, a bellowing, gut-churning failure. Finally, I’m sure that every hyperbolic statement attributed to that small fraction of people which I happen to think have good enough bearings in the situation came out of someone’s mouth at some point. Rhetorical excesses and security gaffes were indeed committed. But notice the slight-of-hand which renders this concern paramount, obscuring the fact of the slime in our midst. Flare-ups of temper or desperation obviously increased in some kind of proportion to how unseriously concerns were taken about Exile by the collection of white anarchists, punks, metalheads, pagans, and activists in this town and region, who frequently dismissed them outright. Sadly, a lack of support all too easily plays into unhealthy preoccupations. Who among us would not love to give more of our attention to any number of other interests and passions? Who among us would not love to defy the caricature of participants in a laughably obscure subcultural dispute of little significance? But as the system is more and more beset by crisis and breakdown, newly dispossessed people are going to be reaching for whatever radical tendencies are lying around. Despite the vogue for detached, cool self-effacement which passes for a sober voice of reason³⁴, the competing influences of ostensibly anti-authoritarian visions of ecological resistance could very well chalk up to much more than they once did as things heat up. This is our problem to deal with.

Yet it seems that some parties would still prefer the antifa critics to keep their mouths shut in shame over what are seen as the intangible aspects of our allegations or the missteps taken. All the while defenders of Exile continue to post selfies with Douglas Pearce and defend the inalienable right of fascist literature distributor Counter-Currents to table their wares at California’s Stella Natura festival. Perhaps most despicable of all, a few of the Evola-devout continue to intentionally and openly spread false information that certain anarchists opposed to Exile’s blog are literally agents of the US government sent to Olympia, apparently to disrupt the threat posed by its goth bars and apoliteic neo-fascist ex-cons turned ecstatic folkies. This practice, known as snitch-jacketing, is probably only surpassed by actual snitching when it comes to pathetic

³⁴ This among people who can often be found drunk on their ideas.

machinations which carry potentially dire consequences for the life and limb of its targets. Fortunately, the vast majority of people who would be inclined to take precautionary measures (and who have been the subjects of very recent federal scrutiny) seem to understand the allegations to be laughably baseless, serving primarily to discredit its sources even further.

The dishonest frameworks of discussion intentionally put forward by the cowards and dolts make no allowance for the appearance of certain kinds of anti-fascist, papering over legitimate differences among countercultural white people. Some of us are indeed northwest-dwelling, civilization-hating, practitioners of primitive skills and lovers of metal and believers in ancestral magic. Others are taken with nihilism. Still others subscribe to the kind of leftism eschewed by the foregoing. And for all this we still easily say fuck Sadie and Exile. On the other hand, it's entirely possible to be a cop-hating, back-to-the-land, tincture-making, insurgent fascist. Again, just because the deluge of pap which denies the existence of these nuances will be swallowed in whole or in part by far away anarchists in big cities– or those who stay here for a few months or a couple years before leaving for the next hot destination– does not mean we will suddenly start preferring a false unity to the genuine strife we've striven to press upon for years or decades of our lives. If our know-nothing detractors and anarchist popularity contest winners are dismayed at this, they'll be positively aghast by the ruptures that are in the offing.³⁵

A FINGER POINTS AWAY TO THE MOON

Unlike the animal complexions of our bodies which take generations or epochs to change, the resonance of symbols can change in an instant. Personally, I'm of the mind that every thing is endowed with some bit of spirit or life and communicates with its world and hence with us, potentially, at any moment. Even symbols, words, and texts themselves are in a sense alive. Have you ever re-read something you wrote knowing that either someone you loved or someone you hated (or both) had now read it, or was about to read it? Did not the words take on a different timbre, did they not speak differently to you? Or, have you ever tried to think positively about yourself but the little voice inside you sounds eerily like the jeers and emotional sabotage of your parents, your teachers, your attackers?

The spells (and spellings) we cast bring forth various affects within and between us. They are windows into or cuticles over a numinous-yet-manifest realm with which we civilized have increasingly lost touch but may re-gain at any instant. We trade that immanent touch for symbol far too often, in far too compulsive and systematic a way, to an extent far too great. And when we withdraw from that game or even re-tool its conventions too much, we become incomprehensible to spectacular society. We become inscrutable. We become wingnut, eccentric. But none of this means that the symbols can't still matter in a way that is radically subjective for each of us.

So, I'm not prone to vehemently reject the contention that the swastika could, in some times or circumstances, be a positive symbol for many in the world. But it is that very mutability of meaning trotted out in defense of "re-claiming" fascist imagery that I would allude to in order to make a different argument. Almost like clockwork, as I began to conclude this essay I received a text message that the Hammerskins were again demonstrating in Olympia (as part of a larger right-wing protest against the shooting death of LaVoy Finicum), that they would likely be found downtown and that everyone should exercise utmost caution.

³⁵ Or if the rupture is deemed cool they'll take credit for making it happen.

Quite apart from the vile, toxic garbage of ally politics which ensure that we all remain stuck, I have an invitation for my “fellow” white people, for the ones who seem particularly more enamored of their right to free expression in their predominantly white, pristine Cascadian home than they are of fostering affinities which are truly dangerous– barbarous, one might say– to the impeccably modern construct of whiteness and the status quo, to those strategic ruses and allegiances without which civilization could not have recovered its stride after each faltering crisis. This invitation is held out, generously indeed, to those people pondering the situation who, in the idiom of closely neighboring contexts, would readily be recognized as fence-sitters.

The invitation: for us to introduce that rudimentary accord of sensitivity which makes it possible to think and feel the reasons for the associations most people have formed with those trappings strewn about and emanating from Sadie and Exile and their ilk, that ever-scandalous swastika (make sure to say it with a suitable dose of postmodern irony and ennui). For most people with whom we’d care to forge connections in doing battle with the structures that constitute and then gnaw away at modern life, those associations are not nit-picky hangups or puritanism. They are impositions, they are fait accompli. Those symbols and associations correspond in large part to oppressive forces still operating in the world, systems still in place and– perhaps most of all– to those lone and lonely fanatics that only by a hefty stroke of naivete could we allow ourselves to believe are remnant soldiers of a bygone era of racism, destined to disappear any minute now and leave us to our post-colonial pet devices and ethnic concerns. There is no such out-of-hand dismissal that can quell the pangs of doubt raised by the continual appearance of these twisted mirror images of our own faces and politics, who lash out all the more desperately as their mantle is so much as threatened with erosion, all of it thrown into relief by an age of very civilized brutality existing, as it always has, side-by-side with the culture of good manners and don’t-rock-the-boat white fraternity.

The invitation is to find out whether neo-folk, metal, ecology, and– in its worst manifestations– anarchy are not so racist that war, eternal war, could not be declared from within or beside them against those white power elements that they do harbor.

Admonishments to dialogue notwithstanding, this invitation is distinctly not addressed to people like Sadie and Exile, who have demonstrated by their brazen, arrogant flouting of any such request that their interests are so vested as to have chosen a side. It’s the wrong fucking side.

Some things in life are failures of nerve. Some are failures of vision. I wish I was able to say that it’s a rare instance which is so relentlessly, so furiously a failure of both as this story of Sadie and Exile. Such is the feeling of singular madness that sometimes attends the arc of events when they are thought of, retold, re-lived.

Unfortunately, any pang of exceptionalism is not true. The same dual failure– of what can be imagined, and what can be done– is to be found in most any venue, in the courtrooms and the classrooms, at our jobs (pick a job, any job) and on the street corners, at the parties and in the cells. It’s found in anti-septic conservative suburbs, in frenzied, insanity-inducing urban spaces, and in the darkest corners of rural america. It’s with us even in the quiet of the forest only because it’s somewhere in our hearts now.

The sense of shock and consternation which still clings to this tale can most probably be attributed to that vestige of hope, however unrealistic, which holds that life with such a famed and intractable beast as northwest anarchy, or in the radical so-called “community” of which we are a part, should be any less of an absurdity, any less of a bad joke than the rest.

Just another couple of years in the land where up is down..
Sincerely,
a member of the 1312 committee//edelweiss pirates

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1312 Committee
A Field Guide to Straw Men
Sadie and Exile, Esoteric Fascism, and Olympia's Little White Lies
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